CHAPTER 6

The Community of Shame
Schopenhauer's Critique of Nationalism

Nationalists against Schopenhauer

Two years after Schopenhauer's death in 1860, the writer and critic Karl Gutzkow (1811–78) published a scathing two-part portrait of the philosopher entitled "Arthur Schopenhauer's Doctrine and Life [Arthur Schopenhauer's Lehre und Leben]" in a middlebrow, family-oriented journal edited by Gutzkow himself.[1] The premier philosopher of pessimism had become increasingly known to the wider public during the 1850s, and the essay reviewed the first Schopenhauer biography to arrive in the book market, Wilhelm Gwinner's *Arthur Schopenhauer* (1862). This biography would be followed by others later in the decade, as Schopenhauer gained a greater reputation.[2] Having observed Schopenhauer personally in Frankfurt in the mid-1830s and mid-1840s,[3] however, Gutzkow wanted to put an end to the philosopher's posthumous rise to prominence by advancing a critique of his character, which Gutzkow deemed highly questionable.

Above all, Gutzkow criticized Schopenhauer's conspicuous lack of patriotism. A longtime champion of German political unity and autonomy,[4] Gutzkow opened his article with an attack on Schopenhauer's escape from a supposed duty to fight in the Wars of Liberation in 1813–15.[5] As Napoleonic armies passed through Prussia to fight their Russian campaign, Schopenhauer was a student in Berlin, and when several countries went to war against Napoleon in 1813, many of Schopenhauer's professors and fellow students pledged to take up arms.[6] Schopenhauer, by contrast, left the Prussian capital and retreated to Rudolstadt in Thuringia, a provincial town with fewer than 5,000 residents, to complete his dissertation. Gutzkow saw the move as shameful and denounced Schopenhauer in pathetic tones: in a time in which members of "the noblest young generation in our German history, the followers of Schiller, Körner, Fichte, and Schleiermacher," had been eager to sacrifice their lives to defend the

fatherland, and students had left their seats in the university lecture rooms and the teachers joined them "under the banners [*unter die Fahnen*]," Schopenhauer had cowardly run away.[7] In his memoir *Rückblicke auf mein Leben* [*Looking Back at My Life*], Gutzkow called Schopenhauer a deserter, a so-called *Fahnenflüchtling*.[8] Given Schopenhauer's unheroic stance and philosophy of resignation, it would be nothing less than a "national misfortune" to let him influence the education of young people in the same way as Kant, Fichte, Schelling, and Hegel.[9] Schopenhauer, Gutzkow concluded, must be kept out of "the life of the nation."[10] The philosopher Wilhelm Dilthey (1833–1911) came to a similar conclusion: Schopenhauer, he said in his 1862 review of Gwinner's biography, had clearly "retreated from his duties to the fatherland."[11]

Gutzkow and Dilthey were right to claim that Schopenhauer did not care about the nation; he was in fact a lifelong antinationalist. Born in 1788, he was in his mid-twenties during the Wars of Liberation and a member of a generational cohort in which many were galvanized by the anti-Napoleonic struggle,[12] such as the poet Theodor Körner (1791–1813), the scholar Jacob Grimm (1786–1863), and the historian Friedrich Christoph Dahlmann (1785–1860), all of them prominent nationalists. In Berlin in the early 1810s, Schopenhauer attended the lecture series of several nationalist professors, such as the historian Friedrich Rühs (1781–1820), but also Schleiermacher and Fichte,[13] both of whom Gutzkow saw as exemplary patriots. Yet this nationalist academic milieu had little impact on Schopenhauer's outlook. As Nietzsche pointed out in his portrayal of Schopenhauer (1874), the philosopher grew up in a liberal, cosmopolitan home in port cities such as Hamburg with a merchant father and an urbane, educated mother who took him on extended European trips.[14] As a boy and young man, he lived in England, France, and Italy and developed a special affinity with Spanish culture.[15] Schopenhauer, a traveler and polyglot who would later work on translation projects from English and Spanish and cultivated a lifelong interest in Buddhism and Hinduism, was described by Nietzsche as free from "national narrowness."[16] This worldly orientation mattered philosophically. In the preface to the first edition of *The World as Will and Representation*, Schopenhauer pointed to three major contexts and sources of inspiration for his thought: Kant, Plato, and the *Upanishads*, the Sanskrit texts that had become available to him in Latin[17] and that, in his view, should have a "profound effect" on the "still-young" nineteenth century (WWR I: 8). Schopenhauer never saw himself as a philosopher working in an exclusively German or even European tradition, and

explicitly repudiated any arguments that relegated non-European cultures to a supposedly lower rung on some civilizational ladder.[18]

Schopenhauer was not just indifferent to the national cause that gripped many of his peers and university teachers in the second decade of the nineteenth century. Throughout his career, he developed a comprehensive critique of nationhood that exposed the hollowness of contemporary nationalism, which over the course of his lifetime would become a broader and increasingly confident political movement.[19] This extended critical engagement with nationalism, perceptively pointed out but not extensively explored by the critical theorist Max Horkheimer (1895–1973),[20] shows that the established view of Schopenhauer's political disinterest or apathy is not quite right. Throughout his writings, he questioned the premises of the rising nationalist ideology and in this way did engage critically with contemporary political arguments. He believed that the nation as a subset of humankind was metaphysically inessential and morally arbitrary and that it therefore made little sense to cultivate a national culture or a national literature. In his mind, the nation was an artificially narrow and exclusionary unit, barring us from feeling with and learning from others and confining us to small-mindedness and mediocrity.

This chapter systematically reconstructs Schopenhauer's critique of nationalism in three steps. First, it articulates his double case, ethical and intellectual, against the idea of the nation as a community that is supposed to give shape to the allegiances and obligations of its members. Second, it turns to his critique of teleological national history, according to which nations are collective agents with a single fate. Third, it reviews his caustic remarks about the increased importance of the vernacular in scholarly communication and the Germanist attempt to establish an exclusively German literary canon; nationhood was to him not even a useful category of cultural appreciation. Taken together, Schopenhauer emerges as a passionate antinationalist who questioned the importance of nationhood as a cohesive community of solidarity and mutual care, a unified collective political and historical subject, or even a meaningful cultural or literary phenomenon.

Against the Nation: Schopenhauer's Arguments and Affects

Living in an age of rising national pride and nationalism, Schopenhauer did not deny that there were multiple peoples with distinctive cultural traits and that Germans, Dutch, French, English, or Italians each had their temperaments and dispositions.[21] Unlike the sunnier philosopher Johann

Gottfried Herder (1744–1803), however, Schopenhauer did not joyously celebrate national plurality but noted the "stupidity, perversity, and depravity" that he thought appeared in every country in different forms and that was honored with the name "national character" (PP I: 316). He recognized that every nation likes to mock the others for their flaws, and sardonically added that all of them were right. Personally, however, he clearly subjected the German people to the most consistent and withering criticism.[22] Germans possess a great deal of patience, Schopenhauer wrote, but this only meant that they were willing to entertain ideas and propositions that are "weak" or even "absurd" (WWR I: 452). Germans exhibit a high degree of tolerance, he also claimed, but they are unfortunately far too tolerant of fads and idiocies with the result that each new folly "spreads so quickly in Germany" (PP I: 402). Like people from Spain, Turkey, and England, Germans can keep their calm under agitating circumstances, a seemingly admirable ability, and yet Germans remain unfazed out of a "phlegmatic and dull temperament" rather than genuine composure (WWR II: 224); they are obtuse rather than cool. Hidden in every ostensible German merit, Schopenhauer spotted a German demerit.

Yet the mere existence of shared cultural traits did not, Schopenhauer believed, convert the nation into a meaningful object of loyalty and commitment. Nationalists typically believe that the nation is a community of ethical importance, and that co-nationals belong together and owe each other a special kind of recognition and solidarity.[23] National membership imposes obligations of collaboration and mutual protection. Schopenhauer did not agree and advanced two principal arguments against the normative significance of national membership, one intellectual and one moral. First, the nation was not a community of intellectual equals and hence it possessed no attraction to him as a self-proclaimed member of an intellectual elite. Second, all human and nonhuman animals who suffer pain and misery should elicit our compassion, and hence a narrow focus on the well-being of co-nationals would seem cruelly indifferent. For Schopenhauer, then, the nation as a particular subset of humankind was intellectually irrelevant and morally arbitrary.

To begin with, Schopenhauer considered it axiomatic that intellectual gifts were unevenly distributed among people. No differences of wealth, status, or class were quite as stark as differences in sheer intelligence. To dramatize the intellectual disparities he regarded as indisputable, he frequently used a sociopolitical analogy and spoke of an intellectual aristocracy: "Nature is … highly *aristocratic* with respect to the intellect" (WWR II: 155). There were, he claimed, thousands of fools for every

intelligent person just as there were thousands of common people for every nobleman, and there were millions of unremarkable people for every authentic genius just as there were millions of subjects for every king. Even more bluntly, Schopenhauer stated that most people were simply "fools" living in perpetual ignorance and dullness (WWR II: 294) and that a genius must always be seen as a rare anomaly in rather than a representative of a national population. It is simply wrong to "measure the comparative mental powers of different nations using the greatest minds of each nation" since this would "ground the rule in the exception" (WWR II: 295). In private notes written in the 1830s, he declared that idiocy was likely a German national trait[24] and that he was ashamed to belong to the German nation because of the "exuberant stupidity" of his co-nationals.[25] People from the same nation may speak the same language and share a cultural background or ethnic traits, but their discrepant levels of intelligence would always undermine any claim to likeness and community.

Schopenhauer's insistence on intellectual hierarchy may seem arrogant, but this elitism served him as an argument against the egalitarian strand in nationalism. The nationalist focus on a shared vernacular and common cultural traits implies that distinctions based on merit, accomplishment, or capacity within the national community should be given less attention. All members of the nation form a single community and they all have an equal claim to membership and its benefits despite their different socioeconomic backgrounds, degrees of education, and intellectual endowments. The community of ethnically and linguistically similar people is also in some significant way a community of equals.[26] For Schopenhauer, this focus on a linguistic or cultural common denominator leveled out the distinctions that truly matter, namely, those of intelligence. His talk of an aristocracy of intellectual gifts was partly meant to reinstall exclusivity in an epoch in which writers and agitators sought to downplay traditional stratifications and celebrate linguistic, cultural, and ethnic unity across divisions of estate and social class.

Yet Schopenhauer's rejection of nationhood out of personal snobbishness was partly a response to the collective snobbishness of nationalism. According to Schopenhauer, "national pride" was transparently a surrogate for individuals who possessed no qualities of their own and hence the "cheapest kind of pride" (PP I: 315). In his view, unremarkable people tend to boast of the accomplishments of some greater collective to which they belong; they grasp after something that will make them seem great and impressive but find nothing in themselves, which then leads them to

associate themselves with the accomplishments of co-nationals. In this context, Schopenhauer's obsessive emphasis on individual intellectual gifts was at least partially a strategic attack on the attempt of nationalists to foreground a spurious, nonindividual kind of merit through a glorification of the national collective. Individuals with great personal qualities, he added, tend to concentrate not on the glories but on the "faults of their own nation" (PP I: 315).

Following the implications of his argument from inequality, Schopenhauer denied that any nation as a collective could be seen as especially intelligent or talented. He did not dispute that communities could sustain shared cultural habits over time. The French, for example, enjoyed a tradition of "honest empiricism" and sober observation that made them prominent in the sciences (PP II: 57), and Germany was, in Schopenhauer's own period, indisputably the home of many philosophers. According to Schopenhauer, however, no nation could lay claim to a superior *collective* intellect, and the German predilection for philosophy was simply a matter of chance. Schopenhauer admitted that Kant had inaugurated a new era in philosophy, but since Kant was German and wrote in German, he had unfortunately inspired a lot of Germans without "any conspicuous talent" (WWR I: 452). The resulting increase in the number of philosophers in Germany did not mean that German philosophy was somehow better or achieved a higher standard. On the contrary, the discipline was inflated, filled up with careerist mediocrities. Germany was not a more philosophical nation than any other just because philosophy had become a fashion in German lands, even an industry, with the consequence that charlatans now made a handsome living in swollen philosophy departments. Faced with this absurdity, Schopenhauer refused to behave "as a good patriot" and praise the Germans (PP I: 89). As a philosopher, he saw no need to celebrate being German.

From an intellectual perspective, the nation was too large a unit to be meaningful; only individuals possessed great intelligence, not nations. Yet Schopenhauer paired this elitist, antinationalist view with another argument that was decidedly egalitarian and ethical. In the passage in *The World as Will and Representation* in which Schopenhauer introduced the idea of an intellectual aristocracy, he also spoke of a contravening tendency, or a "unifying principle," that binds all humans together regardless of their level of intelligence (WWR II: 156). He found this principle of unification in the "kind-heartedness" that inspires individuals to embrace and feel for and with others, or even "identify ourselves with other people" (WWR II: 156). This principle of connection and identification,

Schopenhauer added, is of a moral rather than an intellectual character. When we identify with others out of the goodness of our hearts, we respond to their suffering rather than respect their intellectual ability. Intelligence is a "separating principle," and morality, or compassion, an integrating one (WWR II: 155).

Schopenhauer elaborated on the moral value of compassion as identification in his tract on morality (1840). There he explained that genuine compassion removes the "dividing wall" between individuals and leads to the realization that the suffering of others belongs to me and that I should do what I can to alleviate it (BM: 201). Actions that spring out of such a profound sense of connection and even identity, Schopenhauer continued, have true moral worth. For him, compassion was the basis of all uncoerced, spontaneous justice and "loving kindness" (BM: 200). Moving from the realm of ethics to the realm of metaphysics, he added that compassion has its ultimate theoretical source in the insight into the illusory character of the boundaries that separate being from being. Metaphysically speaking, we are all of the same essence, even though our perception individualizes and itemizes everything we see and deceives us into treating ourselves and others as sharply contoured individuals in a universe of separate things. Compassion, then, is a moral feeling of connection and identity that annuls egoism and is ultimately validated by metaphysical revelation.

Schopenhauer did not explicitly give his ideal of compassion an anti-nationalist formulation, but its incompatibility with the ideology should be clear enough. The compassion that dissolves the dividing wall between all beings should also disregard petty national divisions. In fact, true compassion should even reject the divisions among different species. A compassion so encompassing that it includes all sentient beings would obviously not be arbitrarily fragmented by something as superficial as nationality. Interestingly, Schopenhauer veered away from German and used multiple languages when he wrote about the proper attitude that we should assume toward one another. Instead of addressing each other with *Sir* and *Monsieur*, he suggested that we should use "*Leidensgefährte*, *Socî malorum*, *compagnon de misères*, *my fellow-sufferer*," phrases that remind everyone of the tolerance, patience, forbearance, and neighborly love that each person needs, and each person owes to everyone else (PP II: 273). As the multilingual passage implies, our neighbors are all human beings and not just our co-nationals.

To Schopenhauer, genuine morality clearly transcends national borders to include a much greater ethical community, and genuine intellectuality dismisses national borders to focus on the few who are truly worthy of

admiration for their abilities and accomplishments. We have "*Leidensgefährte*" and "fellow-sufferers" everywhere whom we owe a kind and loving attitude, and all nations have a large "mob, rabble, *la canaille*" that we can dismiss intellectually (WWR II: 155). Nations are neither morally nor intellectually relevant, and linguistic, cultural, and ethnic forms of affiliation and likeness are not meaningful criteria for compassionate attention. In sum, Schopenhauer exhibited two forms of antinationalism: the antinationalism of compassion and fellow feeling for all vulnerable beings in the world, and the antinationalism of elitist disinterest in the mediocrities that constitute the majority in every nation.

The antinationalism of the intellect can also be called the antinationalism of contempt, or perhaps the antinationalism of shame. Schopenhauer was clearly bothered, even mortified, by his inescapable cultural association with all the fools of the German nation – he was, he wrote privately, "ashamed to belong to it."[27] One can feel contempt for some group that one does not belong to in any way, but as Schopenhauer's own formulation implies, shame arises when one cannot dissociate oneself from the community. Shame is a symptom of belonging, however attenuated and negative. Schopenhauer's antinationalism thus seems to have more than one affective source: compassion, on the one hand, and contempt, on the other, but his especially vehement rejection of Germany seems to have been nourished by a sense of shame.

Schopenhauer's Critique of Collective Agency and Historicity

The aim of Schopenhauer's twofold argument against nationhood was to remove nationality as a meaningful object of respect and to dissolve the community of co-nationals as a nexus of recognition and obligation. Yet the critique of national borders as intellectually and morally immaterial for feeling and thinking individuals was not quite sufficient. In the early nineteenth century, the affirmative conception of collective national being went hand in hand with historical scholarship meant to verify the enduring existence of distinctive peoples.[28] Nationalist writers and academics even established the nation as the self-evident, unrivaled subject in history. The German people, scholars such as Heinrich Luden (1778–1847) argued, can be treated as a unitary agent that provides modern historiography with a center of gravity and focus of emplotment. Peoples such as the Germans and the French, the English and the Russians, were actors on the world-historical stage[29] and were either locked in a mutual struggle for survival and hegemony[30] or able to settle into stable forms of mutually beneficial

respect and brotherhood; in both cases, nationality and history implied one another.

In the historiographical works of German nationalists, Germany enjoyed a privileged status. Contemporary historians such as F. C. Dahlmann presented a narrative according to which Germans had emerged in the ancient world as fiercely freedom-loving tribes, whose collective life had been endangered by internal strife and external domination throughout the centuries, but who could now reclaim their unity and autonomy in decisive current trials and battles.[31] In liberal versions of this teleological narrative, championed by figures such as Karl von Rotteck (1775–1840), history moved toward the establishment of a nation-state, in which the national people would achieve political self-determination under a constitutionalized government.[32] The nation-state was the most appropriate and most mature political form, fusing a strong cultural identity with a modern form of self-government. Through the form of the unified and independent nation-state, the nation as a collective self obtains legitimate self-rule.

Schopenhauer's critique of the value and meaning of nationality for the individual thus had to contend with the associated idea that nations constituted collective actors on purpose-oriented trajectories and were the natural subjects of historical narratives. Conscious of this complex of ideas in the nationalist era, he articulated a critique of the dominant contemporary views of collective agency and historicity.

It should be said that Schopenhauer did not contest the value of historical writing per se and acknowledged that it had a vital function for societies. Historiography and, more generally, writing that preserved the thoughts and ideas of previous epochs could ensure that populations retained a sense of context and orientation across generations. Without a grasp of history, human beings would be unable to understand who they were and thus forced to confront the world with incomprehension, entrapped in the "narrow" present (WWR II: 462). To illustrate the dramatically negative character of such alienation from the past, Schopenhauer claimed that historiography assumes the same function for a collective as self-awareness does for an individual, and that a gap in history is analogous to a "gap in the recollecting self-consciousness of a human being" (WWR II: 462). Written history ensures a sense of continuity. Without it, humans would stare with stupefaction at the relics of previous societies and earlier epochs and face the future in a state of disorientation.

Yet Schopenhauer's recognition of the value and function of history as a social form of recollection did not imply that he was willing to treat

peoples as unitary selves with coherent stories of maturation. In his explicit discussion of the discipline of history in the second volume of *The World as Will and Representation*, Schopenhauer claimed that only individuals enjoy a genuine "unity of consciousness," and that members of a people are not so closely united as to possess shared self-awareness (WWR II: 459). Communities were composed of atoms and could be disaggregated. Consequently, the idea that a collective of many separate individuals enjoyed some biographical "unity of life" was a purely fictitious idea (WWR II: 459). Only the individual constitutes an integrated unit, and only the individual enjoys a coherent life narrative, a unity over time. Collectives, Schopenhauer emphasized, do not have anything approaching diachronically consistent selfhood.

Committed to a metaphysical doctrine according to which a unitary will is ceaselessly striving under the appearance of plural individuals, Schopenhauer nonetheless rejected any conception of complete social, ethnic, or political unity in the domain of representation. To him, the individual wills that existed as fragments of the metaphysical will could not be fused in the pursuit of a collective political project – there was no genuine collective agency or supra-individual national will in human society. According to him, peoples were abstract fictions, and therefore narratives of collective progress were artificial constructions.[33] The historians of his age could tell stories of amelioration and political or technological achievements such as "constitutions and legislation" or "steam-engines and telegraphs" (WWR II: 461). Hegelian philosophers of history in particular liked to indulge in a shallow optimism for which all human development was crowned by the establishment of a "fat, comfortable and substantial state with a well-regulated constitution" (WWR II: 460). Yet Schopenhauer ridiculed these prevalent historical narratives as philistine celebrations of accumulating gadgets and swelling bureaucratic government. None of these accounts could point to progress in a genuine sense, namely, in the sense of an advancement of morality. By contrast, an individual life could exhibit, if not moral progress, then at least authentic moral significance and achieve a pedagogical or didactic value, because the sequence of connected decisions made by a self over time formed a whole and could evince an overall ethical meaning.

In *Parerga and Paralipomena*, Schopenhauer developed this contrast between the unity of an individual life and the spurious, merely imposed unity of a people's history. When individuals look back at their own complicated biographies, Schopenhauer first suggested, they are often able to discern an overarching pattern in the myriad of seemingly random

occurrences. The course of a life may at any given moment seem chaotic and confused but can, close to the point of its completion or its end, nonetheless appear as neat and unified as a "well-conceived epic" (PP I: 180). Schopenhauer did not ascribe this retrospective impression of unity to the ordering operations of the human imagination that strains to detect patterns everywhere and is able to spot human figures "on a speckled wall by creating systematic connections between stains that the most blind chance has scattered" (PP I: 182). Instead, he attributed the ostensible orderliness of the totality of an individual's life to a person's inborn character. All individuals have determinate physical, moral, and intellectual constitutions unique to them, and when they interact with external circumstances, they necessarily do so in a consistent way, in accordance with their innate characters. Over time, then, it becomes apparent that individuals act as if guided by an "inner compass" and that everything that has happened, once it becomes visible as a coherent pattern, even seems strangely fitted to who they are (PP I: 181). When individuals are struck by a fate-like order to their lives, Schopenhauer believed, they are discovering themselves – their innermost characters.

It made some sense, Schopenhauer thus claimed, to speak of the fate of an individual. The same was not true for a people. Individual lives take on the aspect of "planned orderliness" and they are all entwined and constitute one gigantic ensemble of combined life narratives, and yet Schopenhauer rejected the idea that nations are collectives with shared destinies (PP I: 181). This position follows from his argument that individuals, but not collectives, possess personal constellations of intellectual and moral traits and that they gradually reveal themselves in patterned biographies deserving of the name "destiny." The stance is also consistent with Schopenhauer's stress on stark intellectual disparities in human populations. Co-nationals share a language and perhaps habits and customs, but they emphatically do not share intellectual gifts or moral qualities. Hence, they do not possess one collectively shared character that is progressively disclosed through enterprises expressive of some spirit of the people.

In accordance with the notion that peoples do not have unitary characters and therefore cannot be seen as cohesive agents, Schopenhauer dismissed the idea that "world history" exhibits any "design and integrity" (PP I: 180). There are, he claimed, no super-characters whose destinies materialize throughout the ages, and thus no epic-like order to national history, despite the claims of "professorial philosophy" in the age of Hegelianism (PP I: 180). According to Schopenhauer, a people does not

have a common telos, and history is not a medium of the collective's self-realization;[34] the nonexistence of collective agents implied the non-teleology of any national history.

Schopenhauer expressed this antihistoricist position[35] with a dramatic metaphor. For many historians in his own age, history had a beginning, a middle, but also an end. The end was typically humanity's culmination point, involving something like the establishment of a national state for historicist nationalists or a fully articulated modern system of freedom for Hegelians. Schopenhauer conceded that history could seem plot-like, but he added that history as a whole was not one unitary drama with phases in a sequence moving toward a final stage or resolution. Instead, history consisted of an endless series of dramas, one after another, "always populated with the same characters with the same plans," in which the same human spectacle was enacted again and again with no cumulative learning or upward trajectory in between the plays (WWR I: 206). The plot was always the same, and there was no overarching, comprehensive story in which a (national) people reached an ultimate stage and its history was fulfilled.

Schopenhauer against National Literature

Schopenhauer rejected the core tenets of nationalism. For him, the nation was not a collective historical agent, not even a morally or intellectually meaningful community, and fraternal likenesses exhibited by co-nationals were of little moral or intellectual consequence. The fact that the Germans often seemed grave and stolid or the English often seemed calm and polite in comparison to members of other peoples did not mean that the German or English people constituted unified subjects, that they were collectively superior to other populations, or that co-nationals owed each other special consideration.

Yet Schopenhauer also disputed the significance of nationality in the realm in which it might seem to matter, namely, that of language and culture – he was against all forms of nationalism, including cultural nationalism. To him, literature should not be divided into national literatures, and the defense of the linguistic purity of a supposedly national language was a silly and potentially damaging ideal. If anything, the construal of cultures as exclusive domains of belonging and the rise of European vernaculars, such as German, as languages of scholarship had a deleterious, fragmenting effect on intellectual and artistic life. For the sciences and for philosophy, it was, Schopenhauer claimed, more important to maintain a universal medium of communication than to cultivate

insularity. For literature, it was more important to enjoy great authors in any language than to focus on mediocre ones who happened to write in one's own tongue.

It was an axiom of the nationalists in Schopenhauer's era that the nation was defined by its shared language and its common culture.[36] Linguistic particularity and cultural distinctiveness defined the contours of collective life, nationalists argued, and cultural and linguistic membership must be honored as the primary fact about any individual. The speakers of a language were not just conveniently able to understand each other; they were bound to one another, belonged together, and shared the same spirit. Linguistic and cultural forms of sameness were clear manifestations of the collective personality of nationhood, and nationhood the basis for moral solidarity and political unity. All social, political, and moral claims about the centrality of the nation were thus connected to claims about the nation's linguistic and cultural integrity and homogeneity.

More specifically, German nationalists of the early nineteenth century made a series of interconnected points about language, literature, and the disciplined study of both. The German language was the most precious treasure of the German people, German literary works represented the most advanced use of the language and thus counted as the most elevated and important expression of the internal life of the nation, and serious humanistic scholarship needed to become national and preserve and promote German literature.[37] The plurality of languages grounded the plurality of literatures, all of which must be studied separately as expressions of separate peoples.

Schopenhauer dismissed all these claims. A proud stylist in his native tongue, he did appreciate the value of German. Much in the same way as the nationalist, he claimed that the German language was a "precious legacy," and that all languages were expressive of the collectives that speak them (WWR II: 134). Staying close to the idiom of his time, he even wrote that a language is "the mark of a people's spirit" just like the styles of individual authors encapsulate their personalities (WWR II: 153). Schopenhauer even criticized the Germans for being poor custodians of their inheritance; the Italians and the French showed more "piety toward their own languages" and did more to preserve the qualities of their national tongues (WWR II: 134). Germans ought to emulate the model of other countries, he claimed, and establish an academy for the cultivation of the German language. Yet he argued that it made no sense to protect the German language if this meant policing the use of supposedly foreign words. Especially in the sphere of philosophical and scientific terminology,

internationally shared conventions were valuable and established terms should not be replaced by more German-sounding ones. In this tract on morality, Schopenhauer explained his preference for the word "*moralisch*" over the allegedly more Germanic "*sittlich*," which he found dubious (BM: 190). In his own writing, he added, he would never make concessions to the faddish "Germanomania" (BM: 190). The attempted Germanization of scientific vocabulary was clumsy and tasteless, and his own style made frequent and unabashed use of non-Germanic words.

While praised as a writer of German, Schopenhauer mourned the loss of Latin as a universal language of erudition. The decline of a continent-wide language of scholarly communication, he wrote, had been a "genuine misfortune" since it fragmented the once cohesive European academic public into linguistically isolated islands (PP II: 436). Divisions between German, French, and English had obstructed the easy flow of ideas between countries and reduced the critical reception of all philosophical and scientific accomplishments, with perverse consequences. For instance, branches of the natural sciences in France, such as zoology and physics, remained unsupported by a robust, German-developed metaphysics, while Kant's philosophy had regrettably remained stuck in the "swamp" of Germany, where it had inspired the lunacy of Schelling's and Hegel's idealism (PP II: 437). Worst of all in Schopenhauer's eyes, the post-Latin provincialization of thought in Europe had prevented his own rise to prominence. It was partly because intelligent people everywhere lacked a common language and had no access to his groundbreaking works that he had remained "unnoticed" (PP II: 437).

Moving beyond the discourses of science and philosophy, Schopenhauer observed how an increased preoccupation with nationhood as a boundary also led to symptoms of decline in poetry and literature. Again, Schopenhauer did not dispute the idea that one could talk about "German literature" – there were clearly works of poetry written in the German language for a German-speaking public (WWR II: 108). Yet even when he lauded individual authors and texts, he denied that their Germanness was their most significant feature or even mattered at all. In the first volume of *The World as Will and Representation*, he singled out *Des Knaben Wunderhorn* [*The Boy's Magic Horn*], the collection of folk songs by his contemporaries Achim von Arnim (1781–1831) and Clemens Brentano (1778–1842), as a "superb" anthology (WWR I: 276). He did not, however, view this landmark work in the Romanticist construction of German national literature as a vessel of some distinctively German mood. Arnim and Brentano had managed to compile a work of great loveliness

with songs that beautifully captured states of enthusiasm and vivacity, but the songs of the collection shared this quality with "love songs and other popular songs in all languages" (WWR I: 276). The lyric poetry of true poets, Schopenhauer continued, expresses what millions of people had felt in the past and will feel in the future, and such poetry is never a vehicle of the sorrows and joys of one nation only. The increasingly national categorization of literary works disavowed the international, or rather nonnational, traits of various genres, and artificially divided clusters of works that were in fact very similar and should be grouped together.

Schopenhauer also suspected that the very idea of national literature limited the critical appreciation of true literary excellence regardless of its origin. To understand a body of literature as primarily national meant to apply a nonliterary criterion to literature. The fact that a particular work was German or French said nothing about its actual literary qualities, whether it was good or bad *as literature*. Since national categorization was indifferent to literature qua literature, the scholarly focus on national literatures and the cultivation of a national canon tended to weaken a genuinely literary-critical engagement with literary works. There were egregious versions of this error. Schopenhauer saw the increased German academic interest in the *Nibelungenlied* at the expense of Homer's *Illiad* as nothing but a "blasphemy" (PP II: 365). Only modern-day barbarians could believe that a Middle High German verse epic should take precedence over a central classical work and be taught at German gymnasiums. German students, Schopenhauer firmly believed, must be "spared" from medieval German literature (PP II: 365).

The construction of a national canon would, Schopenhauer also indicated, lead to an increased focus on trivial works. A specifically German or French national canon would inevitably be impoverished in comparison to a canon that included works from both languages, as works of great interest from a supposedly foreign literature would be replaced by non-excellent texts that happened to fulfil the nonliterary requirement of nationality. There were, Schopenhauer noted, large numbers of "mediocre poets, rhymesters, and tellers of fairy tales" in German lands, but nearly all of them were second-rate and they should not be given attention simply because they were German (WWR I: 272). With a devastating phrase, Schopenhauer spoke of the "petit-bourgeois idea of national literatures [*die Kleinbürgerei der Nationalliteraturen*]."[38] For him, the focus on national literatures represented a narrow-minded shrinking of the great expanse and dignity of human culture. In the field of literature, nationalism only meant division, smallness, and mediocrity. This was Schopenhauer's argument

against cultural nationalism and the emerging study of national literatures; a morally and intellectually irrelevant concept, the nation was not even an appropriate frame for cultural appreciation.

In conclusion, Schopenhauer observed the rise of the concept of national literatures during his own lifetime, and he deemed it a form of philistine narrowmindedness. A multilingual traveler, lifelong student of world religions, and legatee of Goethe's interest in a plurality of literary and cultural traditions, he would have refused the invitation to be included in a specifically German canon and be treated as a German writer, and probably not very politely. Philosophers, he claimed, should never seek to achieve mere national acclaim but should try to gain the approval of "the elite of long periods of time and all countries, without national differences" (PP II: 10). Likewise, great authors transcend national boundaries just as stars fixed on the firmament: "They [great authors] do not belong to *one* system (nation) like the others, but to the world" (PP II: 408). Schopenhauer was obviously self-aggrandizing, and yet his excessive pride saved him from the fervent but narrow ambitions of cultural nationalists.

As Karl Gutzkow rightly suspected, Schopenhauer was not a patriot or a nationalist. The philosopher did not deny the existence of nations, but he thought that they were morally and intellectually irrelevant categories for populations, that they lacked the unity and agency attributed to them by nationalist historians, and that they were even detrimental to the study of philosophy and literature. In his own time, Schopenhauer's dismissive attitude to nationhood made him a target of criticism, as Gutzkow's attack and Dilthey's reservations show. The struggle for a nation-state was a progressive liberal cause of the era, and Schopenhauer came across as a reactionary even to some of his contemporaries. In the 1860s, the prolific, popular, and politically engaged author Gutzkow – and not Schopenhauer – probably seemed like the person on the right side of history.[39] Gutzkow himself clearly looked at Schopenhauer as an antiquated figure: "the man [Schopenhauer] appeared to me . . . to belong to the past."[40]

Yet Schopenhauer's arguments against the nation seem more congenial in the contemporary moment, especially his insistence on the obligation to recognize the plight of all who suffer regardless of national divisions. In his moral philosophy, he stood for a compassionate sensitivity to beings in pain so radical that it would render the borders between cultures and populations more porous. Fully aware of the rise of nationalist sentiment in the culture of his era, Schopenhauer insisted on the solidarity of all those who suffer and rejected the idea that co-nationals should elicit special respect and care from one another.

Notes

1 On Gutzkow's writings on Schopenhauer, see Houben, "Der Fall Gutzkow/Schopenhauer," 460–71. On Gutzkow's strategies as a journal editor, see Madleen Podewski, "Medienspezifika zwischen Vormärz und Realismus," in *Karl Gutzkow (1811–1878): Publizistik, Literatur und Buchmarkt zwischen Vormärz und Gründerzeit*, ed. Wolfgang Lukas and Ute Schneider (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2013), 69–86. Gutzkow's journal was called *Unterhaltungen am häuslichen Herd*.
2 Dahlkvist, "Judaskyssar," 375–9.
3 Gutzkow, *Rückblicke auf mein Leben*, 126–7; Houben, "Der Fall Gutzkow/Schopenhauer," 470.
4 On Gutzkow's ideological outlook and political advocacy, see Martina Lauster, "Karl Gutzkow (1811–1878)," in *Vormärz-Handbuch*, ed. Norbert Otto Eke (Bielefeld: Aisthesis, 2020), 776–82; 781.
5 Gutzkow, "Arthur Schopenhauer's Lehre und Leben I," 252.
6 Cartwright, *Schopenhauer*, 178.
7 Gutzkow, "Arthur Schopenhauer's Lehre und Leben I," 252.
8 Gutzkow, *Rückblicke auf mein Leben*, 127.
9 Gutzkow, "Arthur Schopenhauer's Lehre und Leben II," 275.
10 Gutzkow, "Arthur Schopenhauer's Lehre und Leben II," 275. My translation.
11 Wilhelm Dilthey, "Schopenhauers Lehre und Leben," in *Gesammelte Schriften*, vol. 16, ed. Ulrich Herrmann (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1972), 394–7; 395. My translation.
12 Hagemann, *"Mannlicher Muth und Teutsche Ehre,"* 163.
13 Arthur Schopenhauer, *Der handschriftliche Nachlaß*, vol. 2, ed. Arthur Hübscher (Frankfurt am Main: Waldemar Kramer, 1967).
14 Nietzsche started reading Schopenhauer at the age of twenty-one, in 1865. See Thomas Brobjer, *Nietzsche's Philosophical Context: An Intellectual Biography* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2008), 29.
15 Nietzsche, *Schopenhauer als Erzieher*, 408–9.
16 Nietzsche, *Schopenhauer als Erzieher*, 408. My translation.
17 Urs App, "Schopenhauer and the Orient," in *The Oxford Handbook of Schopenhauer*, ed. Robert Wicks (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020), 88–107; 90–1.
18 Taran Kang, "Escape from *Samsara*: Schopenhauer's Opposition to the Philosophy of History," *European Legacy* 26.5 (2021): 484–504.
19 Wehler, *Deutsche Gesellschaftsgeschichte, 1815–1848/49*, 402.
20 Max Horkheimer, "Die Aktualität Schopenhauers," *Archiv für Philosophie* 11.3–4 (1962): 207–22; 210–11.
21 Weigt, *Die politischen und sozialen Anschauungen Schopenhauers*, 26.
22 Matthew Slaboch, "'Eadem, sed aliter': Arthur Schopenhauer as a Critic of 'Progress,'" *History of European Ideas* 41.7 (2015): 931–47; 944.

23 Jacob Levy, *The Multiculturalism of Fear* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 71–3; David Miller, "The Ethical Significance of Nationality," *Ethics* 98.4 (1988): 647–62; 648.
24 Schopenhauer, *Der handschriftliche Nachlaß*, vol. 4.1, 252.
25 Schopenhauer, *Der handschriftliche Nachlaß*, vol. 4.1, 19. My translation.
26 Andreas Wimmer, *Nationalist Exclusion and Ethnic Conflict: Shadows of Modernity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 53.
27 Schopenhauer, *Der handschriftliche Nachlaß*, vol. 4.1, 19. My translation.
28 Jürgen Fohrmann, "Weltgesellschaft und Nationalphilologie," *Merkur* 67.7 (2013): 607–18; 607.
29 Jörg Echternkamp, *Der Aufstieg des deutschen Nationalismus (1770–1840)* (Frankfurt am Main: Campus, 1998), 329; Christian Jansen, "Der deutsche Nationalismus im Vormärz," in *Vormärz-Handbuch*, ed. Norbert Otto Eke (Bielefeld: Aisthesis Verlag, 2020), 195–203; 195.
30 Biggemann, *Der Dämon des 19. Jahrhunderts*, 17–18.
31 Echternkamp, *Der Aufstieg des deutschen Nationalismus*, 338–9.
32 Echternkamp, *Der Aufstieg des deutschen Nationalismus*, 338.
33 Anthony Jensen, "Schopenhauer's Philosophy of History," *History and Theory* 57.3 (2018): 349–70; 361.
34 José Guilherme Merquior, *Liberalism, Old and New* (Woodbridge, CT: Twayne, 1991), 13.
35 On Schopenhauer's anti-historicism, see Schnädelbach, *Philosophie in* Deutschland, 80–3; see also Malachi Hacohen, *Karl Popper: The Formative Years, 1902–1945: Politics and Philosophy in Interwar Vienna* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 431.
36 Elie Kedourie, *Nationalism* (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1960), 64–9.
37 Jürgen Fohrmann, "Geschichte der deutschen Literaturgeschichtsschreibung zwischen Aufklärung und Kaiserreich," in *Wissenschaftsgeschichte der Germanistik im 19. Jahrhundert*, ed. Jürgen Fohrmann and Wilhelm Voßkamp (Stuttgart: J. B. Metzler, 1994), 576–604; 598.
38 Arthur Schopenhauer, *Werke in zehn Bände (Zürcher Ausgabe)*, vol. 10, ed. Arthur Hübscher (Zurich: Diogenes, 1977), 532. My translation. The English translation uses the word "balkanization" (PP II: 436) for "*Kleinbürgerei*" and thus omits the class dimension.
39 Lukas and Schneider, "Einleitung: Karl Gutzkow," 7–9.
40 Gutzkow, *Rückblicke auf mein Leben*, 128. My translation.