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Auschwitz is one of the abiding landmarks of twentieth century history, indeed perhaps of all history. It was not just the unendurable horror of what went on there, but also the fact that the evil was perpetrated by one of the most advanced peoples of Europe, a people whose contributions to civilisation have been immeasurable, in music, literature, philosophy and science. But what actually is the impact of Auschwitz in the first quarter of the twentieth-first century, some seventy or more years since the whole world had its eyes opened to that dismal place?

According to Yoram Hazony, in *The Virtue of Nationalism* (New York: Basic Books, 2018), there are two principal outcomes of Auschwitz. One is the creation of the state of Israel: the Jewish people, abandoned by the rest of the world during the Shoah, forged for themselves a state in which they could be safe and defend themselves and their children. The other is the prevalence of liberal internationalism in the world today, particularly in the European Union and in transnational bodies like the World Bank, UNESCO and the International Court of Justice: on this view it was nationalism which caused Auschwitz, and civilised peoples must eschew it as they work their way, and the world's way, to a new order that gets rid of the malign anachronism of nationalism.

In Hazony's view these two outcomes lead to a perverse paradox in the case of Israel. From the first point of view, Israel represents Jewish men and women, rifles in hand, watching over their own children – 'Israel is the opposite of Auschwitz'. From the second point of view Israel represents the horror of Jewish soldiers using force against innocent others, backed by nothing more than their own government's view of what is in their national interest – 'Israel is Auschwitz', or at least a continuation of the trend in human history that led to Auschwitz.

This startling analysis will be found profoundly shocking by many, although, if it has any plausibility, it would go some way to explain the otherwise puzzling hatred felt viscerally by so many for the state of Israel, and which leads to such outrages as replacing the star of David on the Israeli flag with a swastika. The analysis begins to make some sort of sense if one follows the argument that has leads Hazony to his conclusions about Auschwitz. Nevertheless philosophers of today are likely to find this argument deeply

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counter-intuitive at first sight, as it represents a root and branch rejection of the two philosophers who have probably done most to shape contemporary political thinking in the Anglo-American philosophical world, namely Locke and Kant.

Locke is rejected by Hazony for having embedded in the philosophical mind the notion we should think of the state as the outcome of agreements, actual or potential, between freely consenting contractors. Of course no one believes in an original social contract as a historical fact, but the starting point of so much contemporary political philosophy is the notion that political arrangements should be subject to putative assent and, if necessary amendment, by would-be freely consenting contractors, guided by nothing more than their own rationality, a rationality they share with all other theoretical contractors. Against this abstract conception of the purely rational citizen excogitating notions of justice and authority in an ideal constitutional convention, Hazony urges the rootedness of real people, in such actual human realities as family, place, tribe, language, culture, tradition and history – all of which go to make us what we are, and which impose on us loyalties, duties, tastes and sensibilities, not of our choosing, and which in certain circumstances will also enlist us as members of nation states where these various historical contingencies are reflected. Of course, even where, as in the case of the USA, there is an explicit process of constitution making, this process will be deeply influenced by the pre-existing thought and practices of its framers. One symptom of this is that the revolutionaries of 1776 saw themselves as claiming the rights of the free-born Englishmen they thought they were, and some of them actually invoked Magna Carta (of 1215) to this effect.

Kant is criticised by Hazony for regarding the nation state as a ‘degrading’ condition, in his terms, a middle stage between the lawless freedom of savages, and the international system to which he aspired. In Kant’s ideal system nations will renounce their freedom and, again in Kant’s words, will ‘adapt themselves to public coercive laws, and thus form an *international state*, which would necessarily grow until it embraced all the people of the earth’. From this Kantian perspective, Israel is an unwelcome example of a late comer to the middle stage, the stage of nation states, particularly reprehensible as its founders were in one sense children of the European Enlightenment, and should have been Kantian cosmopolitans rather than nationalists. By contrast, the European Union, with its long-standing commitment to ‘ever closer union’ and a wiping away of national differences is a big step on the road to internationalism, at least on the continent of Europe. That this Kantian ideal is accepted

almost unthinkingly by so many contemporary intellectuals and establishment figures goes a long way to explaining the widespread incredulity and anger at the insolent attempt of voters in Britain to extricate themselves from the Union.

Hazony's objection to projects like that of Kant is that they are both utopian and imperialistic. They are utopian because they assume that the actual nature of human beings and their inherent rootedness to home and custom and the rest can simply be wiped away in favour of an abstract citizenship of the world. In this wiping away there will inevitably be all kinds of new regulations, procedures and beliefs laid down by the new international authority, and deviant tastes, customs and opinions outlawed. The utopianism involved in this international slate cleaning will also be imperialistic, because it will also necessarily involve a trans-national authority over-riding nations and their sovereignty. Unlike earlier empires it may be an imperium of law and administration, if not of arms, but it is an imperium nonetheless, and will be ultimately backed up by arms. In this context Hazony refers not just to the empires of the ancient world, including the Roman empire, but also to what he sees as the imperial pretensions of the empire and papacy in medieval Europe, attempting to establish a single regime in Europe (and beyond), as well as the later Hapsburg empire and Napoleon's imperial ambitions. He also sees the Hitlerian Reich as an imperial project, way transcending the limits and proper ambition of a truly German national state. So the second response to Auschwitz – that it was an example of nationalism at work – is for Hazony profoundly wrong. It was an example of a malign and transnational empire building.

Against these imperial projects, old and new, Hazony continually invokes the Mosaic and Protestant traditions. In the Hebrew Bible God gave the Judaic people their own home and land and nation in which to forge their own history, customs and traditions, but they were not to conquer other nations, rather they were to live in peace with them. The Protestant traditions admired by Hazony are those of the Holland, a nation freeing itself from the Spanish empire, the United States (in the main not an imperial power) and Britain (though, like Edmund Burke, one of his heroes, and like John Stuart Mill another, Hazony has reservations about the British Empire).

For Hazony, the struggle between nationalism and internationalism is seen in terms of the age-old struggle between empiricism and rationalism. The internationalist and imperialist (which by another name the internationalist is) believes that he or she has a blueprint which is demanded by his or her reason, and which should be

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followed by everyone. Against this utopianism, the nationalist will point to experience, the rootedness of actual human beings and their genuine diversity. For a nationalist no nation is perfect, and some might be very imperfect; but in the case of a successful and civilised nation, it will very likely be the best regime that can be had, and certainly not something to be wiped away in favour of a rationalist internationalism. Burke, as already noted, is one of Hazony's philosophical heroes, and so are the neglected English jurists John Fortescue and John Selden, whose study his book may well do something to revive.

Empires come in many forms, as Hazony points out; in today's world internationalism and hence imperialism are defended in different ways by Christians of various types, by Muslims, by Marxists and, perhaps above all, by rationalist liberals, who differ in the detail but agree in their hostility to the nation state. Hazony's book is short for so large a topic and necessarily broad-brush; there will no doubt be much to disagree with, particularly in the detail. Nevertheless his defence of the nation state and his critique of contemporary internationalism are striking, original and timely, and in today's academic consensus refreshingly counter-cultural. His book deserves close consideration and study. In its humanity and empirical good sense, it does something to suggest of Locke, Kant and their philosophical followers (in words that Edmund Burke applied to the rationalists of the French revolution even before the bloodshed) that 'their liberty is not liberal; their science is presumptuous ignorance; their humanity is savage and brutal'.