

Kathryn A. Manzo

CREATING BOUNDARIES

**The
Politics
of
Race
and
Nation**

Creating Boundaries

The Politics of Race and Nation

Kathryn A. Manzo



BOULDER
LONDON

Paperback edition published in the United States of America in 1998 by
Lynne Rienner Publishers, Inc.
1800 30th Street, Boulder, Colorado 80301

and in the United Kingdom by
Lynne Rienner Publishers, Inc.
3 Henrietta Street, Covent Garden, London WC2E 8LU

First published in hardcover in 1996.
© 1996 by Lynne Rienner Publishers, Inc. All rights reserved

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Manzo, Kathryn A.

Creating boundaries : the politics of race and nation / by Kathryn
A. Manzo.
p. cm.

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 1-55587-564-5 (pb : alk. paper)

1. Nationalism. 2. Race awareness. I. Title.

JC311.M345 1995

320.5'4—dc20

95-41218

CIP

British Cataloguing in Publication Data

A Cataloguing in Publication record for this book
is available from the British Library.

Printed and bound in the United States of America



The paper used in this publication meets the requirements
of the American National Standard for Permanence of
Paper for Printed Library Materials Z39.48-1984.

5 4 3 2 1

Preface

This book is a personal odyssey as well as an academic project. I am a U.S. citizen by birth; a “permanent resident” of Australia (although I no longer live there); and an actual resident of Britain. Because of the place of my birth and the fact that my first father was an American, I am not officially of British descent. Yet I was raised in England by my British mother and second father, with the speeches of Enoch Powell, Irish jokes, and the music of Tamla Motown. In history classes at my Catholic high school, I learned of nothing but warfare with Europe until I optioned in medieval history, at age sixteen. For the next two years I took notes on suzerainty relations between England and France from the perspectives of King John and Richard the Lionheart. My social identity comprised three life-facts: religious affiliation (Catholic); class position (middle); and soccer team loyalty (Manchester United). I was not aware of being a member of a white race or living in a once imperial country until I left home to study at the University of Manchester.

I learned a great deal in Manchester. From Nigerian and Ghanaian friends I learned that Britain had once had an empire. From Welsh friends I learned that their first language was not English and that something called Welsh nationalism existed. And in so-called black and Asian areas I learned to enjoy reggae and the taste of curry. I don’t remember much about my European Studies degree except that I spent the third year in France. I never quite understood why so many of my fellow Britons seemed to hate the French simply because they “refused” to speak English. Nor did I ever hear a sophisticated explanation for why Manchester woke up one morning in 1981 to find shops burned in Rusholme (an area of mainly Indian settlement) and a police station under siege in Moss Side (where many students lived alongside people of Afro-Caribbean descent). Since there had been no racial tensions before (at least none that we students were aware of), the rumors soon circulating about agents provocateurs sent from London solidified quickly into accepted fact.

National identity means a great deal to some people and precious little to others. My purpose in writing this book was not to decide whether nation-

alism is inevitably good or bad (it is always both), but to understand how and why it operates. Given twenty-four years of life in Britain, twelve years in the United States, and my previous work on South Africa, I felt I could not do otherwise than set nationalist practices within a larger global and historical context than that of the individual, modern nation-state. Whatever the reader may think of this book, the writing of it has provided me with new insight into how the Britain of my experience was created; how it differed from the world of my parents; and thus how my own, composite identity has been socially constituted. I finally understand what the political fights within the family were all about.

The people I wish to acknowledge are dispersed in time and space. My biggest expression of gratitude must go to Lynne Rienner. Without her faith in my abilities the manuscript would never have been started, and without her patience it would not have been completed.

Apart from the many scholars whose thinking has shaped my own, I owe an intellectual debt to several people: first to David Campbell, for suggesting that I read about nationalism instead of ideology; second to Roxanne Doty, for her thoughtful comments on the manuscript; and third to the postgraduates at Johns Hopkins University—those who invited me to present my research and also participated in my seminars. Because their written work was as valuable to me as their classroom comments, I would like to mention Marjorie Opuni-Akuamoa, Jason Phillips, Mark Franke, Kara Shaw, and Adam Lerner.

I could not have completed the necessary research for this study without a legion of research assistants. At Williams College I was fortunate to be able to hire Tom Kimbis, Neville Alexander, Bethany Moreton, and Megan McCracken to work for me. In Australia, I exploited shamelessly the library expertise and cheerful willingness to help of my mother-in-law, Shirley Campbell. What she can do with a cryptic keyword is a wonder to behold for the CD-ROM illiterate.

Last but not least I thank the postgraduate students at the Australian National University. I was fortunate there to have the opportunity to contribute to their Identity and Governmentality lecture series, and benefited greatly from the supportive scholarly environment they fostered. My thanks to all.

—K. A. M.

Contents

<i>Preface</i>	vii
1 Nationalism and Global Politics	1
2 Spiritual and Racial Families: Nationalism as Scripture	37
3 Mimosas of the Veld: White and Rainbow Nations in South Africa	71
4 Turnip Seeds in the Parsnip Fields: British Empire and Island Nation	113
5 Wattles in the Bush: White Australia and the Multicultural Family	169
6 National Families in Global Space	219
<i>Bibliography</i>	231
<i>Index</i>	243
<i>About the Book</i>	253

Nationalism and Global Politics

The Scripture says not a word of their Rulers or Forms of Government, but only gives an account, how Mankind came to be divided into distinct Languages and Nations.

—*John Locke, 1698*¹

This book is an attempt to make sense of the power of nationalism in a world seemingly incapable of realizing homogeneous nation-states. Within the twinned disciplines of international relations and comparative politics, scholarly attention to questions of state sovereignty and national identity has been concentrated for several decades in four main subfields. One is international political economy, where a “sovereignty at bay” literature has theorized the demise of state power in the wake of the postwar expansion of transnational capital.² Another is development studies, devoted since its appearance in the late 1950s to comparative analyses of state-building and national development in Western Europe and the so-called Third World.³ The third is a more general but related literature on nations and nationalism, one that E. J. Hobsbawm thinks “entered so fruitful a phase about twenty years ago.”⁴ And finally there is critical international relations theory, a genre that “unties the sovereign state” while inviting inquiry into the construction of all political boundaries and identities.⁵

These literatures have emerged in a context of decolonization, when processes of “globalization and fragmentation are transforming the nature of political community across the world.”⁶ Although there is no simple cause and effect relationship, changing global power relations have brought challenges to the boundaries of seemingly autonomous disciplines as well as to the sovereignty of nominally independent nation-states. With one notable exception, each of the subfields mentioned has been home to critical questions about dominant intellectual traditions and practices. Should any discipline rely on conventional readings of a few key texts? Is it possible to understand and explain the world without poaching in the provinces traditionally reserved for other disciplines, especially sociology, economics, history, political theory, and comparative literature? Are all academic disciplines informed by modern assumptions and dichotomous modes of

thought? How useful are ideal type categories such as tradition and modernity, political society and state of nature, if their employers “slide from treating [them] as heuristic devices to thinking of them as fixed empirical states of affairs of a rather uniform kind”?⁷ And if the object of analysis is a phenomenon considered abnormal or pathological (Nazism, for example), where should its roots be sought?

The notable exception is the literature on nations and nationalism. Certainly there are critical voices throughout the social sciences, individual scholars who have questioned the boundary production and maintenance at work in eminent texts. The most influential theories discussed in this chapter are not themselves without merit or insight. But their capacity to account for contemporary nationalist practices is limited by too ready acceptance of modern ideas that presuppose a secular/spiritual dichotomy. Within that intellectual frame, the main preoccupation has been with the origins and spread of the modern nation-state, not with the historical nation in global context analyzed by early modern thinkers. The dominant academic tradition remains the modernization theory used in older accounts of state-building and national development, along with a sprinkling of the Hobbesian realism no longer hegemonic in international relations. And the prevailing approach to nationalism is still binary classification: the production of a fixed boundary between a modern (ungendered and nonracial) Western model of the nation and a deviant type now identified as “ethnic.”

Etienne Balibar has argued that “there is always a ‘good’ and a ‘bad’ nationalism.”⁸ But that split is internal to the concept of nationalism itself, not original to one particular branch or modernizing society. Medieval attempts to understand the origins and nature of human diversity were sparked by European travel into distant lands and given sustenance by colonial relationships. Christian thought, political philosophy, and racial science have long been home to debates about identity and difference; through cross-fertilization and interbreeding they have spawned ideas that continue to echo within nationalist thought and practice.

Nationalism has been spread through (and been dependent on) imperial networks of power and knowledge. The conditions that foster its appeal are in global politics. They are in power relations associated with the operation and management of the world economy; with the institutions and imperatives of postcolonial development; and with international relations of war and diplomacy. Neither its historical genesis nor contemporary forms can be understood unless nationalism is situated within a larger historical and political context than that of the sovereign nation-state.

Colonial powers, according to Balibar, prided themselves “on their particular humaneness, by projecting the image of racism on to the colonial practices of their rivals. . . . The other White is also the Bad White.”⁹ That colonial practice has been revived, in attempts to cast either Germany or

some part of Eastern Europe as the source of “ethnic” mythology. Unless it is acknowledged that (in Paul Gilroy’s words) “the power of [these] imperial dreams remains considerable, partly because they have been so forcefully repressed and so actively forgotten,”¹⁰ it is not possible to understand why “racism is constantly emerging out of nationalism, not only towards the exterior but towards the interior.”¹¹

Remembrance of how colonialism has shaped the national identities of colonizer *and* colonized (not just of the latter) can also contribute to the political project advocated by V. Y. Mudimbe for critical intellectuals—that of decolonizing the human and social sciences.¹²

The premise of this book is that nationalist practices, for all of their diverse forms and locations, are political religions that create boundaries separating sacred kin and alien kind. Nationalism’s dominant conceptual partners are not simply nation and state. They are also race and alien, for without the racialized kind of alien there can be no national kin. Nation and alien are relational terms, interdependent and inseparable in nationalist thought and practice.

A historically variable concept, “race” has bound man to nature (either a mythical state of human nature or other living things in the natural world) through the twin categories of species and family. Unlike Charles Darwin’s natural species, human races can transmute into ethnic groups through political selection. No boundary is ever immutable, and the alien races of today may become the ethnic minorities (or hyphenated nationals) of tomorrow.

But it is not the case—as Ernest Gellner has claimed—that “ethnicity has replaced kinship as the principal method of identity-conferment.”¹³ Nations are imagined as kinship groups under the authority of a godlike and frequently masculinized state; those outside the boundaries created and maintained by nationalism are treated as a different (sometimes feminized but also hypermasculine) species of either human or animal; and the sanctioned movement of people across nationalist boundaries is referred to as naturalization (of aliens) and transplantation (of nationals).

The following chapter shows that common spiritual and racial elements cut across the boundaries of ideal types of nations. Thereafter are three historical country studies—of South Africa, Britain, and Australia. These are designed to demonstrate in greater detail, and to seek to explain, how racialized understandings of identity and difference operate within nationalist practice. Race remains alive in collective memory and common sense, even though inscriptions of permanent difference and hierarchy are increasingly coded as either “culture” or “ethnicity.”

The remainder of this chapter situates the “fruitful” phase of writings about nations and nationalism in historical and global context. This literature serves as testimony to how national boundaries are constituted in the present and reinvented in moments of global change. But as explanations for

the power of nationalism—for a phenomenon that promises the domestic security of home and family as a way to cope with globalization—these stories are less than convincing. For it is not the specifically modern in isolation that accounts for nationalism's authority, but the continued dependence of modern political principles, like nationality, on racial and religious traditions.

MYTHICAL ORIGINS OF MODERN NATION-STATES

Recently, everyone has been harking back to his or her origins—you have noticed it, I suppose? —*Julia Kristeva, 1993*¹⁴

Nation and State

If the proliferation of books and journals is any indication, transformations attendant upon the cessation of the Cold War between the United States and the Soviet Union have done nothing to diminish growing attention to nations and nationalism. Looking forward in time, some have asked what is to become of nationality as a political principle. Historians such as William McNeill have argued that polyethnicity is destined to become the norm of the future, as it was before the French Revolution of 1789 signaled the “triumph of nationalism.”¹⁵ Then again, the incorporation of nations into larger transnational communities, as seems to have happened in Western Europe, cannot be discounted as a possibility.¹⁶ While it was once fashionable to anticipate the demise of national identities (“the more industrialism, the less nationalism,” according to Gellner¹⁷), those who predicted the rebirth of nationalism may take cold comfort from events around the globe.¹⁸

More enticing than prophecy has been the urge to look back, to an original moment when the idea (and ideal) of the nation was supposedly born and spread. Hobsbawm has argued that the nation “belongs exclusively to a particular, and historically recent, period.” As far as he is concerned, “It is a social entity only insofar as it relates to a certain kind of modern territorial state, the ‘nation-state,’ and it is pointless to discuss nation and nationality except insofar as both relate to it.”¹⁹

Many such discussions are not theoretical at all—hence the influence of a fairly small number of eminent scholars. Numerous works in the field offer little more than classification of national types, rather than theoretical accounts of the politics of nationalism across time and space.²⁰ According to Hobsbawm, the most common question is the same one that Ernest Renan asked in 1882, namely, “What is a nation?”²¹

Although there is no definitional consensus, “most serious writers” have apparently agreed with Karl Deutsch's 1953 claim that “nationality is

not biological and has little if anything to do with race.”²² The most frequently recurring element of nationhood cited is a common culture; as Gellner has expressed it, “Two men are of the same nation if and only if they share the same culture.”²³ After that comes shared time (usually historical or ancestral ties and myths but also “homogeneous, empty time”²⁴), followed by common territory or shared homeland.

Within nation-states thought of as “empirical states of affairs,” nationalism is more often located in subnational organizations and parties than in the social and political institutions of the dominant culture. One form of theoretical analysis that does exist (in studies of comparative government and electoral systems) takes the form of reflections on how democratic states can best manage the nationalist objectives of “ethnic groups” in “plural societies.”²⁵ Broader theoretical questions are also posed about the concept of nationalism—about why it proves so difficult to define,²⁶ about whether it creates nations or vice versa, and about how models of the nation invented in parts of the Western world (usually in England, France, or what is now the United States) were transformed in the process of dissemination from one society to another.²⁷

Language and Capital

It is language, more than land and history, that provides the essential form of belonging, which is to be understood.

—Michael Ignatieff, 1993²⁸

Efforts to explain the origins of the national idea in the West typically focus on what Liah Greenfeld has called its “specificity,”²⁹ on what it did *not* share with traditional (religious and racial) conceptions of identity. Benedict Anderson, for example, has claimed that “from the start the nation was conceived in language, not in blood, and one could be ‘invited into’ the imagined community.”³⁰ The distinction between language and kinship, however, has never been that stark. It is not only that ideas about “common stock” have been disseminated in popular languages and mutual intelligibility deemed a marker of relatedness. European languages were themselves divided into kinship groups at the beginning of the seventeenth century. According to Yuri Slezkine:

In 1610, Joseph Justus Scaliger had divided the European languages into four major families: Greek, Romance, Germanic, and Slavic. . . . All languages and hence all nations had parents, siblings, and offspring (dialects); all linguistic elements could be divided between congenital and acquired; hence a correct method of distinguishing between the two would result in flawless genealogy.³¹

National identity, for Anderson, was made possible by a conception of modern time and then circulated by nationalists using capitalist modes of communication. It was incompatible with the messianic time of the medieval era and with the Christian communities and dynastic realms the nation-state supplanted. To be successful, the nation seemingly required “a secular transformation of fatality into continuity, contingency into meaning.”³² It also needed the fall of Latin as a sacred language and its displacement by territorially based vernaculars.³³

Industrial capitalism purportedly required a common education system and uniform language; in modern factories and commercial print a mass citizenry was invented and manufactured. Meanwhile, the state was gaining authority over education, religion, and law. For Gellner the role of the educative state in developing a common culture, rather than other activities such as taxation, warfare, or bureaucratic incorporation, enabled the engendering of nations.³⁴

The relationship of capitalism to nationalism needs to be rethought—as Gellner’s later work acknowledges.³⁵ Neither the structural needs of capitalism nor its capacity to disseminate an original idea in a shared tongue were deemed productive of nationalism in the writings of early modern thinkers such as Marx, Lenin, and Weber. Yet if there is no simple causal connection between them, the two great “isms” of the modern age do share three common features.

First, both capitalism and nationalism are modes of life and systems of meaning now existing on a global scale. They constitute a global “culture” if that term is understood in the way that Gellner has used it, to mean “a system of ideas and signs and associations and ways of behaving and communicating.”³⁶ Production never ceases within these global cultures; it occurs daily in multiple sites that are linked together to some extent in what Immanuel Wallerstein has called a world-system. Organizational structures both within political boundaries (state machineries) and across them (transnational alliances of classes and countries) work to institutionalize relations of power by managing conflicts and repressing opposition.³⁷

But as Max Weber recognized, the most effective way to maintain culture that is “in reality so little a matter of course” is not to seek “a conscious acceptance” of its maxims, let alone to silence dissent. Cultures that present themselves to the individual as “an unalterable order of things in which he must live” appear most natural and outside of conscious thought. Unconscious common sense is the product of “a long and arduous process of education,”³⁸ one that operates continuously in social institutions (schools, universities, media, and churches, for example) that need not be under state authority in order to be effective.

Second, both capitalism and nationalism privilege monoculture over diversity. The uniform trees, seeds, and crops of capitalist agriculture are

analogous to the culturally homogeneous citizens of the idealized nation-state.³⁹ Yet both are uneven in that for all their seeming triumph, they continue to coexist with alternative ways of being and knowing in the world. Global cultures have been resisted, and not every site of production has yet been captured by the world-system. Contemporary struggles against monoculture, for example, inhere in attachments to biodiversity and to multicultural societies.

Third, and perhaps most important, capitalism and nationalism are combined in that neither exists in pure form, devoid of traces of earlier modes of life or conceptions of identity. Renan described “forgetting” as “a crucial factor in the creation of a nation.”⁴⁰ The body of writings that Anthony Smith has called “modernist”⁴¹ has forgotten many of the practices of “disavowal, displacement, exclusion, and cultural contestation”⁴² at work in the constitution of modern nation-states. Also forgotten are the racial and religious traditions that still inform nationalist thinking about human diversity, nature, and origins. As Alejandro Portes once said, “Secular modernity lacks sufficient cultural depth to match the force of great national traditions.”⁴³

James Kellas has pointed out that “‘God’s People’ is a favorite idea of nationalists.”⁴⁴ Yet even those nationalisms that make no mention of a god (Christian or otherwise) treat the nation as sacred and demand sacrifice in its name. Nationalism is secular to the extent that religious difference is tolerated and conversion is not a condition of naturalization. But when it treats the immortalized nation as an entity worth dying for—as the ultimate object of individual loyalty—nationalism operates as a political religion.

Western models of the nation are *less secular* than they often appear, in part because the idea of the nation as a unilingual “family” of common descent derives from Christian scripture. When the Second Treasons Act of 1571 in England mentioned “nation,” it still meant “no more than a family of kin.”⁴⁵ The widening of the concept of nationhood to embrace all those in a given polity or territory may be traceable in part to the Authorized Version of the King James Bible. The Old Testament was borrowed from and modified in the course of the Protestant Reformation.⁴⁶ “By the eighteenth century,” according to Slezkine,

the rise of national states, national vernaculars, and national churches had resulted in the nationalization of Paradise (claims had been made that Adam and Eve spoke Flemish, French, and Swedish, among others), and then in the appearance of multiple autonomous paradises (all nations/languages had their own excellent ancestors).⁴⁷

For Greenfeld, modernity is a product of nationalism—of the nationalist location of individual identity within a sovereign people—and not the other way around. By 1650 the term *nation* already meant “the sovereign people of England.” It later acquired three other synonyms: *country*, *com-*

monwealth, and *empire*.⁴⁸ Neither nationalism nor modernity can thus be understood without an analysis of how all those concepts—family, nation, country, commonwealth, empire, and race—have overlapped in nationalist thought and practice.

Western models are *more racial* than they often seem (and let it be remembered that Protestant Britain and Catholic France have been models of racial enmity toward *each other*), in part because the word *race* entered the English language in 1508 as a synonym for family lineage. English-language Bibles of the period were consistent with other writings in their use of the term *nation* as interchangeable with *tribe* (a people connected by kinship and language), and with *race*.⁴⁹ Race (like nation) has come to be associated since then with culture, time, and geopolitical space. But its earliest attachment to family, nation, and fixed human difference has not been severed. It has been commercially reproduced in publications such as government documents, children's stories, travelers' tales from distant lands, and popular books, newspapers, and magazines.

Accounts that find the origins of the national idea in modernity have sprouted only since the decolonization of European empires and the onset of the Cold War, not since the dawn of the modern age. The following section shows that Enlightenment principles, revolutionary ideals, and vernacular languages have not always been treated as central to the national idea in the West. Nor has binary classification always been the norm.

NATIONALISM AND MODERNITY

To treat nations as modern is often to presume that they did not exist (indeed were not even conceived) prior to a recent and historically discrete period. Leaving aside for the moment the question of whether modernity is simply an epoch (as opposed to a series of attitudes and orientations toward the world), it is important to know when the modern age—and thus nationalism—is supposed to have begun. The answer is by no means obvious, depending as it does on whether the time before modernity is described as ancient, medieval, feudal, or traditional. But as in the work of Michel Foucault (which concerns itself with such novelties as “modern rituals of execution”),⁵⁰ the literature on nations and nationalism tends to locate modernity's birthday somewhere around the end of the eighteenth century. Thanks largely to the fame of Anderson's *Imagined Communities*, the notion that the national idea “was born in an age in which Enlightenment and Revolution were destroying the legitimacy of the divinely ordered, hierarchical dynastic realm” continues to circulate.⁵¹

Yet according to Greenfeld, “The emergence of nationalism predated the development of every significant component of modernization.”⁵² Self-

consciously indebted to Max Weber,⁵³ Greenfeld has claimed that “it is possible to locate the emergence of national sentiment in England in the first third of the sixteenth century.” While that sentiment initially took a benign cultural form (a Chaucerian revival), it was simultaneously manifested in anti-alien feeling (a riot against foreign artisans in 1517 in London) and in diatribes against agents of the Holy Roman Empire.⁵⁴

Marc Shell’s *Children of the Earth* also shows that a vision of an English nation-state was manifest in the writings of Henry VIII’s daughter Elizabeth.⁵⁵ The conceptual apparatus of nationalism could not have depended on modern institutions, because it already existed in written form, in what Shell has called “the political fictions of premodern familial nationalism.”⁵⁶

Those whom Greenfeld has described as “the founding fathers of the discipline of sociology”—intellectuals whose life’s work it was “to account for the emergence of modern society”—did not treat the national idea as peculiarly modern either.⁵⁷ In his analysis and critique of a period of human history defined (for him at least) by the development of “modern private property,” Karl Marx describes the preceding era as either “feudal” or as the Middle Ages. Written in the mid-nineteenth century, Marx and Engels’s “The German Ideology” located the conditions of “this new phase” in power relations that were global in scope. Increased trade and communications between hitherto isolated towns, in combination with a rapid rise in manufacturing, brought “the various nations . . . into a competitive relationship” with each other for the first time. Previously “inoffensive exchange” was replaced by struggles for trade, which were “fought out in wars.”

Commercial struggle was apparently fueled by “the colonization of the newly discovered countries” that began “with the discovery of America and the sea-route to the East Indies” in 1492. Between the middle of the seventeenth and the end of the eighteenth century, “the nation dominant in sea trade and colonial power” (England) had secured for itself “a relative world market” as well as “freedom of competition inside the nation” and “the science of mechanics perfected by Newton.” Thus was England, for Marx, the most advanced of the “civilized nations.” Although soon joined by others, it was England that led in the development of a modern state, modern capital, a modern world market, modern and large industrial cities, modern peoples, and modern society.⁵⁸

Given his attempt to explain why “a definite *mode of life*”⁵⁹ instantiated by England emerged out of the disintegration of feudalism, it seems fair to describe Marx as a theorist of modernity. It is noteworthy then that when Marx wrote of “modern nations” he contrasted them to “the ancients,” not to feudal institutions.⁶⁰ By describing Phoenicians “in primitive history” as a nation,⁶¹ Marx clearly did not consider nation to be a modern concept.

More obviously modern (and significant) for Marx was “civil society,”

an eighteenth-century and bourgeois conception that “has as its premises and basis the simple family and the multiple, the so-called tribe.”⁶² According to contemporary Marxists such as Nigel Harris, Marx had little to say about nationalism because he considered it a passing phase and less significant, in the long run, than transnational proletarian solidarity.⁶³ But the “simple family” has been a core element in nationalist renderings of identity, and other themes central to Marx’s discussions of state and civil society—such as sovereignty and democracy—have figured prominently in more recent accounts of nationalism. A consideration of Marx’s analyses of “bourgeois ideology” sheds important light on the religious foundations of modern political concepts.

In terms reminiscent of Anderson, Marx bemoaned the fact that in the state, “man is the imaginary member of an imaginary sovereignty, divested of his real, individual life, and infused with an unreal universality.”⁶⁴ For Marx the novel political idea (and ideal) fostered by bourgeois intellectuals was political democracy; it was first realized in states emancipated from the imperial power of the Catholic Church. Yet Marx’s essay “On the Jewish Question” contains an important insight into the purported secularity of the modern “political state.”

Marx argued that the “secular maxim” underpinning political democracy was an existing religious principle: the Christian ideal of man as “a sovereign being, a supreme being.” Marx insisted that “the perfected Christian state” is the atheistic democratic state, the one that has effectively displaced religion onto civil society and “not the so-called *Christian* state which acknowledges Christianity as its basis.” A Christian understanding of sovereignty was for Marx the spiritual foundation of modern political society. It enabled the state to occupy the same spiritual place that heaven (for Christians) occupies in relation to earth.⁶⁵

Marx’s work calls into question any presumption of a firm boundary between nationalism and religion, because it highlights the indebtedness of secular political principles—like democracy—to Christian conceptions of identity. The Christian ideal of human sovereignty that Marx alluded to owes more to the Protestant Reformation than to the teachings of Jesus Christ himself. But such a principle is modern only if modernity is pushed back into the sixteenth century, into the temporal domain referred to by Marx as the Middle Ages.

What then of a Marxian relationship between capitalism and nationalism? Dominant ideas are always those through which a ruling class expresses its interests as the general interest, according to Marx.⁶⁶ It could be inferred from this that the national idea has come to dominate global political life thanks to the “conceptive ideologists” (Marx’s term) at work for transnational capital.⁶⁷ The problem with this formulation is that as capitalism has become globalized it has become less unified; national boundaries

may serve the interests of some capitalists while being antithetical to the needs of others. And particularly in its more virulently racist formulations, nationalism has been practiced by the ideologues of organized labor.

Capitalism could have had more to do with nationalism in the nineteenth century than it does at the end of the twentieth. Following Marx, Lenin posited that “one of the modern requirements of capitalism is undoubtedly the greatest possible national uniformity of the population, for nationality and language identity are an important factor making for the complete conquest of the home market and for complete freedom of economic intercourse.” Yet Lenin went on to insist that “the national composition of the population” is “*one of the very important economic factors, but not the sole and not the most important factor*” (his emphasis). What capitalism most needed to function, for Lenin, was the free movement of labor between villages and towns. Since the consequence of labor mobility was the appearance in urban locations of “mixed populations,” homogeneity was not a prerequisite of production.⁶⁸

The centrality of *global* movement to nationalism (as well as to capitalism) will be considered later in the chapter. But first, a brief reference to Weber’s work on “modern culture” is in order. Unlike Marx, Weber believed that “capitalism and capitalistic enterprises” have existed throughout human history—“in China, India, Babylon, Egypt, Mediterranean antiquity, and the Middle Ages, as well as in modern times.”⁶⁹ What for Weber was peculiarly Western and modern was a form of capitalist organization typified by four principal features: “the rational capitalist organization of (formally) free labor”; “the separation of business from the household”; “rational book-keeping”; and “our legal separation of corporate from personal property.”⁷⁰

Theoretical differences between Marx and Weber are less significant for present purposes than their shared assessments of modernity. Both considered modern capitalism to be fundamentally “dependent on the peculiarities of modern science.”⁷¹ Both analyzed the spiritual basis of modern life; the principle of individual sovereignty was the spirit of civil society for Marx, whereas for Weber, Calvin’s conception of the calling was the spirit of capitalism. And each of them bemoaned the human costs of modern capitalist production, a system that for Weber ran on the subordination of man to economic acquisition.

The “reversal of what we should call the natural relationship” of man to money⁷² could be effected, Weber felt, only with the overthrow of a supposedly natural trait that he designated “traditionalism.” The “idyllic state” in which non-Calvinist man supposedly lived was destroyed for Weber once “the old leisurely and comfortable attitude toward life gave way to a hard frugality.”⁷³ Fanciful indeed may have been Weber’s rendition of man’s “natural” disposition. But it seems clear that he (like Marx) deemed modern man to be an impoverished version of a human being.