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- Title** Should we promote patriotism in schools?
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- Abstract** *If patriotism is love of one's country, the attempt to promote it in schools must count as a form of emotional education. Emotional education is defensible insofar as it consists in offering pupils good reasons and effective techniques for fostering or suppressing particular emotions. The question is whether we are in a position to offer pupils good reasons for loving their countries. In this article I set out an account of the rationality of emotions in general and of love in particular, then examine some of the arguments for and against patriotic attachment. I conclude that there is room for reasonable disagreement on the desirability of patriotism and that we therefore ought not to promote it in schools but rather to teach it as a controversial issue.*

Should we promote patriotism in schools?

There is, at present, a lively debate in philosophy of education about whether or not we should promote patriotism in schools (see, for example: Archard, 1999; Ben-Porath, 2007, 2006; Brighouse, 2006; Callan, 2006, 1997; Gutmann, 2002; Miller, 2007; Merry, 2009; Nussbaum, 1994; Stevens, 1999; White, 2001, 1996; Wingo, 2007). A striking feature of this debate is the determination of each side to draw the line of battle in a different place. Defenders of patriotic education focus their efforts on demonstrating (what they take to be) the benefits of loving one's country: they take it as read, more or less, that showing patriotism to be beneficial supplies the warrant for promoting it in schools. Opponents of patriotic education, by contrast, pay little attention to the pros and cons of patriotic attachment, giving centre stage instead to (what they take to be) the practical difficulties of cultivating it. Chief among these is what Harry Brighouse calls 'the distortion problem' (Brighouse, 2006, p.109), according to which any attempt to persuade pupils to love a country is likely to involve misrepresenting it. There is thus a curious failure of engagement between those on either side of the debate, and a tendency for each to regard the arguments of the other as only marginally relevant to the problem.

My aim in this article is to meet, and defeat, the advocates of patriotic education on their own terms. I think they are right to focus on the question of whether or not patriotism is a good thing, but wrong to suppose we can say with confidence that it is. I shall argue that reasonable people can and do reasonably disagree about the desirability of loving one's country, and therefore that patriotism should be taught as a controversial issue in schools.

I do not underestimate the seriousness of the distortion problem. It is undoubtedly true that the great majority of efforts to promote patriotism in schools the world over have been, and continue to be, severely compromised by their reliance on the perpetuation of national myths, fantasies and falsehoods. Nor do I think it is adequate for defenders of patriotic education to respond to this problem by simply accepting misrepresentation as a necessary evil, in the manner of William Galston:

... rigorous historical research will almost certainly vindicate complex 'revisionist' accounts of key figures in American history. Civic education, however, requires a more noble, moralizing history: a pantheon of heroes who confer legitimacy on central institutions and constitute worthy objects of emulation. It is unrealistic to believe that more than a few adults of liberal societies will ever move beyond the kind of civic commitment engendered by such a pedagogy. (Galston, 1991, pp.243-4)

If we can only promote love of a country by deliberately misrepresenting it, the price of patriotic education is certainly too high to pay. An education that requires teachers to 'select, exaggerate, forget, mythologize, fictionalise, and lie' is, as David Archard insists, an education 'unworthy of its calling' (Archard, 1999, p.166).

But, significant though the distortion problem is, pointing to the practical difficulties of

cultivating patriotic feeling is an unsatisfying and ultimately unpersuasive response to calls for patriotic education. For if patriotism really does carry the benefits its advocates claim, we presumably have reason to make fairly strenuous efforts to overcome whatever practical difficulties lie in the way of giving pupils access to those benefits. Few take the view that there is a *necessary* connection between loving one's country and believing falsehoods about it, and there are enough patriots whose love for their country is undimmed by frank acknowledgement of its faults, errors and atrocities for us to doubt that there is even a reliable contingent connection between the two. So why, in principle, should a way not be found of promoting patriotism in schools without peddling national myths and fictions?

One defender of patriotic education undeterred by the distortion problem is John White. He advocates the construction of a new, ethically defensible 'idea of Britishness' to serve as the focus of national sentiment. In promoting this idea in the classroom we can explicitly contrast it both with older, more dubious notions of Britishness and with the concrete, complex, morally ambiguous realities of British national life. Thus: 'history lessons in schools will show our warts and wens as well as beauty spots: there is no cause for deviations from historians' normal standards of objectivity' (White, 1996, p.336). Whatever one thinks of White's proposal, it shows that defenders of patriotic education are obliged neither to ignore the distortion problem nor to join Galston in accepting its implications; they can urge instead that ways can and should be found to overcome it.

So I think it is a mistake for opponents of patriotic education to put all their eggs in the practical difficulties basket. We should resist calls for the promotion of patriotism in schools not (or not only) on the grounds that it is difficult in practice, but on the grounds that it is unjustifiable in principle. Or so I shall argue in what follows.

What is patriotism?

Patriotism is love of one's country. It is a certain kind of emotional attachment to a certain kind of object. To ask about the desirability of patriotism is to ask whether, on balance, it is good or bad for people to have this feeling about this object.

A country comprises a national community and the land on which it resides. The unity of these elements lies in the fact that nations are conceptually connected to their homelands: a constitutive and distinguishing feature of national communities is a shared sense of belonging to a particular geographical place. The object of patriotic attachment, then, is 'a certain kind of territorially concentrated, intergenerational community to which the patriot belongs and whose survival and prosperity she values deeply' (Callan, 2006, p.533).

It is helpful to distinguish patriotism from certain normative beliefs whose company it sometimes keeps. One of these is the belief that one's national community should enjoy political independence, a view for which David Archard recommends we reserve the term 'nationalism': 'Nationalism is, as a political theory, a normative claim about the proper consonance of nation and state; it claims that a nation should have independent sovereign statehood and that states are political communities which should be bound together by a single national identity' (Archard, 1999, p.159). While love for one's country often goes together with the belief that it should be a sovereign state, each is perfectly intelligible in the absence of the other.

The other normative belief from which I'd like to distinguish patriotism is the belief that we have special obligations to our fellow nationals, over and above our general obligations to all human beings. Special obligations between compatriots have found capable defenders in Yael Tamir (1993) and David Miller (1995), but their existence remains hotly contested in contemporary political philosophy. Miller himself holds that they are plausible only if one favours a particularist account of the structure of ethical thought: ethical universalists, he thinks, 'should regard nationality not as a justifiable source of ethical identity but as a limitation to be overcome' (p.64). The point to note here is that there is no necessary connection between the position one takes on the ethical significance of nationality and the feelings one has about one's country. Patriots can consistently either accept or deny special obligations between fellow nationals; or they can decline to adopt any view on the matter at all.

Educating the emotions

If patriotism is love of one's country, the attempt to promote it in schools must count as a form of emotional education. A few general remarks on the enterprise of educating the emotions are therefore in order.

First, emotional education is a task to which schools should (and do) address themselves. Although it is sometimes suggested that schools ought to steer clear of the affective domain and confine their attention to matters of cognition, there are no very good arguments in support of this view and some compelling ones against it. One such argument is that cognition and affect are not at all easy to separate: an integral part of coming to understand the facts, theories, texts and narratives that make up the cognitive content of the curriculum is coming to feel their interest and excitement, their inspiration or disenchantment, their nobility, injustice, comedy or tragedy. Another is that schools do more than deliver curricula: they are communities in which friendships are made and unmade, conflicts are generated and resolved, achievements are celebrated and failures commiserated. And still another is that education, on any adequate account of it, is concerned with the learning of persons as such, not just persons as reasoners or workers or citizens, and our emotions are too central and too troublesome a feature of our personhood for educators to be able to ignore them. So it is difficult to see how schools could avoid taking some responsibility for the emotional education of pupils. (One may, of course, admit this point while holding fast to the view that the home is, actually and properly, the primary site of children's emotional learning and that the contribution of schools in this area is merely supplemental.)

Second, emotional education may be either *rational* or *non-rational*. By rational emotional education I mean the attempt to offer students good reasons for moderating or changing their emotional responses, to help them see why the reasons are good, and to equip them with techniques for bringing about such changes as they choose to make on the basis of those reasons. By non-rational emotional education I mean the attempt to deploy methods of psychological manipulation to alter students' emotional responses directly, without reference to their capacities for reason-assessment and rational choice. It is tempting to say that only the former counts as education proper, on the grounds that it alone meets an appropriate standard of 'wittingness and voluntariness on the part of the learner' (Peters, 1966, p.45); but perhaps this unhelpfully excludes the important and legitimate forms of non-rational influence - the modelling, cajoling and exhorting - by which teachers begin to shape the emotional responses of young children before they are ready to assume responsibility for their own emotional

lives. What I think we can say is that, insofar as we have a fundamental obligation to respect and to develop the rationality of our pupils, we must strongly prefer the rational approach to emotional education; and, moreover, that we may consider cultivating non-rationally in younger pupils only such emotional responses and attachments as we are able and entitled to cultivate rationally in older ones. In other words, unless it is appropriate for us to promote patriotism in schools by rational means, there is certainly no question of it being appropriate to do so by non-rational means.

Third, emotional education is possible because our emotions are partially under our control. They are plainly not *fully* under our control: emotions are, to a significant extent, things that happen to us, things we suffer or experience or undergo. But if we were wholly at their mercy, it would hardly make sense to talk of there being good reasons to moderate them or change them, to foster or suppress or overcome them. Yet such talk clearly does make sense. We issue such imperatives as ‘Cheer up!’, ‘Calm down!’ and ‘Don’t be afraid!’ because we know that there are things people can do, positive steps they can take, to lift their spirits, dampen their ardour or dispel their fear. They cannot just banish powerful feelings in whose grip they find themselves, but they can, usually and if they want to, act to reduce them; and perhaps, by repeatedly so acting, build up a measure of resistance to the unwanted feelings. Emotions are not in any straightforward sense *commandable*, but they are, at least to some degree, *malleable*.

What are the methods by which we exercise this partial emotional control? They are, of course, many and varied. They range from taking deep breaths and thinking happy thoughts, through imitating behaviour associated with feelings we are trying to cultivate, to undertaking extended programmes of therapy or self-examination. A quick-tempered person, for example, struggling with her propensity to fly off the handle at the slightest provocation, might try such methods as refusing to attend to what she knows will infuriate her, issuing reminders to herself about the things that warrant anger and the things that do not, and biting her tongue when she feels the rage welling up inside her. An unfeeling person who regrets his detachment from the suffering of others might try reflecting on the ordinary lives, hopes and attachments of those who now find themselves in dire circumstances, imagining himself and his loved ones in those same circumstances, and, when he does feel a flicker of compassion, dwelling on the feeling for longer than he is naturally inclined. Mary Warnock puts particular emphasis on the role of pretence in the shaping of emotions (Warnock, 1986). She takes the example of children who, on losing in competitive games, are so upset by their defeat that they cannot find it within themselves to be happy for the winners. The best way for them to cultivate in themselves a capacity for this sort of identificatory happiness, Warnock plausibly argues, is to fake it: they should congratulate the winners with a show of sincerity and warmth, in the hope that actual sincerity and warmth will follow in due course. Just as, on the Aristotelian model, the first step in the acquisition of virtue is the imitation of the virtuous, so it may be that the first step in the acquisition of a desired emotional response is the imitation of those who have it: ‘Acting the part of the generous, the good loser, may bring you nearer to the character you are pretending to be... The habit of concealment may finish certain feelings off; the habit of expressing feelings, at times not truly felt, may bring them into being’ (p.181). These, then, are the kinds of methods by which we exercise partial control over our emotional lives, and which are a condition of the possibility of emotional education.

Emotions and reasons

Rational emotional education, we have said, consists in offering pupils good reasons for moderating or changing their emotional responses, helping them to see why the reasons are good, and equipping them with techniques for bringing about such changes as they choose to make on the basis of those reasons. This assumes not only that emotions are malleable, but that they are susceptible to rational evaluation. It assumes that we can draw rationally sustainable distinctions between good emotions and bad ones, between feelings that fit and feelings that fail to fit the situations in which they arise, between emotional responses that are appropriate or proportionate in their intensity and those that are too strong or too weak. I think this assumption is sound, but it requires some elaboration and defence.

The standard approach to rationally evaluating emotions is predicated on the idea that most emotions are constituted in part by beliefs about their objects. Fear, for example, is constituted in part by the belief that its object is dangerous, indignation by the belief that its object is unfair, compassion by the belief that its object is suffering. It always makes sense to ask of these constitutive beliefs whether they are epistemically warranted: are we *justified* in holding that the object in question is dangerous, unfair or suffering? Where the beliefs are warranted, so the story goes, the corresponding emotions may be said to be rational.

A common objection to this approach is that it mischaracterises emotions. Such emotions as fear, indignation and compassion, it is pointed out, are not only conceivable but commonly encountered in the absence of the beliefs that are supposed to constitute them. D.W. Hamlyn observes that people who are afraid of mice do not typically believe that mice are dangerous, but rather have a propensity to *see them as* dangerous: ‘They may know that mice are too small and too harmless in any direct way to be frightening, and whatever view one has about the relation between knowledge and belief it seems right to say that they believe this too - in an intellectual way at least. It may remain true, however, that whatever their intellectual beliefs about mice may be, they cannot help seeing them in practice as frightening little creatures’ (Hamlyn, 1978, p.222). Or again, consider how emotions can be stirred by vividly imagined possibilities, even when those possibilities are fairly remote. I may be (and sometimes am) assailed by feelings of indignation at the thought that a paper I intend to submit for publication will be inattentively read and unfairly rejected by its anonymous reviewers, though I neither believe nor seriously expect that this is going to happen. An adequate account of emotions must therefore, as Patricia Greenspan insists, allow for ‘propositional attitudes that are weaker than strict belief: states of mind, like *imagining* that danger looms, that involve entertaining a predicative thought without assent’ (Greenspan, 1988, p.3). Following Greenspan, I shall speak henceforth of emotions being constituted in part by *thoughts*, rather than beliefs, about their objects.

It might be thought that this amendment should have little effect on the criterion of evaluation proposed by the standard approach. Could we not just say that an emotion is rational when its constitutive thought is a warranted belief? Greenspan thinks not. She takes the example of suspicion, an emotion constituted in part by the thought that its object has done or intends to do wrong. It cannot be right, she argues, to say that it is only rational to be suspicious of someone when the evidence of wrongdoing is epistemically decisive; for in this situation we should not speak of *suspicion* at all. Rather, suspicion is rational when the evidence available warrants *alertness to the possibility* that its object has done wrong. If someone has given me no indication that she is guilty of wrongdoing, and no third party has suggested to me that this is the case, it would be irrational and paranoid of me to be suspicious of her; but if there are conspicuous oddities in her behaviour, if I detect a shiftiness in her manner or a peculiar aversion to certain topics of conversation, I am rationally entitled to entertain the thought that

something is awry, notwithstanding the fact that her behavioural quirks fall a long way short of the evidential standard required for justified belief.

Greenspan's proposal, then, is not that we abandon the standard approach to rationally evaluating emotions, but that we lower the evidential standard it proposes for the assessment of constitutive thoughts. An emotion is rational not (only) when its constitutive thought is a warranted belief, but (also) when there is warrant for being alert to the possibility that its constitutive thought is true. It is rationally appropriate for me to be moved by feelings of fear, indignation or compassion when I encounter suggestive but inconclusive *signs* of danger, unfairness or suffering, as well as when I encounter these things directly and unambiguously. The irrationality of fear of mice is preserved on this account: there is no more justification for entertaining the thought that mice are dangerous than for believing they are. My indignation at the imagined prospect of my paper being unfairly rejected is a less clear cut case: given that papers sometimes *are* inattentively read by reviewers, it is presumably not wholly unreasonable for me to be alert to this possibility.

The standard approach can, then, be modified in such a way as to meet the first objection. There is, however, a second and deeper worry about this way of thinking about the rationality of emotions. An example may help to bring this out.

Gareth and Tim are lifeguards, attempting to save the life of a holiday-maker who has gone into the sea in defiance of warning signs on the beach and has been pulled beneath the waves by a powerful riptide. Both lifeguards are in grave danger, yet neither is afraid. Gareth is unafraid because he, like the holiday-maker but with rather less excuse, is unimpressed by the warning signs and severely underestimates the dangerousness of the riptide. He assumes the holiday-maker is just a poor swimmer and expects the rescue to be straightforward. Tim, by contrast, is fully cognizant of the danger. He recognises that he may lose his life in the rescue attempt, but years of training and experience have taught him to suppress his fear. He judges that fear would be counter-productive in this situation, would impede his ability to make the sort of clear-headed, split-second, life-and-death judgments necessary in difficult rescues.

Here we might say that Gareth's failure to feel fear is irrational. The evidence of the danger at hand is manifest and ample and Gareth's refusal to take it seriously is a straightforward failure of epistemic rationality. But would we want to say the same of Tim? Surely not. Tim has stifled his fear for very good reasons, notwithstanding his sincere and justified belief that he is in danger of drowning.

This shows that the standard approach to the rationality of emotions is at best incomplete: there are cases in which it is quite rational to suppress emotions despite their constitutive thoughts being epistemically warranted. We can ask of our emotional responses not only whether there is evidence to support them, but also whether it is helpful or harmful, beneficial or burdensome, for us to have them. Even when my encounter with danger, unfairness or suffering is direct and unambiguous, I can intelligibly wonder about the value or advantage of my feeling fear, indignation or compassion.

Greenspan distinguishes on this basis between the *representational* and the *practical* rationality of emotions. Representational rationality is 'backward-looking', in the sense that it looks back at the features of situations that give rise to emotional responses; practical rationality is 'forward-looking', in the sense that it looks forward to the likely benefits and drawbacks of those responses. In our lifeguard example, Tim suppresses his fear because he

judges that being afraid, although representationally appropriate to his predicament, is not practically conducive to the end of saving the holiday-maker's life.

Several kinds of consideration are pertinent to assessing the practical rationality of emotions. There are, first, considerations of *intrinsic* value: some emotions are inherently pleasurable or uplifting, others painful or depressing; some are integral to our dignity as persons, others antithetical to it. Just as important, and usually harder to weigh up, are considerations of *instrumental* value: there are various ways in which emotions can assist or impede us in the discharge of our duties and the pursuit of our goals. One way they can assist us is by *supplementing our motivation* to do what we ought to do; and one way they can impede us is by *clouding our judgment* about what we ought to do.

The positive instrumental role of emotions in supplementing motivation is one to which Greenspan devotes a good deal of attention. She argues persuasively that emotions can move us to action when knowing what we ought to do is not enough to make us do it. Emotion offers a practical solution to the problem of *akrasia*: it 'sets up a check on weakness of will' (p.174). So important is this function of emotion in our lives that it may be appropriate for us to think of certain emotional responses not just as desirable or beneficial, but as obligatory:

By subjecting himself to emotional pressure, an agent erects a barrier to the will's moment-to-moment flexibility. Our claim that he 'ought to feel' in such cases means that he ought to commit himself by means of emotional pressure to following through on some of his long-term desires. (p.174)

Greenspan offers the example of a person against whom an offence has been committed and who is required, by the principles of justice and respect for human dignity, to rebuke the offender. The problem is that rebuking those who have injured us is difficult: at best socially awkward and at worst deeply intimidating. So although the injured party knows what she ought to do, this knowledge has less motivational force than her fear of confronting the offender. What is needed to make up the motivational shortfall, Greenspan argues, is anger. Anger is an uncomfortable emotion and those in its grip have a strong motive to alleviate their discomfort by redressing the injustice that has caused it. If our injured party can get angry about the offence committed against her, she is much more likely to be able to overcome her fear of confrontation and issue the rebuke that justice demands. We might therefore reasonably judge that it is, in general and on balance, a good thing for us to get angry when we are deliberately injured by others.

The negative instrumental role of emotions in clouding or distorting judgment has been noted in philosophical discussions of emotion since the dawn of Western philosophy. According to Aristotle: 'The emotions are all those feelings that so change men as to affect their judgments, and that are also attended by pain or pleasure' (Aristotle, *Rhetoric*, Book II Chapter I). Emotions compromise the rationality and objectivity of our judgments by predisposing us to view situations in certain lights, by preventing us from seeing things as they really are, and by inclining us to form opinions without due attention to relevant evidence. Consider, says Aristotle, how people are affected by their emotions in criminal trials: 'when they feel friendly to the man who comes before them for judgement, they regard him as having done little wrong, if any; when they feel hostile, they take the opposite view' (*ibid.*). The degree to which a trial can be fair depends in part on the degree to which jurors can suppress or set aside their feelings of friendliness or hostility towards the defendant, of revulsion at the crime

of which he is accused, of sympathy or contempt for the victim. It is for this reason that people likely to be in the grip of such emotions, people related to or involved with the victim or defendant, are precluded from serving on the jury.

In the *Nicomachean Ethics*, Aristotle offers an assessment of anger rather different from Greenspan's:

Anger seems to listen to argument to some extent, but to mishear it, as do hasty servants who run out before they have heard the whole of what one says, and then muddle the order, or as dogs bark if there is but a knock at the door, before looking to see if it is a friend; so anger by reason of the warmth and hastiness of its nature, though it hears, does not hear an order, and springs to take revenge. (Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, Book VII, Chapter VI)

Perhaps, after all, it is not such a good idea for us to get angry about injuries done to us. Perhaps anger leads us too often to misconstrue accidents as violations, to assign blame without adequate grounds, to issue rebukes disproportionate to offences. These, at any rate, are the sort of instrumental costs that we must weigh against the motivational benefits of anger in the face of injury.

Emotions, then, can be subjected to rational assessment either representationally, by attending to the epistemic warrant for their constitutive thoughts, or practically, by attending to their intrinsic or instrumental value. What is the relationship between these two modes of assessment?

In the standard case they are complementary and reinforce one another. Fear is representationally justified when danger looms and practically useful in prompting one to run away; compassion is a representationally appropriate response to the suffering of others and a practically valuable one insofar as it motivates action to alleviate that suffering. But sometimes the modes of assessment conflict, as in the lifeguard example. Here it seems rational for Tim to suppress his epistemically warranted fear in order to keep a clear head for the rescue attempt, though if his fear were nevertheless to overcome him it would be odd to describe the emotion as irrational. There are also cases where an emotion is epistemically unjustified but instrumentally helpful: Greenspan offers the example of 'pride-based confidence, the feeling that one is up to any task' (p.147). There are undoubtedly situations in life in which it is highly advantageous to feel self-confident, regardless of whether one's achievements to date supply a warrant for this feeling. If, by pretending to myself that my achievements are considerably more impressive than they are, I can generate the self-confidence I need to succeed in the enterprise at hand, it may be quite rational for me to do so. Though here again I could hardly be accused of irrationality if instead I proportioned my self-confidence to my past achievements.

It is perhaps because emotions resemble beliefs in some respects and actions in others that we find ourselves torn between the representational and practical modes of assessment. Be that as it may, it seems clear that criteria of both kinds typically and properly inform our attempts to assess the rationality of our emotions.

Reasons to love

Armed with this general account of the rationality of emotions, let us now consider the rationality of love in particular. For love is an emotion of an unusual kind. Most emotions, as we have seen, are constituted in part by thoughts about their objects: my entertaining the thought that something is dangerous or unfair or suffering is a necessary condition of my having the emotion of fear or indignation or compassion. As D.W. Hamlyn observed some time ago, however, love is an emotion with no such constitutive thought. There is no thought I must have or belief I must hold about an object (with the arguable exception of the belief that it exists) as a necessary condition of my loving it:

It seems to me that loving someone or something is not incompatible with, for example, having no respect for them, finding them in many ways distasteful, or recognizing in them a whole series of bad qualities which are not overridden by good qualities... In the face of all this it is very difficult to think of any particular belief that the lover *must* have about the beloved, or any way in which the lover must see the beloved. (Hamlyn, 1978, pp.226-7)

Accepting this claim about love requires rejecting what is sometimes called the cognitivist theory of emotion. According to the cognitivist theory, emotions are *by definition* partially constituted by thoughts about their objects. It just does not make sense, on this account, to talk of emotions without constitutive thoughts. Confronted with Hamlyn's observation about love, determined defenders of the cognitivist theory therefore have two options. The first is to accept that love lacks a constitutive thought but deny that love is an emotion. This is an option to which Hamlyn rightly gives short shrift:

It would not be a plausible move to defend any theory of the emotions to which love and hate seemed the exceptions by saying that love and hate are after all not emotions. I have heard this said, but it seems to me a desperate move to make. If love and hate are not emotions what is? (Hamlyn, 1978, p.219)

The second option is to take up Hamlyn's challenge to identify a 'particular belief that the lover must have about the beloved'. The most promising and most popular candidate for such a belief or thought is that the beloved is excellent, virtuous or valuable. It would, on this view, be unintelligible to say of someone that she loves something but neither believes nor entertains the thought that it is excellent.

But while this may be the most promising candidate for love's constitutive thought, it is still highly implausible. There is nothing particularly excellent, virtuous or valuable about most of the things that most of us love, nor are we obliged to pretend otherwise in order to sustain our love for them. I am under no illusions about the many shortcomings of *The Big Chill* as a piece of cinema. It is not an excellent film, or an important or ambitious or groundbreaking one; there are no cinematic milestones that would never have been reached had it not been made. It is riddled with cliché and melodrama and the performances of the ensemble cast are variable at best. Yet it is a film I love. I love it despite its flaws, perhaps even because of them, but certainly not because I am in denial about them.

If this is true of our love for inanimate objects, it would seem to be even more true of our love

for people. The love of parents for their children, a form of interpersonal love as deep and steadfast as any, does not depend on any thought of the children's merits. Many parents do, of course, have wildly exaggerated views of their children's abilities and virtues; but this is just an instance of the way in which emotions can cloud and distort judgment, not evidence for the view that love logically requires thoughts of excellence. There are plenty of parents who see clearly that their children are no cleverer, kinder, braver, prettier, more athletic or more artistic than average, but who love them unconditionally nevertheless.

For these reasons it is increasingly common to find philosophers rejecting the view that love involves the constitutive thought that its object is excellent or valuable. Here, for example, are recent verdicts on the matter from Harry Frankfurt and Eamonn Callan:

It is entirely possible for a person to be caused to love something without noticing its value, or without being at all impressed by its value, or despite recognising that there really is nothing especially valuable about it. It is even possible for a person to come to love something despite recognising that its inherent nature is actually and utterly bad. (Frankfurt, 2004, p.38)

We unashamedly love unremarkable cats and dogs, mediocre books, trivial jobs, ugly houses with unmemorable yards, in addition to our perfectly ordinary friends, kin and lovers... [T]he lover may be perfectly aware of the modest value that the beloved has in the larger scheme of things without that thought diminishing love. (Callan, 2006, p.526)

Like Hamlyn, I think the right way to deal with these facts about love is not to deny that love is an emotion but to reject the cognitivist theory that requires all emotions to have constitutive thoughts. Most emotions, to be sure, *are* constituted in part by thoughts about their objects, but a few are not; and love is an instance of the latter.

If this is correct, it has an important implication for the rationality of love. It means that we cannot evaluate our loves using the representational mode of assessment. Because love has no constitutive thought, the question of epistemic warrant simply does not arise. There is nothing that could be true of any of the things I love that would make my love for them representationally inappropriate. The only mode of assessment that has application to questions of love, or of any other emotion that lacks a constitutive thought, is the practical mode.

This in turn means that one familiar subset of arguments for and against patriotism are wrongheaded. It will not do to defend patriotism by pointing to a country's achievements and virtues, or to attack it by pointing to a country's failures and vices. This is analogous to defending one's love for one's children by pointing to their school reports. Just as it is no more rational to love children who do well at school than children who do badly, so it is no more rational to love countries with glorious histories than countries with inglorious ones. (This is a slight oversimplification: there may be *practical* considerations that make love for, say, peaceful and prosperous countries more rational than love for war-torn and impoverished ones, insofar as it is always painful to see the object of one's love in dire straits. The point is that some such story about practical costs and benefits would need to be told to make the achievements and failures of a country relevant to the rationality of loving it. And in fact I doubt that practical considerations of this kind carry nearly as much weight in rational

judgments about patriotism as practical considerations that make no reference to national characteristics.)

Reasons to love, then, are necessarily practical in nature. To determine whether or not we should be patriots, we need to ask not what our countries are like, but what the intrinsic and instrumental gains and losses of loving our countries might be. I cannot hope to do justice here to the variety of ways in which we might be advantaged or disadvantaged by patriotic attachment. What I can try to do is show that there are weighty enough considerations on either side for the matter to be regarded, for the time being at least, as rationally unsettled. In the remaining sections of this article I shall outline three such considerations, two in support of patriotism and one against.

Patriotism as a spur to civic duty

We noted above that one of the ways in which emotions can be instrumentally beneficial is by supplementing our motivation to do what we ought to do. The most familiar and most persuasive practical argument for loving one's country invokes a benefit of this kind. Patriotic feeling, it is claimed, supplements the motivation of citizens to do their civic duty.

This argument works best if we make two assumptions: first, that the country to which patriots are attached is a sovereign state, so the national community is coextensive with the political community; and second, that the sovereign state in question is a liberal democracy, so the civic action required to sustain it can reasonably be thought of as morally incumbent on citizens. Armed with these assumptions, the logic of the argument is straightforward. Citizens have a range of obligations to their political community, some of which are fairly onerous and in conflict with their own interests. There is therefore a danger that they will be inadequately motivated to meet these obligations. But if their political community is a national community they love, they are emotionally invested in its flourishing and consequently have a powerful supplementary motive to do what they ought.

This is an argument vigorously defended by Eamonn Callan (2006, 1997). The advantage enjoyed by patriots, he contends, is that 'their love of country blurs the distinction between self-interest and the interests of compatriots in a way that makes action to support the creation of just institutions less costly' (Callan, 2006, p.543). It is just *easier* for patriots to make the sacrifices and payments that membership of their political community requires of them. The demands of justice are what they are regardless of how we feel about the beneficiaries of our just deeds; but the more we love the beneficiaries, the less our just deeds feel like sacrifices. When members of a community we love are impoverished, it cannot but be distressing to us, so in taking action to reduce their poverty we also relieve the discomfort of our own distress. We would, of course, be moral monsters if this were our *reason* for taking action: the point is not that our emotional discomfort supplies us with a good reason for acting to reduce poverty, but rather that it helps us overcome the weakness of will that can prevent us from doing what we already have good reason to do.

The spur-to-civic-duty argument also underpins John White's defence of patriotic sentiment:

... in a liberal democracy, some way has to be found to motivate a sufficient number of citizens to favour redistribution, especially where it is against their financial interest to do this. If they feel themselves to be part

of the same community as those in need, their emotional bonds with them may outweigh narrower considerations of advantage and disadvantage. National sentiment can help to provide this bonding. (White, 1996, p.331)

Here, then, is one plausible argument in support of patriotism. One good reason for loving my country, assuming that I am a citizen of a liberal democratic nation-state, is that it will helpfully supplement my motivation to meet my civic obligations.

It is sometimes objected to this argument that patriotic feeling is hardly likely to be stirred in the hearts of those who lack it merely by their coming to see its instrumental value in supplementing civic motivation. David Archard, for example, insists that ‘I cannot love Britain simply and only because I recognise that all Britons must love Britain if Britain is to display good liberal order’ (Archard, 1999, p.164). But this objection misses the point. No doubt it is true that a person who feels nothing at all for Britain cannot start loving it ‘simply and only’ because she recognises the civic benefits of patriotism. We have already acknowledged that emotions are not commandable in this way: they are not conjured into existence by the force of rational arguments. Our principal concern is not with those who feel nothing at all for their countries, but with those who feel at least a flicker of affection for them. Emotions are not commandable but they are malleable; flickers of affection can be snuffed out or fanned into flames of love. It is quite possible and quite reasonable to ask which of these options is preferable, and the spur-to-civic-duty argument is a relevant and important consideration here.

At the same time, however, the argument is far from being self-evidently decisive. It is not at all clear that countries do in fact require patriotic citizenries in order to display ‘good liberal order’. For one thing, supplementary motives are not always needed to make citizens do their civic duty. For another, there are more kinds of motivational supplement than patriotism available to help citizens with their communal obligations. Many of us, for example, are prompted to play our part in the just redistribution of wealth less by patriotic sentiment than by fear of the penal consequences of tax evasion. So while patriotism can indeed serve as a spur to civic duty, this may not be a gain sufficient to outweigh all losses.

Patriotism as a source of pleasure

Another argument for patriotic attachment focuses on its intrinsic value. Loving one’s country, like loving anything else, is intrinsically valuable because inherently pleasurable. John Wilson notes the intimate conceptual connection between love and pleasure:

The fundamental and simple idea [of love] is that one finds pleasure in the object and gets pleasure out of it; and hence (since one cannot do that all the time in an immediate practical way) one is strongly attached to it in one's mind and heart, seeks it out, and wishes to preserve it (perhaps only in order to keep it safe so as to get reliable pleasure out of it). As a sighting shot, one might say that to love something is just to have a fairly permanent kind of intensity of desire for it and attachment to it. (Wilson, 1995, p.14)

Patriots are people who take pleasure in their national community and the land on which it

resides. They delight in their affinity with their compatriots and in the lilting resonance of their mother tongue; they celebrate the success of their athletes in international sporting competitions and the influence of their artists on world culture; they marvel at the beauty of their country's natural landscape and the magnificence of its architectural wonders. As Harry Brighthouse has it: 'It seems right that a sense of identification with fellow countrymen, and with one's country more generally, helps many people to make sense of their environment, helps them integrate into it, and makes them feel good' (Brighthouse, 2006, p.107).

Like the spur-to-civic-duty argument, the source-of-pleasure argument undoubtedly has rational force. But, again, its force is scarcely overwhelming. There are myriad things – individuals, communities, books, buildings, institutions, ideals, activities, theories – in which we can and do invest our love, and there is no reason to think that countries are more satisfying, more reliable or more identity-sustaining objects of love than a great many others. What is important, from the point of view of love's intrinsic value, is *that* we love, not *what* we love. Brighthouse's verdict here is surely right:

But national identification is only one source of flourishing: it is not essential in the way that I suspect identification with one's family is for most people. It is more like enthusiasm for a particular sport, or for a particular kind of music; it makes a real contribution to a person's sense of wellbeing, but if it were not there that person would substitute some other enthusiasm or locus of identity. If it were essential, there would be a strong case for promoting it... But if it is just one of many valuable sources, the case is much weaker. (p.107)

Patriotism as an impediment to civic judgment

The argument *against* patriotism I should like to consider casts love of country in the negative instrumental role identified earlier: that of impeding us in the discharge of our duties by clouding our judgment about what we ought to do. This argument also works best on the assumption that the country to which one is patriotically attached is a liberal democratic nation-state. Citizens of democratic states are required to elect governments and hold them to account, to subject to scrutiny the domestic and foreign policies devised and pursued on their behalf, and to vote or protest against such policies as they find to be imprudent or unjust. They can only meet these requirements if they maintain some critical distance from their political representatives and institutions, if they can stand back far enough from the policies pursued by the state to be able to assess them rationally and objectively. In the context of nation-states, patriotism works against the preservation of critical distance because the actions of the state are simultaneously the actions of the nation, which patriots are strongly inclined to view in a favourable light. Because patriots delight in their country and want it to flourish, they have a tendency to lose sight of its flaws and failures in their eagerness to celebrate its merits and achievements. As William Blake has it: 'Love to faults is always blind / Always is to joy inclin'd' (Blake, *How to know Love from Deceit*).

The claim here is not that love of country is more distorting than love of other things, but rather that the consequences of the distortion are more serious in this case than in others. It (usually) matters little if I am blind to the faults of my favourite novel, restaurant or teacher. But it matters a great deal if I am blind to the faults of my country, because it means that I

cannot meet some of my basic civic obligations. We are all responsible for identifying and opposing unjust national policies and institutions, so we all have good reason to resist or suppress any emotional attachment that interferes with our ability to do this.

Stephen Leighton, in a careful defence of Aristotle's contention that emotions are 'those feelings that so change men as to affect their judgments', identifies a number of ways in which our emotions influence our thinking (Leighton, 1996). One way is by prompting us to give or withhold the benefit of the doubt in cases where the relevant evidence is ambiguous. So, 'in love's seeking the benefit of a beloved, where circumstances are unclear, one would be inclined to give the beloved a favourable interpretation' (pp.210-11). Another way is by setting up frameworks of expectation that cause us to misperceive and misconstrue. The lover's tendency to focus on the merits of the beloved sets up an expectation that the beloved will behave meritoriously. The more passionately we love something, the more likely it is that this positive expectation, rather than the relevant evidence, will determine how we perceive it:

There can, therefore, be a variety of reasons why lovers seem able to misjudge even in light of what appears to be insurmountable evidence to the contrary. What they take in, they misconstrue. To the extent they continue to take in, they continue to misconstrue. Through the warmth and hastiness, and the expectation of emotion, they stop considering further evidence, and instead view the entire matter in terms of what they have already taken in and determined. (pp.215-16)

A vivid account of how love of country currently serves to cloud the civic judgment of patriotic Americans has recently been given by Richard Miller (2007). Even where American patriots recognise that 'vast immoral imperial excess has been part of America's presence in the world', Miller argues, they are nevertheless strongly inclined to construe this excess as a regrettable and aberrant departure from America's 'basically sensible and humane disposition', to connect it only with the current administration in defiance of abundant evidence that every administration for decades has engaged in 'foreign conduct promoting US power unconstrained by severe costs to foreigners in developing countries', and to suppose, falsely and naively, that they can rectify the problem simply by voting for someone else at the next election (pp.10-14). And because of the rose-tinted spectacles through which they view their country, they are fatally slow to recognise and challenge each new manifestation of imperial excess: 'In the face of an enduring foreign policy establishment who really are steadfast in pursuit of American power, the amnesia, wishful thinking and inattention [of American patriots] guarantee that opposition congeals only after great damage is done' (p.14).

Callan mounts a rather ineffectual attack on the impediment-to-civic-judgment argument. He acknowledges that, because love necessarily involves the desire that its object prosper, 'failings in the beloved, including culpable failings, are easily occluded by that desire' (Callan, 2006, p.530). And he concedes that this may tempt us down the following line of thought:

I said earlier that one familiar frailty of love is our susceptibility to lose truthful perception of the beloved when its value has been severely compromised, and my example was the parent who makes bogus excuses for the child who is guilty of grave wrongdoing. You might suppose that patriots are afflicted with a parallel susceptibility to cognitive distortion

under unjust conditions, and you might infer that nonpatriots are therefore likely to be better able to see domestic injustice for what it is. Maybe they are akin to dispassionate, impartial jurors at a criminal trial rather than the emotionally fraught parents of the accused. (pp.542-3)

But, says Callan, it would be a mistake to suppose and infer these things. Why? Because ‘we cannot assume nonpatriots will be adequately interested in discerning the justice or injustice of domestic institutions in the first place. Not to care about your country is to lack one familiar motive for caring about whether its political institutions are just’ (p.543). Patriots may be prone to ‘a self-deception that obscures what is shameful’, but nonpatriots are prone to political apathy, and this means we have ‘no grounds to suppose that patriots have any general disadvantage over nonpatriots in identifying domestic injustice’ (p.543).

The problem with this objection is that it fails to do what it purports to do. It undermines neither the supposition that patriots are susceptible to cognitive distortion under unjust conditions, nor the inference that nonpatriots are better able to see domestic injustice for what it is. That nonpatriots have one less motive than patriots for meeting their civic obligation to attend to the justice of national institutions is quite consistent with their being better able to detect injustices when they do so attend. Callan’s objection gives us no reason to doubt either the premises or the validity of the impediment-to-civic-judgment argument; it merely reminds us that the spur-to-civic-duty argument points in the other direction.

Patriotism does tend to cloud or distort civic judgment, and this can have dire consequences for those at the sharp end of unjust national institutions and policies. But this argument against patriotism is no more obviously decisive than the arguments we have advanced in its favour. It is not *necessarily* the case that political judgments made by people who love their countries will be distorted or self-deceiving, and it may be that the danger can be somewhat mitigated by making patriots aware of it. It is with this in mind that some advocates of patriotic education have specified that what they wish to see promoted in schools is ‘critical patriotism’ (see, for example, Merry, 2009). Given the intimate connection between loving something and viewing it in a favourable light, however, it would be implausible to suppose that alerting patriots to the danger of distorted civic judgment might be enough to eliminate it.

Conclusion

I do not claim that these three arguments represent all there is to be said about the benefits and costs of patriotism. They are intended to show only that the question of whether or not we should love our countries is rationally unsettled. There are good-but-not-decisive arguments on both sides, and we have at our disposal no straightforward means of weighing the arguments against each other and establishing that those on one side have greater rational force.

That being the case, the correct way to handle patriotism in schools is to teach it as a controversial issue. As Robert Dearden argues, a matter should be taught as controversial when ‘contrary views can be held on it without those views being contrary to reason’ (Dearden, 1981, p.86; for a more recent defence of this principle, see Hand, 2008). It is contrary to reason neither to embrace patriotic sentiment on the grounds that it is a spur to civic duty, nor to suppress it on the grounds that it distorts civic judgment. Because reasonable people reasonably disagree about the value of love of country, the promotion of

patriotism in schools cannot be educationally justified. Our responsibility as educators is to acquaint pupils with the arguments on either side as even-handedly as possible and encourage them to decide for themselves how to handle this aspect of their emotional lives.

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