

## LIBERAL NATIONALISM – A CRITIQUE

Monika Kirloskar-Steinbach

**Abstract.** Today, political philosophy is witness to liberal justifications of nationalism. Liberal nationalists regard nationalism as a fundamental good which is instrumental in forming individual identity. They argue that liberals should not dismiss nationalism as a primitive, tribal urge but instead learn from it. In fact the sense of belongingness and relatedness which is so constitutive of nationalism could help counteract liberal maladies. Liberal nationalists urge one to consider nationalism not as opposed to reason but as an enriching force which can eliminate the alienation associated with modernity.

This paper tries to show that a normative justification of liberal nationalism proves to be problematic on various counts. It does not fare well with liberal morality with its emphasis on reason and reflection. Moreover, a priority to the nation, as opposed to the state, could also have consequences for liberal institutions. They would have to take a back seat and hope that in crucial times individual nations decide to stand by them.

*“What is the Nation? It is the aspect of a whole people as an organised power. This organisation incessantly keeps up the insistence of the population on becoming strong and efficient. But this strenuous effort after strength and efficiency drains man’s energy from his higher nature where he is self-sacrificing and creative. For thereby man’s power of sacrifice is diverted from his ultimate object, which is moral, to the maintenance of this organisation, which is mechanical (...) He feels relieved of the urging of his conscience when he can transfer his responsibility to this machine which is the creation of his intellect and not of his complete moral personality” (Tagore 1995: 66–67).*

### Liberal nationalism – a critique

Justifications of nationalism seem to be making a headway in political philosophy<sup>1</sup>. Its proponents contend that liberalism and nationalism are not

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<sup>1</sup> See especially Hurka 1997; Miller 1997; Tamir 1993. Kymlicka (1995) offers a similar view although he carefully avoids the term ‘nationalism’ and favours the term ‘community’ instead. In Nielsen’s (1999) “rooted” cosmopolitanism, social liberal commitments are considered to be more weightier than nationalistic ones.

necessarily mutually exclusive and that they can in fact be made compatible. Liberal nationalists urge one to consider nationalism not as the pathology of modernity but as an answer to its malaise. For them, nationalism is more than an infantile disease, more than “the measles of mankind” as Einstein once proclaimed it to be. They argue that nationalism is a legitimate way of understanding one’s role and place in life. They strive for a normative justification of nationalism which lies within liberal limits. The main claim which seems to be involved here is that as long as a nationalism abhors violence and propagates liberal rights and equal citizenship for all citizens of its state, its philosophical credentials can be considered to be sound.

This essay attempts to show that liberal nationalism is more problematic than it is made out to be. For the sake of clarity, I will mainly concentrate on a very consequent defence of liberal nationalism propounded by Yael Tamir. Since most of the arguments which are interesting from a philosophical point of view are found in her book ‘Liberal Nationalism’, I will often refer to it along with her other essays on the subject.

At the very outset I would like to point out that I refer only to contemporary liberal theory in my frequent usage of the word ‘liberalism’ or ‘liberal(s)’. Liberalism is understood in this paper as a ‘family of positions’ with its multifarious strands being concerned about individual rights. Contemporary liberal theorists try to envisage a framework (rule of law, democracy, etc.) which will protect these rights and ensure human flourishing. After having sketched the main ideas involved in Tamir’s liberal nationalism, I will try to work out the inherent tension between liberalism and nationalism, especially when one presumes that there are many different nations in one state. This tension comes to light when one considers liberal arguments for the defence of liberal institutions. The contention of this paper is that a liberal nationalism *à la* Tamir fails to resolve this tension.

### **Tamir’s liberal nationalism**

Tamir tries to “translate” nationalistic arguments into liberal language since she wants to explore ways in which liberalism can profit from nationalism. Her liberal nationalism thus combines a “commitment to personal autonomy and individual rights” with “the importance of membership in human communities in general, and national communities in particular” (Tamir 1993:35). By using terms of communitarian discourse as a stepping stone, she hopes to seek a union between nationalism’s positive aspects like belonging, loyalty, and solidarity and liberal ideals like personal choice, reflection, and autonomy<sup>2</sup>.

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<sup>2</sup> Incidentally, Tamir (1997:229) believes that in times of crisis liberal states invoke a nationalist discourse in order to make individuals risk their lives for the state. This way liberal states, which conceive of themselves as having arisen due to contractual agreements, hope to compensate for their lack of an ideological foundation.

Before we proceed further, let us clarify what Tamir means by a nation. According to her, self-awareness of a group, a subjective “we-feeling” is a necessary condition of a nation (Tamir 1993:65–66; 1995:422;1996:87). A number of shared objective features of a nation like religion, territory, language, etc. are thought of as being sufficient. A nation is thus said to be a community conscious of its particularistic existence, whereby members of this nation constitute an exclusive, cultural community. Individual members are thought of as being bound to each other by fraternal ties. This fraternity arises because the national community regards itself as a community of common fate and descent (Tamir 1996:86). Every member chooses to consciously belong to the nation in question and renews this plebiscite daily. Nations are thus considered as cultural groups which are not only products of history but also of human will<sup>3</sup>.

#### *National membership and associative obligations*

Tamir (1993:32–36;1997:237) regards membership in a national community as part of the basic quality of being human. As a “contextual” being, one cannot hope to pontificate on communal and moral attachments in a neutral and impartial fashion. An Archimedean point of departure is not possible. Yet humans can choose and reflect on their moral and communal identities. They often break cultural ties and move to other national communities because they believe that these communities offer a better way of living<sup>4</sup>. That is why she urges us to respect national membership since it represents a free choice of an individual. This means that there is a free exchange of members between nations with individuals moving to nations which are likely to offer them a better way of life (see below).

Associative obligations to fellow members play a constitutive role in her liberal nationalism. Membership in a nation gives rise to them. “Identity generates obligations and obligations define identity” (Tamir 1997:233). They arise due to the simple fact that one is a member of a particular nation. They are independent of the moral worth of this association<sup>5</sup>. Furthermore, obligations towards others arise neither because one loves nor cares for fellow members, but simply because of one’s esteem for the nation. The main driving force behind this “morality of community” seems to be self-interest. But more of that later. This is said to be compatible with the claim that *my* national heritage has to be preserved since it is important to *me*

<sup>3</sup> Miller’s (1997:22–27) definition of a nation is rather similar. However, his discussion of nationalism relies on statist assumptions.

<sup>4</sup> Tamir (1993:26) equates the concept of culture with that of the nation. Accordingly, nations can be distinguished from one another only if they have different cultures. By culture she means “patterns of behaviour, language, norms, myths, and symbols that enable mutual recognition” (Tamir 1993:68). Does this imply that every culture is to be understood as a nation? Can there be cultures which are not nations? Or is national membership merely a sub-type of cultural membership?

<sup>5</sup> Hurka’s (1997) justification of national partiality is considerably different. He firstly considers only nation-states and secondly emphasises that this partiality is justified only when there is an objective basis for this partiality. This option is not open to Tamir.

(Tamir 1993:101). Tamir is quick to point out that this should not be interpreted as a hidden chauvinism nor does she want to imply a hierarchy of life-forms. Instead she is content with the psychological explanation that individuals will take part in a communal life only if they are convinced that it is the best of all possible options.

Tamir hopes that individual choice and communal membership can be balanced by a neutral state. One of the main tasks of this state is to guarantee that every nation in its midst is sufficiently represented in its public sphere. Since nations consist of individuals who enjoy rights, nations too have rights. In this case, they have a right to self-expression in the public sphere. Even authoritarian nations enjoy this right, regardless of the injustice they have caused in the past (Tamir 1993:11). They should be respected in the public realm since individuals value their membership even in this nation. The plurality of cultures which thus ensues is said to be very valuable since it offers the individual a richer palette of options.

This leads us to a very important point in Tamir's argumentation. She rejects the concept of a nation-state, where one state is thought of as consisting of only one nation (Tamir 1996:86). She is right in believing that the national right to self-determination can be meaningfully realised in the public arena of a state, with each nation claiming a part of this realm. This is better than each nation striving for a separate state which it can call its own.

It is important to emphasise that in this line of thinking only the state is said to be able take up an egalitarian, neutral stand. Individual members do not seem to have the power to abstract from their embeddedness or situatedness, since they view the world only through the spectacles given to them by their nation (Tamir 1993:106). However, it remains unclear as to who makes up Tamir's neutral state since she claims that individuals are bound by their national or communal framework and cannot hope to break away from it.

The main tenets of Tamir's liberal nationalism sketched so far, indicate how difficult it is to reconcile it with liberal morality. Liberal morality begins with the individual. Each human is considered to be endowed with reason and moral powers. Her place of birth, nation, race etc. are at best of secondary importance<sup>6</sup>. It should be noted that the key liberal concepts like autonomy and human rights, which seem to be important even to Tamir, presuppose this view of a human being. Morality consists of rules which every rational being would consent to under optimal conditions. These rules are thought of as being neutral to all parties and life-forms. Every person is regarded as being equal since each is of intrinsic moral worth. People have the capacity to direct their lives according to their own terms. Liberal institutions are designed in such a way that a person can exercise freedom. It is also important to note that liberal institutions have to be justified at the tribunal of an individual's reason (see below). This core of liberal morality

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<sup>6</sup> One could be tempted to dismiss the priority of humanity over individual differences as a theoretical fiction which is not backed up by reality. Ignatieff (1999:100–101) rightly points out that it is a "valuable fiction" in liberal theory and plays a crucial role in sustaining liberal institutions.

cannot be reconciled with Tamir's national claims. Pre-given obligations towards a nation which are thought of as being independent of the actions of this nation are not subjected to reason.

*The partial morality of community*

Associative obligations are problematic enough. But Tamir's claim goes further. According to her "morality of community", members are asked to prefer or be partial to fellow members. As she herself puts it (Tamir 1993:99):

*"When faced with an exclusive choice of alternatives between helping strangers or members of my group – be it my family, my community, or my nation – I have a stronger moral duty to help those to whom I feel close than to help strangers".*

She thinks that sound arguments can be found for special obligations towards national members. Her arguments can be broadly divided into two. Her first argument seems to be from *intuition*. One somehow feels that there is reason enough to be partial to people with whom one shares one's life. Her second argument is that of *self-realisation*. She believes that since a human life is short, it is not possible to fulfil all of one's wishes in a single life. This weakness is compensated by identifying with others. In fact, ties of care and co-operation between members are said to arise due to this need. One shares their joys and sorrows. That is what motivates one to help other members and care about them. At the same time, this is also a pre-condition for the personal enjoyment of goods resulting from a communal life (Tamir 1993:97). An impartiality towards all humans, i.e. also towards those one does not identify with, is therefore not possible.

Both these arguments are not convincing enough. Firstly, there is not enough reason to believe that intuitions can be unconditionally regarded as the starting point of ethical considerations. Intuitions that one's own nation incorporates a superior life-form and that members of other nations are inferior are sadly not unknown to the history of nationalism. Further, as Weinstock (1999:523) points out, one should be particularly cautious of intuitive beliefs concerning national partiality since they could have arisen due to the influence of unjust institutions. Tamir also does not clarify what she means by preferring those with whom one shares one's life. It is quite possible that members of a group living in close physical proximity indeed have many things in common without all of them being members of the same nation. It is equally likely that members of a nation only imagine that they have a lot in common. Concrete experiences however reveal that this is not the case.

The second argument which is based on rational egoism is also not satisfying<sup>7</sup>. From the fact that a person profits from one's culture, one cannot deduce that she is

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<sup>7</sup> According to Tamir, a morality of community will help to "transcend egoistic concerns" and mutual disinterestedness by promoting care and cooperation. In extreme circumstances, one would be willing to sacrifice one's life for the common good (Tamir 1999:83). Since this applies only to members, all the arguments advanced in favour of the morality of community seem to promote rational egoism of one group vs. the other.

obliged to prefer one's fellow members, that she in fact has a moral duty towards them. For Tamir national membership is instrumental in guaranteeing human flourishing. This is the reason why nationalism is regarded as a fundamental good. But has national membership proved to be fruitful to all its members? Is there reason enough to believe that the positive net results of nationalism outweigh its negative net results like chauvinism, marginalization of non-members etc.? I think if this claim is made it could be contested.

Moreover, both the arguments also seem to imply a society in which members only profit from each other's company. This ignores the fact that every society has people (the young, the aged, the sick, and others) who cannot actively contribute to their society. In fact, they have to depend on help from others. If societies were only to be thought of as profit-making enterprises, with each person actively contributing to the whole, such groups could stand the risk of being marginalized.

Tamir does not seem to foresee any such problems. She is convinced that nations can fulfil their global obligations if they follow certain simple rules. Her rules of the game are: If only non-members are in need of aid, one should act as per general moral rules. The same also holds for situations in which only members need help. However, if members and non-members are desperately in need of aid, one should help members first. It is important according to her that one is then impartial towards members. The duty towards fellow members can be overridden only when the "needs of strangers are significantly more urgent than those of members" (Tamir 1993:99). This seems to be a tall order. In situations of need, one's current needs could be thought of as being more pressing than that of others. How can one then 'objectively' establish the needs of strangers? One wonders why people, whose sole motivation till now was self-interest, should feel the urge to fulfil their global obligations even though they stand to gain nothing by fulfilling them.

What happens when a nation proclaims that all the other nations are equally badly off and that members should continue being partial to other members? Imagine a shortage of resources within a state. Is a nation according to Tamir justified in proclaiming the lion's share for itself? Members of this nation could argue that their needs are just as urgent as those of others in the same state and the next shortage will come anyway. In fact they could argue *à la* Tamir that the future of their nation can be guaranteed only if their survival is ensured. Why should this nation then even get involved in negotiations concerning a fair distribution of resources? Tamir would argue that members not only value their national identity but also strive for a harmony of all nations since they know how valuable national membership is to them. One is however forced to take note of the fact that such a harmonious co-existence of nations has remained a pipe dream.

Tamir's conception of associative obligations could also be a source of worry for the individual if she insists on her freedom of choice. One could think of many situations in which associative obligations clash with an individual's choice and autonomy. Take a situation in which a person can help only another single person.

As per Tamir's reasoning, this person A has a moral duty to help another person B, simply because B is also a member of the same nation. Person A is apparently not free to choose whom she wants to help. The argument seems to be that even in this case, A cannot neglect her duties towards the nation (see below). By helping B, A fulfils one duty, namely she ensures the future of their nation. But what if B is a person who is against the liberal state? What if B believes that this liberal state has to be done away with? Does A still have the moral duty to help B even if she does not want to?

A person's associative obligations towards the nation seem to arise mainly due to her birth in a particular nation, even if she chooses not to belong to it later on in life. A feeling of belonging and identification seem to characterise this individual's relationship with the whole. As Tamir says, the individual has to voluntarily accept her obligations before it could be claimed that she has taken up responsibility for the fate of her nation. Identification leads to the acceptance of obligations and vice versa. From the fact that a person continues to be in a nation she presumes that she is a willing member and that she finds her membership valuable.

Tamir's individual seems to have the following main rights as a member of a national community: the right to change her national identity thus breaking all ties with the nation, the right to culture if she continues to remain in the nation, and the right to a good life which is due to the national culture. The individual also seems to have the following duties towards her nation: to be loyal to it, to accept its goals and pursue them, to defend it in times of emergency, to ensure the future of the nation by procreating and by being partial to one's fellow members etc. One could also claim that associative duties imply that a member should be ready to die for her nation if called to do so. If need be, she should be ready to avenge misdeeds done to it in the past.

Nations seem to lay a lot of emphasis on their immortality, as Tamir points out herself. This apparently suits the individual who on her part seeks to combat her mortality by being an "organic" part of an immortal nation. Membership in a nation is said to enable the individual to find a place "in an uninterrupted chain of being" (Tamir 1995:432). It is compared to a partnership spanning several generations, with each generation caring for the older. Future generations thus strive to be like their ancestors. She points out that the idea of paying debts to one's ancestors by staying within the fold can be thought of as being "philosophically awkward". Yet it is an essential part of a national identity (Tamir 1993:29). Given this situation, will nations then tolerate members who decide to leave them, especially when they emphasise their own "transgenerational, genealogical continuity" (Tamir 1995:432; 1996:86)? Can nations be assured of the fact that their new members will carry out their duties just as effectively as the former ones? And what about authoritarian nations present in a liberal state? Will their ex-members have to fear repercussions?

Tamir seems to believe that a nation need not fear a paucity of members. There could be new members who identify with the nation and decide to join it. Identifying with a nation could mean that one accepts the aims of the nation like

assuring its future, the well-being of its members and the flourishing of its culture (Tamir 1993:88). In fact, new members are accepted only when they can prove that they identify with the nation. Does this mean that one has to completely give up the customs, norms, language of the old nation before one adopts those of the new one? Remember, national and cultural communities are used interchangeably. If national identity is said to play a fundamental role in the identity of a person can one just give up the older identity like a pair of old clothes?

Another problematic aspect is the self-image of a nation. The individual cannot exercise her choice and accept only selective parts of a nation's past. She is not free to claim that she accepts only those parts because she identifies with them. In fact, she has to accept the self-image of a nation<sup>8</sup>. This in turn could hamper her individual choice.

I also believe that Tamir's liberal state will have a hard time with the nations present in its midst. As we have already seen, this state is expected to be neutral and egalitarian and yet consists of citizens who cannot seem to abstract from their givens. These citizens are also characterised by the morality of the community according to which it is their moral duty to prefer fellow members. Can the liberal state hope that its citizens be loyal to it? In Tamir's defence, it could be argued that individuals not only have associative obligations towards their nation but also towards this state. How is an individual supposed to act when both the obligations clash? Should she resort to her reason? One does find stray comments which suggest that moral obligations are sometimes weightier than others. Yet Tamir remains decidedly vague about the concrete circumstances. Her liberal state cannot hope that the dice is cast in its favour:

*"Since no nation can assume it will remain united forever, nations have a reason to join political arrangements in which such splits will cause them minimal harm"* (Tamir 1993:153).

This statement is particularly surprising for a liberal nationalism which hopes to vindicate liberal ideals. This seems to suggest that Tamir's liberal state has to go out of its way to ensure the future of the nations in its midst. It has to try to balance their conflicting interests and also ensure that the basic rights of the individual are not trampled upon. And yet there seems to be not much reason to hope that the various nations will support its liberal institutions when the going gets tough.

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<sup>8</sup> This can be exemplified with post-war Germany's struggle to define itself. Should Germany today make a clean break with its past or continue to define itself as the children of aggressors who caused so much damage to mankind. For readers familiar with current German debates, the "Moralkeule" debate shows how nations (in this case a nation-state) have problems with individuals who want to alter the nation's self-image.



### Liberal toleration

Liberals are rather sceptical about associative obligations, since they believe that collectives could suppress individuals. It has to be admitted that even in liberal theory, it is difficult to do away with ‘political obligations’ altogether. The future of liberal institutions seems to be guaranteed only when individuals are loyal to them. Let us not forget that these institutions are in line with the liberal morality sketched above. They are considered to be tailor-made for its reasonable, autonomous, and equal citizens. But why are obligations towards liberal institutions needed?

Contemporary liberals see themselves as inheritors of the Enlightenment project. They draw from the Enlightenment a deep respect for the individual and try to protect her from all kinds of suppression. Liberals envisage a society of rational, responsible, and confident individuals whose relationships to each other are marked by open-mindedness and patience. They hope to achieve this state of affairs by making individuals more aware of their strengths but more importantly of their weaknesses. A peaceful co-existence can be guaranteed only when individuals tolerate each other, i.e. when they are mindful of each other’s weaknesses.

Toleration is a defining feature of liberalism. Justifications of liberal toleration have been worked out elsewhere<sup>9</sup>. In our context it suffices to note that the main motivation behind liberal toleration is the intrinsic worth of persons. One respects the other person who is involved in the object tolerated and is therefore ready to impose restraints on oneself. The other individual is respected because she is thought of as being endowed with sufficient reason to evaluate her beliefs and actions. She is considered to possess the capacity to evaluate her norms and values, and if necessary to revise them. That is the reason why she is thought of as being capable to take up the responsibility for her own life. It means treating her as a self-legislating subject who can direct the course of her own life. Her actions are based on those values or norms with which she identifies most. Respecting her, means accepting her beliefs although they could be quite contrary to one’s own. It has to be pointed out that toleration among individuals is only meaningful within limits. The overarching norm which sets these limits is the “harm-principle” according to which individuals and groups are free to live their lives as they see fit as long as their actions do not harm others<sup>10</sup>.

This is where obligations to liberal institutions come in. As we saw earlier, it is difficult to combine an unconditional loyalty to an association with a liberal’s emphasis on reflection. If associative obligations, which are independent of the actions of the association, were subjected to the tribunal of reason, they would in all

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<sup>9</sup> See Heyd 1996; Horton/Mendus 1985; Mendus 1989a; 1989b.

<sup>10</sup> As Mill said (1977:223): “the sole end for which mankind are warranted, individually or collectively, in interfering with the liberty of action of any of their number, is self-protection. That the only purpose for which power can be rightfully exercised over any member of a civilized community, against his will, is to prevent harm to others”.

probability fail the test. Their contingent nature would be revealed on reflection. On the other hand, a loyalty to liberal institutions seems to fare better. There is reason enough to believe that liberal institutions play a crucial role in guaranteeing political conditions in which one can lead a free life. Thus associative obligations can be construed of being a mutual relationship between the individual and the liberal state which possesses these institutions. The individual hopes to lead a (relatively) free life and the liberal state is assured of its stability. The individual could develop a sense of belonging to the state, meaning that she identifies with the liberal institutions of the state and feels at home in them. The individual and her fellow liberal citizens, who are marked by this sense of belonging, could justify a suppression of their intolerant fellow citizens only “when the tolerant sincerely and with reason believe that their own security and that of the institutions of liberty is in danger. The tolerant should curb the intolerant only in this case” (Rawls, 1999:193). Depending on the circumstances, liberal citizens would have to decide to what extent the freedom of others should be curtailed. Force can only be used as a last measure since a mere incitement to intolerance and persecution does not suffice to immediately use violence against the intolerant and regard it as justified. In some cases it would suffice when intolerant ideologies are excluded from the public sphere temporarily.

What does this discussion mean for the liberal nationalism advocated by Tamir? As she proclaims, her liberal nationalism requires a state of mind characterised by tolerance and respect for the plurality of life-forms (Tamir 1993: 90). One could insist, as she does, that a liberal state should make room for all the nations in its midst<sup>11</sup>. Every nation has a right to be present in the public-sphere of a liberal state, since nations play such a crucial role in human flourishing. But as our discussion shows, liberals can claim that a liberal state cannot bow down to the wishes of all nations without harming itself. This is particularly true of a nation which systematically wishes to do away with liberal institutions. Barry (2001:138) minces no words about the priority of liberal principles:

*“The point of liberalism is that it is universalistic. It therefore necessarily conflicts with the claim that nations are the bearers of values that cannot, as a matter of principle, be overridden in the pursuit of liberal ends”.*

It can be said that Tamir’s liberal nationalism fails to resolve the tension between liberalism and nationalism on two counts: As we have seen, her account of associative obligations cannot be reconciled with the moral worth of all individuals. Her associative obligations demand members to favour fellow-members since they regard each other as a community of fate. Indeed communities are asked to fulfil their global obligations too. But these obligations can be overridden when the community thinks that it itself is endangered. Communal morality could also prove

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<sup>11</sup> One could argue that Tamir’s nations cannot tolerate each other. In fact they would compete with each other for more members. Big nations with a huge following can hope to pursue their goals and projects more effectively than say smaller nations which are primarily concerned with their immediate survival.

to be hazardous for the liberal state. The latter is not a part of this morality since if the going gets tough, a nation is justified in breaking away from the state and can search for alternative political arrangements. It also remains unclear as to how a particular nation will proceed when the state is in danger.

Secondly, the future of liberal institutions can be guaranteed only when individuals protect these institutions from misuse. For this purpose it is essential that individuals regard them as valuable and conducive to their freedom. A commitment to liberal institutions is found wanting in this brand of liberal nationalism. Tamir seems to underestimate the power of authoritarian nations wrecking havoc in a liberal state.

I would finally like to pursue a philosophical hunch. Proponents of a liberal nationalism, who assert that there should be a plethora of nations in a liberal state, could claim that each nation should respect the other. They could further claim that toleration is not an appropriate attitude since it stems from reluctance to accept something. It is merely a disposition of a person to endure something towards which she has a negative attitude. It is quite likely that she, in fact, finds the object tolerated morally faulty. Liberal nationalists could thus insist on the more appropriate attitude of respect. The latter arises from the recognition that membership in a nation satisfies an elementary urge of humankind and plays a pivotal role in human flourishing. Respect, further, involves an appreciation of the Other at its own terms, a desire to preserve the Other in times of need, and perhaps to learn from it thus enriching one's own person/nation.

My philosophical hunch tells me that this respect is a second-order reason advanced to tolerate something. It is one of many possible reasons by which the tolerator tries to justify to herself why she tolerates the Other. In our current liberal discourse, respect, which is considered as a democratic value, is advanced as a reason unto itself thereby ignoring its derivative character. Secondly, this second-order reason is also not available to those liberal nationalists who deny the possibility of an impersonal standpoint in moral reasoning and who believe that all of us are trapped by our own particularistic way of seeing the world.

**Summary.** In his review essay of Tamir's 'Liberal Nationalism', Levinson (1995:645) is willing to credit the non-oxymoronic nature of the term 'liberal nationalism' and is also willing to accept that liberalism and nationalism do not rule each other out. This paper tried to show that it is very difficult to reconcile nationalism with liberalism. Nationalism highlights partiality towards fellow-members and liberal morality emphasises the equal moral worth of all individuals. If one takes the liberal view of human nature seriously, one would have to strive to provide a framework which will ensure that all individuals are treated alike. Although liberalism values a plurality of life-forms it is hard to accommodate liberal tolerance with authoritarian life-forms which could jeopardise individual freedom<sup>12</sup>.

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## Address:

Monika Kirloskar-Steinbach  
 Paul-Schallück-Straße 5  
 50939 Cologne  
 Germany  
 Email: kirloskar@gmx.de

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