18. Nation

'He was a simple man – a Swiss (a people little given to vanity and lying).'
Michel de Montaigne

Synopsis: *Nation a political and arbitrary term (1–3); Nationality (4); Are nations human-specific? (5).*

1. Nation*

Because states are natural to humans, nations play only a peripheral, temporary role in their development. After all, the concept of a nation state is only a recent development in human history; prior to this nations did not coincide (at least to any great extent, as is the case today) with the states that existed. Although today we take this connection for granted (and it is this finding that accounts for this chapter) and are ready to discuss state legitimacy on those terms, this is contemporary thinking that is only a couple of centuries old.

2. *

Nation is a political, hence arbitrary, term. Although commonalities are identifiable in the processing methods (morality, reason) of groups of individuals as distinguishable from others, it is impossible to say whether this was a development that originated from the bottom up (meaning from the individuals themselves, for reasons such as climate or geography) or from the top down (meaning imposed by an institution, specifically their governments). Hence it is also impossible to say whether the formation of nations was a natural or an artificial development.

After all, most humans throughout history have identified themselves in (at least) two ways, meaning as citizens of a state and as members of a (usually wider) nation—and many still do.

3. *

Although discussion of how modern (nation) states emerged is beyond the scope of this analysis, the fact remains that a centuries-long procedure seems to have culminated, today, in the formation of nation states.[552] Why is that? It is possible to provide an explanation from an informational viewpoint: individuals need to augment their information processing and their states also need them to do exactly that. The long process of state succession is explainable through exactly this lens: each time individuals felt their need would be better served through (the formation of) a different state, they pursued that path. Today (and for the past 200 years) an understanding has been reached by humanity that nation states better serve individuals in augmenting their information processing, at least better than any known alternative so far—the digital world and, most importantly, archipelagos[553] notwithstanding.

In spite of the above, regardless of the theory, state-making seems to be an unfinished business.[554] If one suggests that nation states are the culmination of a development that has been happening since the existence of the ancient states, then there is no reason to suggest that this development will not also continue (in whatever new direction) in the future. Similarly, if one considers that modern states emerged because certain factors were in place, it cannot be imagined that new factors will not appear (or may have already appeared) that will lead to the next step.

4. Nationality

Nationality, the connection of any individual with a nation, is different to citizenship[555] because only the latter, in the meaning discussed in this book, is necessary for an individual to live a meaningful life (for a human to become an individual). By contrast, nationality is subjective, political, and time-specific.

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552 On their centralisation see Chap. 11, par. 5.
553 See Chap. 19.
554 See also Chap. 15.
555 See note 7/1/1.

5. Are nations human-specific? *

Could artificial Beings (specifically, computer programs) form nations as well? As has been established, nations are separate from states; therefore this question is separate from that of whether artificial Beings need states, that is, for individualisation.[556] Notwithstanding that both nations and individualisation are viewed from the Unique Human Observer Perspective, the question remains as to whether artificial Beings, after they have been created, could form commonalities that would, perhaps, group them and distinguish them from other artificial Beings, albeit artificial Beings of the same kind.

There is perhaps some merit in examining the situation of other non-biological Beings, namely organisations. Organisations, despite their centuries-old presence, have not formed commonalities, even if a certain 'ethos' may sometimes distinguish organisations (corporations, foundations etc.) originating from one state from those of another.

As regards artificial Beings, their connection with a specific state being unavoidable,[557] as a minimum they are likely to create (imaginary or actual) commonalities, similar to organisations. Any development beyond this would call into question the basic assumptions about what it is to be human, such as identity or self-consciousness.

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556 See also Chap. 8, par. 7.
557 As part of its digital territory, see Chap. 17, pars. 12 and 13.