One for All

THE LOGIC OF GROUP CONFLICT

Russell Hardin

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For James S. Coleman, wonderful colleague

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CHAPTER THREE

Group Identification

You are what you know.
—Epistemological variation on a theme

Self-Interest

How far can ethnic and nationalist identification in politics be understood to result from essentially self-interested behavior? At first thought, plausibly not very far. Nationalism and ethnic loyalty are commonly viewed as inherently irrational or extra-rational in the sense that they supposedly violate or transcend considerations of self-interest. Surely this common view is correct to some extent. Still, it is useful to draw out the self-interest incentives for such commitments and behaviors. There is yet another category of motivations—those that are a-rational. For example, you want only to sit on the beach and watch seagulls. This is not strictly a matter of your interest but of your pleasure or whatever in consuming your time and energy that way. Similarly, we all have a-rational drives that make us want things. When we act from those drives, we may lack reasons that could define our actions as rational. These four terms—rational, irrational, extra-rational, and a-rational—are not strictly parallel.

Throughout this book I use the term "rational" to mean to have narrowly self-interested intentions and I do not constantly restate this qualification. Rationality is, of course, typically a subjective or intentional notion, not a purely objective notion. You act rationally if you do what you believe serves your interest. Self-interest might better be seen as an objective notion. Its service is the object of rational action, although one may fail to understand what is in one's interest. George Washington presumably acted rationally, but mistakenly, when he allowed himself to be bled by doctors, perhaps with fatal consequences. I will refer to primordial, atavistic, inconsistent, and other motivations not intended to serve either the individual or the group interest as "irrational"; and I will refer to individual motivations to serve the group- or national-level interest more or less independently of immediate individual costs and benefits as extra-rational. It is possible, of course, that rational and extra-rational motivations will lead to similar actions in some contexts. The

rational choice account of ethnic, nationalist, or other group loyalty will be compelling if (1) *it often happens that self-interest and group identification are congruent* and if (2) actions that are costly to the individual but beneficial to the group or nation are increasingly less likely the higher the individual costs.

Although it may not be necessary for many readers, I should note that these terms are used in varied ways in different disciplines and literatures. For example, rationality is often given a substantive content. It is said that to be rational is to be a certain kind of person or to have certain desires. In other literatures rationality is taken to apply only to instrumental considerations, to means rather than to ends. Whatever desires I have, I should act in ways that will fulfill them. In the standard rational choice literature from the Scottish Enlightenment through to contemporary writings, rationality is taken to combine one quasi substantive concern, self-interest, with concern for selection of means to the end of self-interest. Self-interest is only quasi-substantive because it is concerned with means for consumption, not with consumption *per se*. For example, I have an interest in having more money, but money is not a substantive good for me, it is only a means to obtaining various goods. If the proximate end in view is self-interest, we can even compare the choice of means to that end by focusing on the relative efficiency of various means.

In some ways, it would be more assertively clear to speak of self-interest rather than of rationality. But there is no simple equivalent of the range of terms we want here: rational, irrational, and extra-rational. Moreover, we may often accommodate extra-rational concern for the well-being of others by speaking of it as a concern for others' interests, and we can then rationally choose best means to fulfill those interests. You may be an altruist or an ethnic loyalist who has a group interest as well as a self-interest. Finally, and most important, self-interest is not generally treated as a subjective notion—even if I like the taste of some poison, it may not be in my interest to eat it and, if I knew enough about it, I would actively prefer not to eat it. Limits to knowledge lead all of us to mistaken beliefs about our interests even when it would be silly to say we had mistaken intentions. George Washington had mistaken beliefs about the benefits of bleeding to treat a bad cold. This fundamental problem of subjectivity often complicates any account of intentional action, as it will complicate our account of group identification.

Much of the work on nationalism is primarily concerned with will, interests, and identity. It is about the cognitive aspects of actors' being nationalist. Writings on ethnicity may more commonly invoke primordial and other emotional motivations. There are many other identities that might underlie conflict as nationalism and ethnicity seem to do.

Many of these, however, do not seem to be of much concern to us in explaining major conflicts up to and including war and internal war. Indeed, many of them seem to be trumped by nationalism in times of war, as identification with class in the Socialist International was, to Lenin's disgust, widely trumped by nationalist identities at the advent of World War I. In a multiethnic state, nationalist and ethnic identities may clash even while the state goes to war.

Often it is claimed that there is something natural about ethnic identification. As there are arguably genetic grounds for physical identification *of* a particular ethnic group, so there might be genetic grounds for psychological identification *with* the group by those who have the relevant physical characteristics.[1] I will take for granted that this presumptive genetic basis of the psychological identification *with one's particular group* is most likely false. Surely it is not merely false but also preposterous for, say, the nationalist identification with the United States, such as was displayed at impressive levels during the Gulf crisis and war against Iraq.

Whatever genetic basis we might find for ethnic and nationalist identification is at most a genetic basis for the propensity to identify with *some* larger group.[2] How we might select a group for identification or how identification may just grow up for some group of which we are part is likely still to be a cognitive problem of making choices. Those choices may be about matters other than direct identification with the particular group or nation. But they will have implications for such identification, which may be an unintended by-product. It is such choices and their grounding in self-interest that are of concern here. One might go further than I wish to go to say that even the basic urge to identify is itself a cognitive result. At the very least, the data on such identification may not readily differentiate biological from cognitive explanations.

Throughout the discussion of this chapter, there will be two partly separable issues: the role of interest in an individual's coming to identify with a particular group, and the interest an individual has in supporting that group as a beneficiary of the group's successes. The second issue may seem more readily than the first to be about deliberate action. Of course, one could see that membership in a particular group would be beneficial and could therefore develop an apparent or even real identification with it. But for very many identifications, it would be odd to suppose the individuals had deliberately set out to develop or adopt the relevant identity. Hence, the explanatory concern must be with the rationality of various choices they make that eventually lead them to identification with a particular group, identification that, again, may be an unintended consequence of many rational actions.

There are three main moves in the arguments that follow. First, I consider the rationality of an action given one's available knowledge, theory, and so forth at the time of choosing. Second, I consider the rationality of *coming to have* the knowledge and theory one now has. And third, I consider the possibility of confusing moral and factual knowledge as seen from the epistemological stance of the person whose knowledge (or belief) it is. These three moves are independent and one may reject one while accepting the others. I think the third of the moves is the most troublesome for a rational choice account. The first two moves seem too sensible to be objectionable, but they are also commonly not overtly made by rational choice theorists or their critics. All three moves enormously increase the demand for data in trying to assess the rationality of actions.

Group Identification from Coordination

How can we plausibly associate nationalist, ethnic, or other strong group identification with self-interest? Surely, it seems, such commitment is beyond the self, it is a commitment to a community of some kind. To get beneath this superficial appearance, first note that many national and ethnic group conflicts are likely to have outcomes that will favor or disfavor members of the relevant group. Contributing to the potential success of the group to which one belongs therefore benefits oneself. Unfortunately, as we well know from the logic of collective action, such considerations are typically outweighed by the costs of contributing.[3] For example, by voting in an election, I may help my candidate win. But to do so, I have to go to the trouble of voting, trouble that can be substantial in many locations. Unless the probability that my vote will make a real difference in the outcome is extremely high, I cannot justify, from my own interest alone, taking the trouble to vote. Then how can I justify contributing to the collective purpose of my nation or ethnic group?

The first answer is that there may be no costs of my joining in the relevant activities of my group. The second answer is that, even if there are costs, I may also expect specific rewards or punishments that will be tailored to whether I contribute. The first answer will apply to many contexts that essentially involve coordination but no expenditure of resources by many of us. The second answer will apply to many contexts in which there are real costs of contributing—so that the problem is not simply one of coordination—but in which rewards of leadership or spontaneous punishments by one's peers are possible.

Of course, a nationalist or ethnic commitment might be purely ideal or normative in that it might involve only ideal-regarding and other-regarding motivations. But it might also be strongly correlated with individual interests. Suppose the commitment is to a nation or ethnic group

in conflict with others and with a prospect of success in that conflict. Then it is likely that the nationals or the ethnic group members will jointly benefit from that success. The benefit is often likely to be collectively provided but individually distributed. The group wins or loses together, but winning means that each member or many members of the group benefit individually. Indeed, one need not be committed to the group in any normative or additional psychological sense to see one's interests served by its success.

There are generally two forms that collective, mutually beneficial endeavors may take. These may be represented game theoretically by the prisoner's dilemma and coordination games, as shown in games 1 and 2. The prisoner's dilemma is perhaps the best-known game in all of the massive game theory literature, especially in the discursive applied literature in the social sciences. In this game, I as the Row player face a choice between two strategies, didactically labeled cooperate and defect. You as the Column player face a similar choice. In the end, we will each receive the payoff determined by our simultaneous choice of joint strategies. Our payoffs in the various outcomes are listed ordinally, with 1 as the most-preferred and 4 the least-preferred outcome; and the first payoff in each cell goes to the Row player, the second to Column. If we both defect, we each receive our third-best payoff. If we both cooperate, we each receive our second-best payoff. If I cooperate while you defect, I receive my worst payoff while you receive your best; and vice versa. Hence, there is incentive for both of us to try to cheat the other by defecting while the other cooperates.

Game 1: Prisoner's Dilemma or Exchange

		Column	
		Cooperate	*Defect*
Row	Cooperate	2,2	4,1
	Defect	1,4	3,3

Game 2: Coordination

		Column	
		I	II
Row	I	1,1	2,2
	II	2,2	1,1

In the coordination game of game 2, you and I have harmonious interests. We wish either to coordinate on both choosing our strategy I or on both choosing our strategy II. There is no conflict. In the prisoner's dilemma there is both a coordination interest in choosing the (2,2) over the (3,3) outcome and a conflict of interests in which I prefer the outcome (1,4) while you prefer (4,1).

Many of the standard problems of political mobilization are generalizations of the prisoner's dilemma strategic structure. Each of us has an interest in not contributing a personal share to, say, a political campaign, because each of us will benefit from all others' contributions

while our own contribution may cost us more than it is worth to us alone. Hence, each of us has incentive to try to be a freerider. (This is what Mancur Olson calls the logic of collective action.[4])

Many other problems of political mobilization are more nearly generalizations of the structure of the simple two-person coordination game represented here. In such problems, all that is needed to achieve successful mobilization is relevant communication to coordinate on doing what we would all want to do if only we were sure others were also doing it. In what follows, *most of my account of group identification, as opposed to action on behalf of a group, will argue or assume that the central strategic problem is merely one of coordination.*

There is something objective and something subjective in the idea of an ethnic group or a nationality.[5] This is true in general of coordination points. There are good objective reasons for me to coordinate on *X* rather than fail to coordinate by choosing *Y*. But there may be no a priori objective reason for the choice of *X* rather than of *Y* apart from knowledge of how you and others are choosing. Hence, group coordination is an achievement that likely turns on highly subjective considerations such as the psychological prominence of particular points in the set of all possible coordination points.[6]

A peculiarity of explanations from coordination is that they often have an important chance element. We might have coordinated on driving on the left, as the English do, or on the right, as North Americans do. There might be no rational ground for the original selection or, rather, for the early pattern of order that turns into a hard coordination. Similarly, we might coordinate on linguistic, religious, or ethnic affinity. If all of these come together to define our group, we may be much more likely to succeed in adopting a strong commitment to the group. If they do not come together, some of us may nevertheless define ourselves as a group on the basis of some attribute that excludes others with whom we might have associated. But the chance element may be more fundamental than this. We might simply fail to coordinate at all in any active sense, even if we have language, religion, and ethnicity in common. Whether we coordinate might turn in part on whether there is someone urging us to recognize our identity and coordinate on it. I may fully identify with my group but take no action on its and my behalf until an Alexander Herzen, Adolf Hitler, Martin Luther King, or Ruhollah Khomeini mobilizes those of us with similar identifications.

Moreover, successful mobilization may be a tipping phenomenon in large part. What would not make sense for a self-interested individual when very few are acting might begin to make sense when many others are acting.[7] At that point the relationship changes from a potentially risky prisoner's dilemma to a virtual coordination involving very nearly

no risk. Both before and after tipping, the interaction might be successful in providing the group with a collective good whose benefit is distributed among group members. It is such distributed collective goods that give individuals direct interest in identifying with the relevant group.

A prisoner's dilemma can tip into a coordination problem in at least two ways. First, when the number acting on behalf of the group interest becomes large enough, the possibilities of punishment and suppression of individual coordinators may dwindle. When too few are acting, the prospects of punishment may be great enough to make participation costly, as in the logic of collective action. If enough are acting, however, the state's capacity to respond might be swamped and the state might let the crowd go while its police or military concentrate their attentions on channeling the crowd rather than suppressing it outright.

Second, an interaction might tip when those who are cooperating can impose retribution on those not cooperating by inflicting harm on them. It might be supposed that the costs of punishment are somehow closely related to the disvalue of the punishment, as though the act of punishing were potentially a constant-sum game. For example, to impose a ten-dollar sanction on you might cost me about ten dollars. This relationship might hold in some cases, but there is no reason to suppose it holds generally. Sanctions can be radically cheaper than the harm they cause. The costs of producing a sanction and the costs of suffering one need not be in any way logically related. The story of Lebanon and Somalia is one of the trivially cheap production of dreadful harms. William Rees-Mogg wrote that, in an Irish Republican Army bombing in the City of London, a hundred pounds of Semtex did a billion pounds of damage.[8] One of the threats—seldom actualized—of antiwar groups in the United States during the Vietnam War was to do grievous damage to corporate and university installations. The people who did or threatened the harms in Lebanon and the United States arguably could not have done as much good for their efforts as they did harms. This may be typically true of virtually all of us. Indeed, if there is a very important element of seeming irrationality or extra-rationality (other than that of the is-ought fallacy, as discussed below) in nationalist and ethnic commitments, it is the fact that many people derive great pleasure from inflicting harms on certain others, including those of their own group who seem treacherously not committed to the group's ends.

This insight, that harming can be cheap, is a central underpinning for Hobbes's theory of government and its great value.[9] It also undergirds Robert Axelrod's theory of meta-norms for punishing those who fail to punish defectors in collective actions.[10] Indeed, one might suppose Axelrod's punishment schedule of bearing a cost of 2 units for 9 units of punishment inflicted is not steep enough for many contexts. *When harming is intended to be deterrent, so that it need not be coherently related in kind to the action it is to punish, the form it takes can be specifically selected for its effectiveness and cheapness.* The nuclear deterrent of the cold war era was ridiculously cheap in comparison to the harms it could have inflicted, and that is a major reason for our resorting to nuclear deterrence: We could afford it. Moreover, in collective action contexts, effective punishment can be decentralized to one-on-one and small-group actions, often more easily than effective rewards can be.

Information through Coordination

Joining a coordination with a group of people who share one's interests in some way can also produce information that makes further identification rational. To see this most clearly, we should consider a case in which there can hardly be any argument that the coordination or identification is somehow intrinsically related to the group or the object of its identification. Let us therefore consider loyalty to a sports team, which afflicts remarkably many people but seldom afflicts all those it might.

Why is anyone loyal to any sports team, such as the Chicago Cubs baseball team? Clearly, this is not a biological or in any sense native or primordial identification. Perhaps the urge to identify, to put us against them, is biological. Still, however, there remains the difficult question: Why identify with this *particular* group? We could ask this question of any group: the Cubs boosters, Armenians, or whatever. But let us focus on the Cubs boosters.

The local community of sports fans has an easy time coordinating on the local team. News media, neighborhood banter, and on-the-job talk can all focus on the Cubs. Circles of friends and other groups in the local community could not so easily sustain diverse attachments. This is not to say that people sit back and select the local team for these reasons but only that these factors are real constraints that affect the pleasures fans get from their game. They also affect how much a potential fan is likely to know about any team. The local team has privileged access, fans can know more about it, they can see and come to like its star players. Fans who go to games are virtually bound to know the local team better than they could know any other. In the end, many might become critics rather than boosters, but still they may focus their concern on the local team. Again, the reason for such a focus is that the local team is in a privileged position with respect to local loyalties.

Locally there may be claims for why the home team is special and therefore merits support. This result may be a case of the is-ought fallacy: What is is taken to be good. Fans in Chicago used to say that, among basketball players, Michael Jordan was the most beautiful to

watch. Fans in Los Angeles said Magic Johnson was most beautiful. One suspects that both judgments were at least as much derivative from local loyalties as they were causes of such loyalties. Much of their substantive basis is similar to that of the views of the ethnic loyalist. The loyalist's experience of knowing her own ethnic group gives her special entree to the pleasures of its practices and customs. From these comes the sense of comfort and well-being that seems to recommend the superiority of that group over others.

For the present discussion, the example of identification with a sports team has the odd advantage that it is purely a consumption good, it is not sensibly seen as an interest one has in the way one has an interest in a higher salary or a windfall profit. Ethnic identification might, in many contexts, actually be in one's interest. I may reasonably be said to have an interest in the resources necessary to get the daily pleasures of fans of the home team, just as I have an interest in the money necessary for satisfaction of other desires, such as those for food and shelter. In a sense, then, it is in my interest that others around me are also followers of the home team so that I may have a context in which to enjoy my own commitment to the team. Here, my interest is directly in the availability of others with similar pleasures and in successful coordination with them.

In a similar way, I might have an interest in the workings of my national or ethnic group, with which I might be especially comfortable for the simple reason that I know it well. (This issue of the epistemological comforts of home will be discussed more fully in chap. 7.) But there is also a quite different way in which I have an interest in the workings of my national or ethnic group. From the fact that, say, my ethnic group prevails politically, I may personally benefit because I may get a better job. Hence, I have an interest in the participation of others not because that participation directly gratifies me, as it does in the case of a sports team. I have that interest because I have an interest in what can be accomplished by substantial coordination. I share with others of my ethnic group in the benefits that may flow from our achieving greater political power. In this latter case, the coordination is itself a means to an end. Therefore, as is typically true of means, it may turn out finally not to lead to the benefits that the members of the group hope to get—it may fail. Coordination around the home team, on the contrary, is immediately beneficial to the individual who joins in the coordination. We may therefore expect coordinated action for ethnic or national interests will be harder to motivate than coordination on support for the local sports team.

Indeed, we may even go further to suppose recoordination around a new team will often be easy for one who moves from one city to another.

This seems especially likely if the role of the particular team is merely as a coordination point as a means to the pleasure of being a sports fan. The role of a particular ethnic identification is clearly much stronger, it is constitutive of the collective good that will benefit the loyal individual. And it cannot easily be replaced for the individual by coordination on participation in some other group that might provide an alternative route to distributed collective benefits.

Nationalism is intermediate between identification with a sports team and identification with an ethnic group. For example, French, German, and Japanese national identifications might continue to motivate those who migrate from France, Germany, and Japan; they might even be hard to give up after a generation away from home. That may in large part turn on the facts that these identifications involve ethnic as well as nationalist coordinations and that family members may still be in their original home countries. But clearly many people find it relatively easy to become American nationalists, not to say superpatriots, when they migrate to the United States. They can do so because they can plausibly see their personal interests as now associated with the successes of the United States.

One of the most important ways information affects groups is in giving group members an understanding of their common interests. This is one half of Marx's theory of revolution, which requires the development of class consciousness before there can be class-oriented action. Workers in a factory share so much time together that they begin to understand their common fate much better, not least because each can benefit from the insights of all. Peasants scattered across the countryside cannot spend enough time together to gain a comparable sense of class identity. Hence, they are unlikely to become a class for themselves.[11] They are, Marx says, like potatoes in a sack without benefit of manifold relations.[12] Hence, even when given opportunity to act for their interests, French peasants failed to do so and voted for Louis Napoleon out of failure to understand their own interests. The mothers of the Plaza de Mayo movement in Argentina had very nearly the factory experience of Marx's workers. They encountered one another repeatedly in the same revealing contexts as they went to bureaucrat after bureaucrat trying to locate their "disappeared" children. Through this experience of each other's experience, they discovered the real nature of their problem and soon mobilized to help topple the military regime that had murdered their children.[13] Part of the cause of the explosion of ethnic identification and ethnic political agitation in parts of the former Soviet Union now may be the sudden openness of the society that lets groups openly discuss and pool their knowledge and views and openly organize for political action.

Conflict from Group Coordination

Explanations of ethnic conflict often invoke emotions. Unfortunately, explaining ethnically oriented behavior as emotional may not be explaining it at all or may be explaining only aspects of it given that it happens. The part we most need to explain is why the behavior happens, why such behavior is ethnically oriented. And we need to explain why one group falls into conflict with another. Why these groups? In the preceding discussion, the process of group identification seems to be sanguine. But we know that it often leads to deep enmity, bloodshed, and even genocide and ethnic cleansing. Benign phenomena apparently produce the conditions for malign phenomena.

The benign phenomena are well understood. Among the benign sources of group coordination are language, religion, local community, mores, customs, and so forth. All of these affect individual's costs of transactions with one another and stabilize expectations. They may also affect the development and maintenance of group consciousness and, hence, identification. Characterizing these influences as economic is not standard in much of the literature on ethnicity and ethnic and other group politics. For example, it is sometimes contended that Québécois sentiment for secession derives from a non-economic fear of loss of language.[14] But loss of language is clearly an economic concern in the sense that it affects the interests of most people in the two or three current generations of Québécois. Not everything that greatly affects our interests falls into standard business accounts of monetary income and expenditure.

What is the source of conflict? Suppose two groups have formed different ethnic identifications in a society. Each of their coordinations may be innocuous and fully beneficial to their group's members. But coordination of each group provides the basis on which to build many things, including political action against the other group. To a political conflict over allocations, a coordinated group brings advantages of reduced transaction costs and, often, strong identification and agreement. Hence, *coordination of a group is potentially political.* If two groups seek to achieve collective resolutions of various issues, they may come directly into conflict with each other. My group wants its language adopted as the official language, your group wants its language adopted. My group wants more access to land and jobs for its members, and so does your group, although the supply of each might be relatively fixed. Within each group, the initial problem was one of coordination on common interests; in the larger society the eventual problem is often grim conflict of interest made grimmer by the fact that one of our groups may defeat the other.

To keep the nature of the conflicts clearer, note that there are three classes of issues. There are *positional goods*, such as public office, *distributional goods*, such as income and welfare benefits, and *interactions between these two.*[15] The Tutsi might wish to hold power in Burundi because a large percentage of available jobs—positional goods—are government jobs that must be filled but that are likely to be filled by the winners in the political conflict. They might also wish to receive certain benefits—distributional goods—from government, such as support for the expenses of maintaining cattle. And, finally, they might wish to hold power and to fill many government positions because the government has control over certain distributional goods.

Consider positional goods of public office. When Rwanda gained independence, it was to begin with a majority Hutu government. Prior to that moment, Tutsi had favored access to native offices under the colonial administration, just as they had dominated control of the nation before colonial domination. Tutsi seemingly spontaneously rose to attempt to block the transfer of power to Hutu, and Rwanda had a bloody civil war that ended with the expulsion of many Tutsi and the dominance of Hutu. The response might not have been spontaneous, however, because among those whose positions were threatened were many in positions to organize and lead a rebellion. When, a generation later, Burundi had its first democratically elected majoritarian government, thereby switching central power from Tutsi to Hutu, Tutsi again rebelled under the leadership of the Tutsi-dominated military. There have been many similar explosions in other states. For example, majority Buddhist Sinhalese governments in Sri Lanka adopted many preferences for Sinhalese. When a later government began to reverse these policies in order to equalize opportunities for Tamils in state-controlled jobs, Sinhalese rioted against the slight reduction in their status.[16] All of these actions were focused on control of positional goods.

Conflict over distributional goods is a commonplace of political life. The standard example in American politics for most of United States national history is conflict over tariffs. Agrarian interests (especially in the south and west) long wanted low tariffs on industrial goods (which they needed to buy and for which they naturally preferred to pay low prices), while industrial interests (especially in the north) wanted high tariffs to protect their domestic markets. In Nigeria, Yoruba from the northern region benefited from regional control of agricultural (especially cocoa) revenues and state control of mineral (especially oil) revenues, while the Igbo from the eastern region would have benefited from the opposite arrangements.[17] The Igbo attempted to secede as Biafra, but were crushed in the ensuing civil war.

In Yugoslavia, disproportionately many of the positional goods of

military and governmental leadership have gone to Serbians, who have also done well in receiving distributional goods allocated by the government. The latter have reputedly been disproportionately funded by the more productive Croatians and Slovenians, who therefore subsidized Serbia. That the distributional result follows in part from the positional advantages of the Serbs is a natural inference. In any case, when the Serbs under Slobodan Milosevic changed the rules and expectations on the sharing of positions, the Yugoslav civil war and break-up were virtually secured. Similarly, when the Croats chose to change the status of Serbs in Croatia, removing them from positions in the police force and reducing their status to "protected minority" rather than full citizens, the Serbo-Croatian war over Krajina was virtually secured.[18]

Note that in good economic times, state-managed distributional goods matter less because private opportunities are very good. Indeed, in very good times, even the positional goods of government may be far less attractive. But in harsh times, when the prospects of individual achievement are dim, the possibility of using government to transfer goods from others to one's own group may offer better hope of improving one's position. Failing to provide an economy that generated private opportunities, one of the great failures of socialist governments in the former Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, was almost ordained by definition. But it helped to set the stage for massive ethnic conflict upon the end of the Soviet Union. Giving a former republic autonomy opens opportunity to fill extant positions—hence, to offer positional goods. From the Baltics to the Urals to the Steppes, ethnic groups have wanted to seize government in order to allocate positions.

A similar malaise befell many, perhaps most, newly decolonized states, as in Africa. In an act of gross cynicism or stupidity, the Portuguese government transferred power in Angola to the Angolan people rather than to a government.[19] They thereby invited the three main groups to fight out the definition of that people. Many formerly colonial states have chosen to follow the statist path to economic and political development and have therefore made their populations too dependent on government for their own opportunities. The statist path might have been almost unavoidable in underdeveloped nations, because it immediately offered positions to enough people to build support for the new native governments. Alas, it may also be a sad accident of history that many of these states gained independence at the apex of belief that the Soviet Union had a better way.

Ethnic conflict often cannot be defused through control over complementary functions. The members of one group might be virtually perfect substitutes for the members of another. Hence, they may benefit best from the group's achieving full control over allocation of positions. In

general, when benefits are provided through government, they can have a strongly conflictual quality. Any policy that benefits one group through a general tax or regulatory scheme typically harms some other group relative to its position before or without the policy. Consider two forms of discrimination on the basis of group identity, one that is quite deliberate and one that is largely accidental. Both, however, are conflictual.

First, on Gary Becker's account of its economics, ethnic discrimination in employment and sales can only occur where markets are not fully competitive because discrimination is not efficient and is costly to firms that practice it.[20] Ethnic conflict in parts of the former Soviet Union is in areas from which the market is nearly absent. In some of these there may be active opposition to the market for ethnic reasons. If the opportunities from market reorganization were believed to be great enough, dominant groups and their leaders might relax their grip and let the market allocate positions, thus undercutting discrimination. If the gains from market organization do not seem compelling, then the economy offers a straight conflict between two groups, each of which would be best served by having its members given preference by government. Giving preference to members of my group reduces prospects for members of your group.

Second, when two groups speak different languages, they have in fact each coordinated on a language. If one of the groups gains a dominant position in politics or in the economy, it may discriminate against those who speak any language other than its own. This discrimination need not be economically inefficient, as straight racial discrimination typically may be. Indeed, it could be driven chiefly by concern with productivity, which is likely to be greater if members of the firm can coordinate more easily with each other and if they can communicate better with the principal clientele of the firm. Letting the two languages be used without any government regulation in favor of either may lead to the disadvantage of the speakers of the minority language. Their job opportunities may turn heavily on whether they master the majority language.

To impose rules against racial discrimination can enhance economic productivity. This may not typically be true for rules against language discrimination. To impose such rules might benefit the current generation or two of the minority language speakers. But it is likely to reduce economic efficiency. Language policy is inherently conflictual because different policies differentially affect relevant parties. The current two or three generations of speakers of the minority language will be losers if their language loses its utility. The present generations of speakers of the majority language will be losers if the minority language is kept viable.

The Is-Ought Fallacy

Most people probably know from experience what anthropologists have established very generally: People have strong community-specific beliefs about what is right and wrong and about the special goodness and rightness of their own communities. Perhaps we all occasionally share the sensibility of a letter writer to the *London Times*, who wrote, "Sir, I wonder if I am alone in being mildly irritated by people who say 'Good afternoon' in reply to my greeting of 'Good morning' during the hour between midday and lunchtime?"[21] We suppose our way is not merely our way but also the right way.

In a discussion of Melville Herskovits's views on cultural pluralism, James Fernandez writes, "Within cultures, with some interesting variations between cultures, one finds people accepting and agreeing to abide by certain norms and values to which they have been enculturated. Why they do this, Herskovits would often say, is difficult to understand."[22] Anthropologists have been read to say more than merely that different cultures have different values; they are accused of holding a brief for moral relativism, as though they claim that the different values are right for the relevant communities. Fernandez argues that Herskovits has been widely misread, perhaps especially by philosophers, as a moral relativist, an advocate of the ipso facto moral rightness of ethnocentric values for the group or society that generates them. Indeed, Bernard Williams calls this "the anthropologists' heresy, possibly the most absurd view to have been advanced even in moral philosophy."[23] On the contrary, Herskovits argues only that people do feel bound by their culture's values, not that they ought to.[24]

Without claiming finally to understand ethnocentric moral beliefs, I wish to argue that there are at least two elements to the explanation of them. First, as argued above, such beliefs grow in part from the way in which individuals gain any knowledge at all, including moral knowledge. Here, interest and rational choice play an important role in producing identification. Again, the argument is not the simplistic one that it is directly rational to adopt a particular identification with its associated community beliefs. Such an argument would often be patently false and beside the point. Rather, *the argument is that it may be rational to do what produces a particular identification and, once one has that identification, it is commonly rational to further the interests determined by that identification.*

The second element in explaining Herskovits's problem is the following. There seems to be a very nearly universal tendency of people to move from what is to what ought to be in the strong sense of concluding that what is is right or good. In this commonsense move, people deduce

an "ought" from an "is." Any such deduction is generally rejected by theorists since Hume's brilliant paragraph on the tendency in the works of moral philosophers.[25] Hume's concern was with writers who describe a state of affairs and then smuggle in an unstated moral principle from which it follows that there is something morally wrong with the state of affairs. Leaving the relevant moral principle unstated makes it superficially seem that the conclusion of moral wrongness is merely a descriptive matter of fact about the state of affairs rather than an evaluative judgment of it.

In popular versions of deducing rightness from what is, people tend to think their own way of doing something is not merely one of many possible—and arguably comparably good—ways of doing it but is the only right way to do it. The hidden assumption that is smuggled into many normative judgments is that what is is good or, more commonly, what *we* do is good. Our custom is to shake hands upon meeting, theirs is to hug and kiss. Our custom is good, theirs is bad—and also a bit funny. (The tendency to succumb to the is-ought fallacy may be radically reinforced when there are also religious differences at stake.)

Herskovits argues that "Ethnocentrism is the point of view that one's own way of life is to be preferred above all others. Flowing logically from the process of early enculturation it characterizes the way most individuals feel about their own culture, whether or not they verbalize their feeling."[26] The relevant jump from "is" to "ought" is a "simple kind of reasoning," a "natural bias." Herskovits further supposes that identification with one's own group is important for strengthening the ego. For this reason, one might conclude that ethnocentrism is good, because it is good for us. However, it may turn militant with a program of action against others, as in modern Europe and America, in which case it need no longer be benevolent, as it commonly has been in anthropological societies.[27] A Soviet journalist remarked of ethnocentric upsurges in the last days of the Soviet Union that the various groups "espouse the superiority of their own nationality" and champion "the rights of nations at the expense of the rights of the individual."[28] He clearly thought some of these groups were militant and often malign.

The move from "is" to "ought" has both an irrational and an extra-rational aspect. It is typically irrational in that there is no justifiable reason for the move, so that it may be unrelated to interest. At best it is merely a fallacy of reasoning. But it may also lead to extra-rational behavior in that one may be morally motivated by the fallacious deduction even when acting on its dictates is against one's own personal interests. One acts for a presumed greater good, perhaps the greater good of one's group or nation, but perhaps merely the greater good of others without expectation of benefits to oneself.

It seems clear that the is-ought fallacy plays a central role in much of ethnic and nationalist identification. For example, many Germans in the first half of this century did not merely think it in their people's interest to prevail in war, they thought it right for Germany to dominate other nations, they even thought they had a moral duty to do so. American leaders regularly refer to the moral duty of the United States and its citizens to act for good, a good that is often virtually defined as replication of the form of government and economy the United States has. In such a case there may be independent moral grounds for the conclusion, so that it need not follow from the is-ought fallacy. Even then, however, it seems often to be strongly reinforced by reasoning from this fallacy.

Hobsbawm wryly notes that "nationalism requires too much belief in what is patently not so."[29] This helps to achieve and maybe to justify coordination on the interests of the group as one's own interests. If the group is winning and if in victory it will allocate positions and rewards to group members, potential members may have reasons of self-interest to coordinate with the group.[30] Still, it is the belief in what is patently not so that may make nationalism possible in many cases. The core of that belief is plausibly the is-ought fallacy. The way in which such a belief is patently not so is the way a scientific or factual belief may often be called into question by the evidence of overwhelming contrary beliefs that one cannot wave aside. The nationalist who speaks of the rightness of her nation's claims cannot finally produce any argument to convince anyone other than another fellow citizen. *That the belief is not convincing, even patently not so in the sense that it would not stand serious scrutiny, however, does not entail that people cannot believe it.*

One might say that the supposed knowledge of ethnic or national superiority is corrupt at its foundations. Unfortunately, this is true also of other knowledge, perhaps of almost all knowledge of factual matters.[31] (One might insist that knowledge of mathematical and logical relations can be free of such corruption at its base.) Hence, at their foundations there is little to distinguish supposed knowledge of normative from that of factual matters. In ordinary thought the two categories may be very nearly one. Should we say that anyone who acts on such knowledge is irrational? We could, but then we would be saying that virtually everyone's actions are always irrational. It seems more natural to say that one's beliefs may have corrupt foundations but that, given those beliefs, it is reasonable to act in certain ways rather than others if one wishes to achieve particular goals. For example, much of my factual knowledge about some aspect of the world, such as geography, is in the form of collectively aggregated knowledge, much of which may be false or inaccurate,[32] but all of which together is much better than no knowledge if I wish to make my way in the world. Therefore it is rational of me to act on my poorly grounded knowledge.

But if this is true, then it may also be rational of me to act on my supposed knowledge of normative matters. In my case, because I agree with Hume's dismissal of the slide from "is" to "ought" and have made that a part of my general understanding, it would not be rational to act from some of my supposed normative knowledge even to the degree to which it is rational for me to use my likely corrupt knowledge of geography. Someone who carries through on an ethnic commitment on the claim that her ethnic group is in fact superior, even normatively superior, to others, may not be any more irrational than I am in following my geographical knowledge. She merely follows the aggregated wisdom of her ethnic group.

While I may eventually come to challenge some of my corrupt geographical knowledge when I run up against the real world, the member of the ethnic minority may never encounter anything resembling a test of her knowledge of her community's moral superiority. Nevertheless, the world may give her some confirmation of her beliefs. In daily life she comes to know far more about her group than about any other, she is naturally comfortable in it, and she is uncomfortable in strange groups. Her comfort becomes associated with the rightness of what makes for the comfort and her discomfort with the wrongness of what makes for the discomfort. In fact, however, the only substantive difference she can claim between the two groups is her greater familiarity with one than with the other.

A psychological reason for the appeal of the simplistic move of the is-ought fallacy in ethnocentric views is that it is analogous to a less inclusive variant whose conclusion, although perhaps reached by fallacious reasoning, is often correct. The variant might be expressed as follows. This is our way of doing things and therefore it is good for us. In its individual-level version, this conclusion may be true of, for example, tastes. Once I have my tastes, it is likely then good for me to have food or whatever that fits those tastes. This conclusion need not follow, because it is contingent and not simply logical. I might follow the ancient Roman aristocracy in developing a taste for wine tempered with harmful lead. But the fact of my tastes makes a difference for the goodness for me of various consumptions. The fact that a community has developed tastes or preferences for doing things in certain ways similarly makes a difference for the goodness to that community of doing things their way.

Hence, while reasoning strictly to a normative claim of the goodness or rightness of a group's mores may justify commitment to the group and even some action on its behalf, it may still be true that action will typically turn on interest. It is partly because others in the group have a

vision of its normative superiority that members can expect to benefit from the successes of the group. The threatened loss of benefits from failure of action by some provides compelling justification for their punishment. And coordination with others in the group behind strong leadership is especially of value when such coordination creates power that may be put to successful use in providing the group its collective benefit and distributing it to members. *The way we should attend to group commitments is the way we should attend to interests.* Your interests should be a consideration in social decisions, but they need not trump other considerations, such as my interests. Similarly, your group's commitments need not trump the conflicting commitments of other groups.

Note that this argument is not conceptually circular. It is not of the form: We value our group and therefore we have an interest in its success. Rather, for historical personal reasons of the particularity of our experience, our interests are causally associated with our group's interest (as in the argument above on information through coordination).

Leaders who want the masses behind them may provoke ethnic or nationalist sentiments. But perhaps it must be true that there is something already latent that can be provoked.[33] What is typically at least latent is the shared interest in the group's fate if it is to have a fate as a group. But recognition of the interest may remain latent even when the group is activated. Leaders may provoke that latent interest; but they may also, and perhaps rather more likely, provoke ethnic or nationalist sentiments grounded in an is-ought fallacy. As Lord Acton, foreshadowing Hobsbawm's remark on the patently incredible beliefs grounding nationalism, notes, "The few have not strength to achieve great changes unaided; the many have not wisdom to be moved by truth unmixed."[34]

Until recently, moral and political philosophy were almost entirely universalist in their principles. Various traditional theories, from utilitarian to Kantian to rights theories, were applied to everyone identically. There were occasional claims by Hegel and others for the rightness of a particular community's values, but moral and political theorists usually insisted on universality. For example, moral theorists, apparently misreading his positive claims about the prevalence of ethnocentric views as a moral claim for their rightness, criticized Herskovits's anthropology. Over the past decade or two, however, there has arisen a strong and articulate camp of communitarian moral thinkers who claim that the source of values is necessarily in the community and that communal values are generally good for the relevant community.

Note that the philosophers' communitarianism is not the people's. The popular moral claim for community and its values is likely to be very specifically about *this* community. It is an instance of Herskovits's ethnocentrism. It is not a moral principle about communities as such and

it may therefore be a claim that stands outside any contemporary moral or political theory. In particular, it is not itself a communitarian view. The communitarian political philosopher argues for the good of community, not for the exclusive good of *this* community. Hence, we may distinguish *philosophical* and *particularistic* communitarianisms. Philosophical communitarianism is an oddly universalistic theory about communities; particularistic communitarianism is the set of beliefs of a specific community, perhaps especially if these beliefs are restrictive. The discussions of chapters 4 through 6 are largely about particularistic communitarianism; that of chapter 7 is about philosophical communitarianism.

Herskovits claims that holding ethnocentric views helps to construct a successful ego. That is an argument that may elevate particular ethnocentric views, to make them good for those members of the relevant community whose egos benefit from the views. But this "good" is the relatively bland functional good of serving the interests of those who hold the views. It is not good in any intrinsic sense, as the ethnocentrist might think it is. Hence, our external judgment of the goodness of the ethnocentric view turns on considerations utterly unlike those that move the internal judgment of members of the ethnic group.

A striking aspect of the is-ought fallacy is the extraordinary range of concerns to which it is applied. Nationalist and ethnic identification are merely two categories of these. And there is nothing special about them that moralizes them or that suggests we ought to take the moralization of them very seriously as a moral matter. We should take the moralization seriously only in the descriptive and causal sense that we should take massive causal effects into consideration. Insofar as the is-ought moralization of nationalism and ethnicity is the only moral claim on their behalf, they have no moral claim on us. Oddly, therefore, *it may be the fact of the particular interest a nationalist or ethnic identification and action may serve, the distributed collective good it may help supply, that gives it some potential moral claim on us.* An interest account of the phenomena may therefore be the foundation of a moral account. Without interest to justify the identification, there is little more than morally accidental facts.

Irreducibly Social Goods

Many of the contemporary communitarian critics of universalist moral and political theories argue against the methodological individualist assumptions of many of such theories. They note that human identity is socially, not individually, constituted. One must readily grant that much of human identity is socially constituted. Indeed, the view that we might

individually bootstrap ourselves into our identities is ludicrous, and evidently no one argues for such a view.[35] To be made cogent, the communitarian criticism must eventually yield a principle or theory of the good in which at least some of the good is constituted by groups for their members. Charles Taylor makes a direct attempt to do just that in his argument for "irreducibly social goods."

Taylor sets up his discussion by first noting that there are many collective goods but that he is concerned with a class of goods that are not like these.[36] Military forces for national defense and a local dam against a rampaging river are collective goods. If they are provided to you, they may readily be provided to me as well without additional cost. These material goods are instrumentally good. They protect us against attack from enemies or floodwaters. The goods we derive from them are not themselves—only the military are apt to love the weapons they use, and only the Army Corps of Engineers may love an actual dam. The goods we derive are peace and unflooded homes. The material goods of military forces and dams causally produce these goods and are only therefore good themselves. If we could get peace and no floods some other way, we might dispense with the instrumental goods of military force and dams.

Taylor argues that it is quite otherwise with such goods as those of community and culture. The culture that we value is essentially linked to the good that we get from it. It is not merely a means to that good, it constitutes the good. Furthermore, he says of certain virtue-theory conceptions of particular virtues that, if these virtues are good, then the culture which makes them possible must also be good.[37] But these virtues may be goods only in a functional sense, as most of them seem to be in Aristotle, who saw different virtues for different roles. The virtues conduce to running a state well, to a good life, or even to pleasure or whatever. They do so in contingent ways. What might be a very important virtue in a hunter-gatherer society might be of little or no significance in the society of Taylor's university world. Hence, these virtues are not *per se* goods, they are only contingently goods. It does not follow that the culture that produced them is a good at all,either intrinsically or instrumentally. Driving on the right produces the intrinsic good of less dangerous and more enjoyable life in Taylor's Montreal and many other places. But driving on the right is not a good *per se*, any more than driving on the left is.

We might therefore suppose the culture of a particular people is worth fostering and preserving independently of that people's benefit from it. Is that so? Well, plausibly, no. It might be worth preserving in order to protect the current members of the society from suffering the painful fate of surviving past their culture, as Ishi, the last Yahi Indian did in early

twentieth-century California.[38] But if there were no Ishis to care for, there need be no value in preserving a Yahi culture. (There might be social scientific value in preserving it for study, but this is not relevant to Taylor's thesis.) Yet Taylor says that a particular culture is "intrinsically good."[39] Either this is an odd use of "intrinsically" or the claim is false. If the thousands of vanished cultures were intrinsically good, one might think effort should have been put into preserving them or should now be put into re-creating them. But many of those cultures were ill-suited to providing good lives to their members. Many of the cultures died from within, as individuals abandoned them for other opportunities.

Of six thousand languages currently spoken in the world, comparative linguists estimate about half will disappear within a century. This is not a mere guess or trend-line projection. There are no longer any children speaking these languages. Some linguists evidently think this is a great loss and they think something should be done to give new life to these languages. One proposed solution is to establish "centers where children are taught and encouraged to use the threatened tongues."[40] For linguists and others interested in linguistic theory, perhaps three thousand dying languages is a great loss. But it cannot be a great loss for the next generation of children from the cultures in which those languages are spoken. Children who grow up speaking, as principal language, a language spoken by only hundreds or a few thousands might reasonably feel cheated by their culture. And that culture would be intrinsically good?

Language, incidentally, is one of Taylor's irreducibly social goods. All languages may be irreducibly social, but none is intrinsically good. They are good only contingently. What makes one of them good is the contingent facts of who speaks it, what has been written in it, and what opportunities for personal growth and well-being it offers its speakers. Note that we need not argue against Taylor's claim for intrinsic goodness by asserting that the good of a particular language or culture is merely instrumental. It may actually be good. But it is only contingently good. Remarkably, we may show it is good by giving an account of how *it serves and affects individuals who consume it.* It is individuals who are beneficiaries of a culture or of membership in a language community. Hence, methodological individualists are not prima facie precluded from arguing for the goodness of cultures.

Nevertheless, it is true, as Taylor wishes to show, that such goods as language and culture are irreducibly social in important respects. An individual cannot produce a serious language. Not even a sterling committee may be able to do so, as the doleful experience with Esperanto suggests. We cannot compromise on a blend of several languages to avoid giving unfair advantage to the natives of an actual language if we

are to have an international lingua franca. A worthy language must be richly, socially produced.

But here again, we can agree with Taylor only in part. Language and many other good aspects of culture are produced collectively, they are in this sense irreducibly social. Even the possibility of enjoying many of the pleasures of the sports fan in boosting the local team is socially produced. But it does not follow from the way it is produced that the *enjoyment* of such a good is irreducibly social. The benefit I get from my culture is my benefit even though it may be constituted in part by my actions and beliefs as inculcated by that very culture. Just as with material goods, collective production or provision does not entail collective consumption. Indeed, it is hard to imagine what collective consumption would be. We can speak of collective provision of some particular thing. I pay taxes, you pay taxes, it adds up to enough to provide a new highway. I participate in the use of the English language and help to determine its drift toward new forms just as you do. But when our cultural creations are *consumed*, they are consumed by us individually. I sit in my study and read Taylor, he sits in his study and reads Hegel. Despite the individual creativity of our authors, the learning that goes into our readings and the meanings of our texts are irreducibly social. Still, our reading is highly individual.

Philosophical communitarianism is clearly an appealing theory to many people, especially including academics at world class, extremely universalistic and uncommunitarian universities, including at least one university that is renowned as a wonderful collection of idiosyncratic individuals who could not possibly constitute a community. What is the core of truth that makes philosophical communitarianism plausible enough to be appealing? Perhaps it is simply that a group may coordinate on any one of several possible ways of satisfying its members, any of which would be good for them. Once it has coordinated on a particular way, that way may then be not merely good (as many alternative ways would be) but even better than any other way for the group. That way becomes better because it can mobilize members in their interest more readily than any alternative then can.

Typically, such coordination has advantages of better communal information and understanding and of common expectations that make continued coordination easy, even effortless, and that enhance particular tastes and preferences that are satisfied by continued coordination. There is nothing more to the community good, no consideration over and above the benefits of coordination in general, including Herskovits's concern with the benefits to the individual ego, to justify any particular coordination.

Could there be any scope for irreducibly social consumption of a

good? Perhaps there could be. Love or friendship as a mutual relationship seems to depend not only on having two separate people contribute to creating and maintaining the relationship but also on having those two benefit from the relationship. That may suggest an opening to thinking of irreducibly social consumption on the larger scale of a whole polity rather than of a mere couple. So far, however, Taylor and other contemporary communitarians have not led us through that opening to anything grander.

Anthropologists often note there are different values in different societies. Communitarian theorists moralize this observation into the odd claim that each group's or society's values are right for it. I want to understand the anthropologists' finding in rational-choice terms. If it is successful, this move blocks the communitarian move to justify the content of the diverse values. But it still leaves what one might call a communitarian residue: the sunk costs of each person's upbringing and cultural knowledge. Economists sometimes consider sunk costs as merely bygones. For the communitarian residue, however, this view would be wrong to a large extent. Our sunk costs are us. Our cultural sunk costs have been transmuted into information and putative knowledge that is not merely gone. Much of it is a resource to us in our further actions—although much of it is perhaps an unfortunate resource, more nearly an obstacle, and we might wish it were gone.

Much of our sunk costs also informs our preferences. Ishi lost almost all of what mattered in his life with the disappearance of his culture. He lived through his loss in later years with seeming equanimity. Consider a very different case of loss of self through the destruction of all of a person's sunk costs. Kurt Tucholsky fled Germany when Hitler rose to power and famously said that what happened in Germany no longer was his affair. Indeed, he wrote a friend, "The world for which we have worked and to which we belonged exists no more."[41] Just how much did it exist no more? Tucholsky wrote further, "I am a writer and *how* I say my stuff is often better than *what* I say."[42] Furthermore, his adult life had been spent in social, art, and literary criticism—of the German society, arts, and literature of his time. Now that, too, was dead as was his language. In Sweden he could read books, often only in translation, and could see that many writers were dead in translation, as he thought he was. He had worked with the intensely pacifist weekly, *Die Weltbühne*, from before the time Carl von Ossietzky joined the journal. With the rise of Hitler, even his pacifism was irrelevant, as he remarked that the pacifism of the Czechs would only let the Germans roll them under that much more easily.

Tucholsky evidently craved contact with people who were part of the culture they had lost, but most of those people were struggling to survive

or were not yet sensible enough to face what Tucholsky saw—he could not understand the hundreds of thousands of Jews who stayed on in Germany or the Russians who sought good trade relations with a government that openly asserted it would as soon destroy them. Ossietzky was in a concentration camp for his writings on German rearmament and would die soon after the announcement that he had been awarded the Nobel Prize for peace. Tucholsky's brother fled via Czechoslovakia to London to the United States. Tucholsky's life dissipated before his eyes. Even in Switzerland he found himself leaving restaurants in revulsion when German Swiss commented approvingly on Hitler's actions (on his account, Tucholsky would say, "Oh pardon me—you, I thought you were a Mensch"[43]). Like Ota Benga in similar straits, cut off from himself, Tucholsky finally committed suicide at a young age.

Surely there were moral values at stake in Tucholsky's suffering through his final three years. But the desperate loss of the sunk costs of his self, of his tastes, his commitments, and his life, screams through his protestations that Germany and his past life no longer matter to him. They were almost all that he was and he was therefore almost all gone, destroyed by Hitler and by those Germans who accepted Hitler. Nothing must have mattered more to his daily existence than that Kurt Tucholsky was no longer .

Conclusion

In sum, individual identification with such groups as ethnic groups is not primordial or somehow extra-rational in its ascendancy of group over individual interests but is rational. Individuals identify with such groups because it is in their interest to do so. Individuals may find identification with their group beneficial because those who identify strongly may gain access to positions under the control of the group and because the group provides a relatively secure and comfortable environment. Individuals create their own identification with the group through the information and capacities they gain from life in the group. A group gains power from coordination of its members, power that may enable it to take action against other groups. Hence, the group may genuinely be instrumentally good for its members, who may tend, without foundation, to think it is inherently, not merely contingently, good.

Much of the detail of human nature is a social construction in each case. But this means primarily that opportunities and their costs and benefits are largely a function of what others have done or are doing. A North American can become a wealthy lawyer or entrepreneur because the relevant opportunities are there. Such options are far less readily available to a typical Kenyan or Bangladeshi, or in the early 1990s to a

typical Bosnian. But there are constraints that seem even more perversely the product of social interaction. For example, people in different societies are seemingly constrained by different norms. Such constraints seem to play a large role in defining the groups to which individuals become committed. The rise and maintenance of group identification in many and diverse groups is the subject of the next two chapters, in which the role of socially constructed norms is central. The argument for many of these norms, and especially for those that help to motivate loyalty to groups, is that they work as well as they do because they serve relevant interests, even if often in complicated ways that may be opaque to the participants.