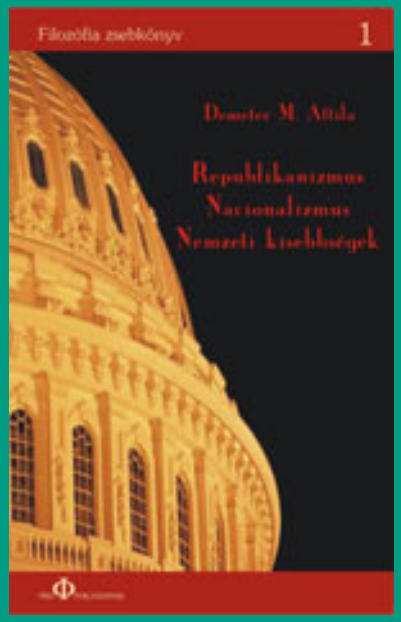


este să existe o comunitate într-o lume a indivizilor, spune Bauman, poate să fie doar (şi trebuie să fie) o comunitate ţesută împreună cu împărtăşirea şi cu grija mutuală."

Abordarea incitantă a subiectului, modul în care analiza realizată de Bauman *curge*, stilul său de a scrie, atât de clar şi sugestiv, fac din *Comunitatea. Căutarea siguranţei într-o lume nesigură* o lectură plăcută şi foarte utilă celor interesaţi de ceea ce autorul numeşte "modernitatea lichidă" şi nu numai lor.

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Attila M. Demeter Republikanizmus, nacionalizmus, nemzeti kisebbségek Republicanism, nationalism, national minorities

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We know from the perhaps most often cited passage of Aristotle's *Politics* that human beings are by their nature political, but we also tend to understand this claim as a denial of our various modern theories of the primacy of the individual. Now, if political life is a human artifact, the individual must be in some sense complete prior to society, and not emerging naturally, rather like a flower, out of those natural human associations he is born into. But oddly enough, in accepting without question the primacy of the individual, our age seems to commit itself to an ongoing debate with the individual who wants to belong to a certain group as a part of ones very identity and also be politically recognized as such.

Key words:

homo religiosus, sacred, profane, Puritan mission, American Paradise, morality, Christian America, dislocation, exile, homeland.

In his third book, after having examined two major moments in the history of political thought, and also of the aforementioned debate, the ancient Athens and the French Revolution, Attila M. Demeter offers some good arguments in favor of the individual who does not want to be stripped by contemporary politics from his true political nature that also places him in the linguistically and culturally mediated proximity of the others. To the reader unaccustomed with the specific problems of this part of Europe, three major chapters of the book may seem to be chosen at haphazard. He first writes extensively about the Revolution, and then about two maybe less known Hungarian thinkers, József Eötvös and Artúr Balogh, turning finally to some English-speaking authors like Vernon Van Dyke, Chandran Kukathas or Will Kymlicka. Nevertheless, all of these three major parts of the book are grounded on the same theoretical situation which could be roughly characterized as a recent structural change in politics. Let us start from here with an outline of the author's own diagnosis.

It seems that contrary to some old-fashioned utopian expectations and prophecies, the political debate between various world-views held by different groups of people was not replaced after all by the purely technical problems of administration. On the contrary, instead of this depoliticization of politics something very different has happened: the so-called politics of identity which aiming at public recognition of the particular interests of various groups like feminists, homosexuals, but also national minorities, became a pervasive theme both in our everyday lives and in political theory. With this relatively new phenomenon of the rebirth, or, perhaps more accurately stated, with the ongoing actuality of ideologically grounded politicizing (the politics of self-expression, as one is almost tempted to call it), western political thinkers have also discovered ethnopolitics, a major subject of Demeter's book, too. Albeit for his readers belonging like the author himself to an Eastern European national minority this theme is not completely new, his approach to it, anchored mainly in the republican tradition that starts off with Aristotle and goes on to recent communitarian authors, can fairly be considered innovative.

The first historical part of *Republicanism, nationalism, national minorities* discusses a thesis concerning the genesis of European nationalism, according to which it was the French Revolution that, although internationalist in its character, has given birth to the modern nation as a political entity, because of the fact that the revolutionaries have considered this to be nothing less than the true depositary of political sovereignty – and at the same time, through their politics of linguistic homogenization, they have also given cultural content to this concept. By refusing the principle of political representation and also those intermediary social and political institutions that could express particular group identities and interests, the Jacobin doctrine of national sovereignty implicitly identified, as it is argued here, society and state, and also strongly questioned the very legitimacy of the civil sphere.

Somehow paradoxically, precisely because no "disturbing" authorities or institutions shall intervene between the individual and the state, national levelling and centralization is required, so that people can be "compelled to be free" and, as this kind of revolutionary logic goes, not "subordinate" to their particular group interests. Shortly put, as the author convincingly shows, the historical link between democracy and nationalism is nothing other than the idea of national sovereignty, or even more precisely, the politics of linguistic and cultural assimilation as the practical method of achieving it. Otherwise, that is speaking in several different tongues, an intrinsically communicative and at the same time administratively centralized democracy could not effectively function, at least as it was believed back then.

Of course, the idea of nation, although pragmatically useful, remains up to this point highly artificial, nothing more than a kind of beneficial abstraction towards which it would be very hard to feel any real loyalty, or indeed even to feel anything at all. How will it then fulfill its practical scope? The historical answer to this problem was, as the following chapter goes on to demonstrate, one of the perhaps most subtle tricks ever to be performed by intellectuals: the spiritu-

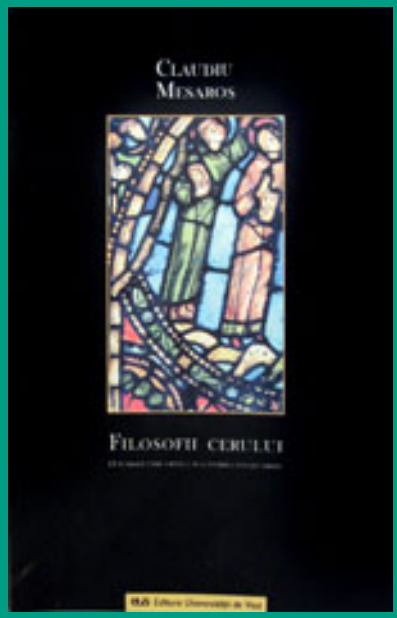
alization of national essence or, as Isaiah Berlin once defined it, the applying of the organic model to the life of society. This naturalized abstraction became then the official legitimizing doctrine of the nation-state together with its dangerous side-effect of linguistic and cultural assimilation for the national minorities that simultaneously emerged with it. Having reached these preliminary conclusions about the birth of modern European nationalism from the spirit of the French Revolution, the leading question of Demeter M. Attila's book becomes whether this increasingly strong politics of assimilation can be satisfactorily compensated, as it was held by most continental liberals, simply by guaranteeing the individual rights of the people belonging to such minorities.

To approach more closely this problem, the middle part of *Republicanism...*, which deals with linguistic nationalism in Eastern-European countries, first examines the ideas of József Eötvös, a liberal theorist and statesman from the 19th century, whose life and writings were devoted to the reform of Hungarian society. As Baron Eötvös believed according to his classical modernist background, we do not have any sound reasons to offer special political recognition for minority groups conserving them hereby „artificially", because the civilizing progress of humanity will lead anyway to the disappearance of most of them. The mere existence of such communities is not yet a self-value, it can only become this way by serving the ideal of progress.

After the victory of the more narrow-minded linguistic type of nationalism over this kind of "cosmopolite" nationalism, at the end of the First World War, Artúr Balogh, perhaps the most eminent Hungarian jurist of minority rights from the inter-war period, offered a very different liberal solution to the ever disquieting question of minorities. Broadening the principles of liberal thinking he argued that the French tenet of national sovereignty according to which the will of the majority can be taken as standing for the will of the whole could be applied only in ethnically homogeneous states (if there were any such, as we may add). Minority groups should become then a new kind of subject of rights in themselves (although later Balogh, as this chapter also shows, had to considerably modify his views, considering minority rights more cautiously only a kind of completion to the individual ones, and not collective rights on their own).

Finally, our author offers an encompassing survey of the recent Anglo-Saxon philosophical literature on the subject, importing a veritable tool-kit of arguments supporting collective and cultural rights, while also not neglecting its critics. (In general, one of the major merits of this book is that, far from trying to work out some legitimizing ideology for national minorities and equally free from the temptations of minority nationalist discourse, it is fundamentally unbiased. In other words, it fulfills the central requirement for this genre of being genuine political theorizing, albeit this also can lead to a somehow dilemmatic character, and not just plain lobbying masked as such. And this, though it may sound trivial, is after all no little thing.)

This way, in the closing part of his train of thought, he first reiterates a paradox of the extension of freedom to various identity groups, as it is demanded by the recent politics of identity, namely that it induces a confinement of freedom for other individuals and groups who will have the duty to respect or even actively guarantee it for those demanding. Therefore it seems that personal and/or group identity does not remain nowadays, even (or perhaps *precisely*) in the case of traditionally liberal countries, a matter of negative freedom untouched by politics, as it was traditionally conceived. With this, the line of demarcation between private morality and politics grows increasingly thinner, and the neutrality of the state regarding different world-views also becomes questionable, because neo-liberal identity politics demands from it to legislate in these affairs, too. However, from another point of view, an important deficiency of classical liberal thinking is that it works with a two-level model composed only of the individual and the state, disregarding ethnic minorities and other groups that can be thought of as separate units or entities, and as such subjects of rights and duties just like individuals, *a fortiori* because there are some individual rights that can only be exercised through group membership.



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Now, even if against this amendment of our traditional framework it could legitimately be argued that identity groups are after all not stable and homogenous entities, that they represent only a means for the welfare of the individual, and sometimes do serve in practice only the interests of their elites, the fact remains that we also know about several methods of politicizing (encouraging migration, official-language politics etc.) that, albeit being seemingly fair to the individuals and respecting all their rights, nevertheless tend to annihilate cultural and national group identities. In this context, Attila M. Demeter also presents several reservations and dilemmas regarding collective rights (among others: do we not instrumentalitize culture, when we try to defend its preservation only as a means for the well-being of the individual; if we do not consider its existence being a self-value, then why should we preserve it, in case that it leads to economical loss; are collective rights not antagonistic with the principle of equality of rights; how can we define the subjects of such collective rights; and not least, what shall we do with non-liberal communities?).

In spite of its acute problem-centeredness, *Republicanism, nationalism, national minorities* almost resembles a book of aporias in the best philosophical tradition, its authors option seems to be fairly clear and pointing towards a republican solution of the problem, i.e. an approach which would recognize the basic Aristotelian truth that our being a part of a community constitutes the very foundation of our human dignity and nature. Thus, he strongly contributes to an authentic *re-politicizing* of politics, helping his favorite thinkers to find their way in the age of nation-states, and concludes his work with a noteworthy apology of republicanism that also could substitute nationalism with patriotism.

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Claudiu Mesaroș
Filosofii cerului
The philosophers of the sky above

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Recent a apărut în librării o carte cu un titlu captivant, ce sugerează existența unei stări inefabile în istoria gândirii raționale, stare dată de conjuncția paradoxală dintre filosofie şi credință, şi anume *Filosofii cerului*, semnată de Claudiu Mesaroş – un universitar timişorean tânăr şi de perspectivă. Este vorba de un tratat de istoria filosofiei medievale, tipărit sub egida Editurii Universității de Vest, în care autorul reuşeşte performanța de a face mai vizibilă importanța patristicii şi scolasticii. Nu este greu de înțeles că sinteza unui mileniu chinuit de prejudecăți şi erezii, a unor vremuri în care filosofia era considerată fie o ispită diabolică (Tatian, Tertulian), fie un dar dumnezeiesc (Justin Martirul, Athenagora Atenianul, Clement Alexandrinul ş.a.), presupune nu numai erudiție, dar şi talentul de a convinge că sub cerul creştinismului gândirii nu i s-a confiscat întru totul libertatea de a se gândi pe sine însăşi, respectiv sub umila condiție de a*ncilla theologiae* nu s-a înstrăinat de sine. În acelaşi timp, consider meritoriu efortul lui Claudiu Mesaroş de a aduce în actualitate unele probleme de început ale formării noii para-