

DIFFERENCE WITHOUT DICHOTEMY:
AN EXAMINATION OF NATIONALISM IN IRELAND AND QUEBEC
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Abstract

A review of nationalist thinking in Ireland and Quebec over the past two hundred years reveals two contrasting formulations of the nationalist argument associated with distinct historical periods. One formulation (prominent from the late eighteenth to the mid-nineteenth century) focused on securing “good government” through knowledgeable governors with a stake in the affairs of a given population. The other (prominent from the mid-nineteenth to the mid-twentieth century) focused on defining and upholding a “national character” that would distinguish and sustain this population. This paper argues that despite their initial similarity to civic/ethnic or political/cultural dichotomies of nationalism, these two formulations are in fact closely related; that they share a common concern with representation; and that the second formulation grew out of the first as the national concept was put into practice. Rather than a dichotomy of nationalism, then, this evolution suggests a thesis/antithesis relationship and raises the possibility of an eventual synthesis in nationalism.

It has always struck me as remarkable that so much contemporary theorizing on nationalism pays so little heed to what actual nationalists had to say on the topic. Perhaps this is in part due to the broad dismissal issued to nationalist writings by the influential theorist Ernest Gellner, who in the early 80's confidently advised his fellow scholars that "we shall not learn too much about nationalism from the study of its own prophets" (1983, 125). Much though I admire Gellner's work, I must respectfully disagree with this pronouncement. For if we do not turn to nationalist voices to help us understand the roots of the phenomenon – its deepest motivations and aspirations – then we must rely on other scholars and theorists to represent them for us. But if we never check these representations against the original, we can never be sure that the nationalism these theorists are talking about is the same as the nationalism we face in real life.

Moved by this concern, I began reading the very nationalist writings that Gellner felt were "hardly worth analysing" (1983, 124). I turned in particular to two cases that I knew to have a long and rich nationalist history – those of Ireland and Quebec. Both can trace their nationalist activism back over two hundred years and both had prominent figures and movements who served as leading voices for the nationalist cause. My goal in starting this work was perhaps overly optimistic. I hoped to identify a central theme to nationalist argument. I wanted to understand what nationalists felt justified their claim, as well as what they laid claim to. But instead of a single idea coming through in these writings, I

found that nationalist argument in Ireland and Quebec appeared in not one but two distinct formulations.

The first of these formulations – I call it the “good government” formulation – appears in the late eighteenth century and continues through the nineteenth century. This formulation focuses on securing good government through knowledgeable governors with a stake in the affairs of a given population, and nationalists set their sights on reforming political arrangements to better represent the population’s interests. The second – I call it the “national character” formulation – begins in the mid-nineteenth century and continues well into the twentieth century. This formulation focuses on recuperating the cultural resources of the population, and nationalists set about defining and upholding a “national character” to distinguish and sustain this population. I will have more to say about these formulations and how they appeared in the arguments of leading nationalists as the discussion proceeds, but for now I want to consider the puzzle presented by this bifurcation in nationalist thinking.

The two formulations appear to be in keeping with much of the common wisdom on nationalism, especially when that wisdom tells us to expect the phenomenon to align itself along either side of a fundamental dichotomy or divide. One such divide is between the civic and ethnic modes of nationalism, for instance (Ignatieff, 1993). Another is between the political and cultural nature of the phenomenon. But while they points us towards a greater consciousness of the different ways in which nationalism can be conceived and enacted, an approach based on dichotomies cannot help us answer one important question.

Why is it, given their evident differences, that we can recognize both these formulations as varieties of nationalism?

In this paper I am going to venture two arguments that should help prepare us to address this question. The first argument is that a dichotomy-based account of nationalism is insufficient for understanding the phenomenon. This may sound strange, after having just sketched out two distinct formulations of nationalist argument. But these two formulations are not separate or different types – something implied by the idea of a dichotomy. They are instead, closer to being mirror images of one another, and this is where the second argument comes in. I will suggest that some kind of inversion has taken place in the logic of the national claim from the first formulation to the second. In short, I'll argue that something like a Hegelian flip in the idea of nationalism has produced two dramatically contrasting, but still inherently related, formulations of nationalism.

DIFFERENCE NOT DICHOTOMY

As I noted, the “good government” and the “national character” formulations of the nationalist claim are reminiscent of the political/cultural or civic/ethnic distinctions often made between different styles or modes of nationalism. Let me begin, therefore, by saying a few words about these dichotomies.

Taking the civic/ethnic dichotomy, for example, civic ideals and those that arise in an ethnic understanding rest on very different principles. The former implies a reasoned attachment that can be logically defended based on some concept of justice. The latter implies a non-reasoned, almost primordial condition, that can only be defended in somewhat incoherent, romantic, or even

exclusivist terms, and which is almost inevitably based on a falsely-constructed idea of what people hold in common. The dichotomy, therefore, represents a real distinction in the way people conceive of the basis for their collective life.

While this distinction in the basis of collective consciousness is helpful in some regards, I am not convinced that the civic/ethnic distinction is of great value when it comes to exploring the common basis of nationalism. For one thing, as Bernard Yack has persuasively argued, there are few if any civic nations (1996). All political communities rely on some combination of rational attachments and pre- or even non-rational circumstances to hold their members together. Whether a state or a nation, communities must be able to give good reasons for people's continued membership, and yet must also be able to count on a sense of membership that doesn't completely rely on reason-giving, else our collective life would be so conditional as to be intolerable.

The civic/ethnic dichotomy obscures this reality and suggests you can get a reasonably pure type of either form. Even worse, the oversimplification it facilitates can easily lend itself to an approach that amounts to little more than identifying "the nationalisms we like" (which are always civic) from "the nationalisms we don't," (which turn out to be ethnic and therefore logically indefensible). The best we can take from the civic/ethnic dichotomy, therefore, is the idea that membership can appeal in varying degrees to principled and chosen attachment or to given, non-chosen conditions. But I prefer to set aside the highly suspect idea that there can be pure types or that these types indicate a higher or lower form of collectivity.

I am more sympathetic to distinctions that focus on the political or cultural dimensions of nationalism, however. Certainly the “good government” and “national character” formulations have something in common with this distinction, insofar as the ultimate goal of either formulation lies in the political or the cultural realm. The problem is that this distinction is again used to generate a dichotomy that is in turn used to suggest that political and cultural goals can be separated, or even more problematically, chosen between. This, for instance, is a problem that arises in the work of theorists such as Yael Tamir (1993) and Margaret Moore (2001). Both opt to truncate nationalism by defining it as either a primarily cultural matter (in the case of Tamir’s work) or a political one (in the case of Moore’s), but this approach won’t work in the long run. The cultural and political elements of these two nationalist formulations cannot be sundered because, as I will illustrate below, each is already implied in the other. Any attempt to impose a dichotomous distinction will therefore collapse upon itself. Let me illustrate this relationship between the two formulations by means of a closer comparison with these dichotomies.

THE CIVIC/ETHNIC DICHOTOMY

The “good government” formulation might at first blush seem to lend itself to a civic account of the nation. In essence this formulation is concerned with the rationally-understood benefits of citizenship and argues that government should be re-organized to better serve the interests of a given population. Creating a new political structure to better realize those benefits seems like a worthy civic goal. But if civic nationalism is the idea that “the nation is nothing over and above

willing individuals” (Seymour *et al*, 1996, 3) then the “good government” formulation does not fit the bill. Instead of nationalism being a principled choice and something which rises above mere necessity of circumstance, the “good government” formulation argues that distinct circumstances and distinct ways of thinking about these circumstances make change imperative.

Take, for example, the arguments of one nationalist, Louis-Joseph Papineau, a prominent parliamentarian in nineteenth century Quebec. Papineau made an argument for enhanced legislative and political autonomy based on the importance of local understanding. As he put it, in order for parliaments to address “local circumstances and wants of the place for which they are constituted... [l]ocal knowledge is an indispensable qualification.” In his view the unique conditions faced in Quebec made reform imperative, not just the civic intentions of the population (Papineau and Neilson, 1824, 6). This emphasis on local circumstances, which was part of the basis of the “good government” formulation, serves to offset the civic dimension of this argument.

The ethnic conception of nationalism, meanwhile, is thought to involve “more or less objective features of our social lives” and the nation is seen as a body which “transcends each individual” (Seymour *et al*, 1996, 3). The “national character” formulation of nationalism may appear to meet this description when it argues that a population has at least latent characteristics that sets them apart and that establish their case for political independence. But while it may suggest such arguments, the “national character” formulation developed out of a concern that these supposedly objective or transcending features were in danger of passing away, leaving the population ill-equipped to face the future, and that it

would take the active participation of the population to re-establish these characteristics.

So for instance, activists with the Gaelic League movement in Ireland argued at the turn of the twentieth century that the Irish could never effectively become Englishmen, because they faced such different original circumstances. Fair enough, this smacks of ethnic thinking. Nevertheless, these same nationalist felt the population could stop being Irish (Hyde, 1989, 84). For these nationalists, Irishness was not something that transcended the individual. Instead, it vitally depended on the choices of individuals – on whether they would adhere to the “Irish way”. Admittedly there was a mystical and mystified element to the “national character” formulation, and the romantic, emotive appeal is certainly evident. But the nation was not so objective or eternal that it couldn’t be lost without continued participation and belief. If people do not choose to continue their attachment to particular shared ways, the nation that grew from those circumstances can very easily fade away. This belief in our capacity to exit a critical condition of nationality suggests that the ethnic idea does not really account for the thinking of the “national character” type of nationalism.

THE POLITICAL/CULTURAL DICHOTOMY

The two formulations of the nationalist claim may have more in common with the distinction between cultural and political nationalism, but even here the categories are an imperfect fit. The cultural/political distinction in nationalism is often defined by whether movements choose to concentrate their activities in the political or the cultural arena. But the two formulations in question involved

methods and goals relevant to both arenas. While some “national character” nationalists saw traditional political avenues as a needless distraction from the real work of re-building the nation, there were others who supported the re-establishment of national characteristics as a *means* to political change. Their aim was to achieve the “good government” that political figures like Grattan has sought in Ireland, and Papineau in Quebec; they just started from a different point. In other words, just because the focus is on the character traits of the population, it cannot be assumed that the ambitions of the movement are limited to the cultural sphere.

Even those cultural nationalists who publicly rejected the standard political agenda were, in fact, still intimately (albeit indirectly) involved with political reconstruction. The Gaelic League in Ireland is a case in point. It was typical of a new “self-help” style of movement that proliferated in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries in Ireland. These were voluntary groups that aimed at providing support and services in not just the standard cultural areas of arts and languages, but also in the areas of education, sports, and agriculture. In doing so these movements served to fill a gap left by the existing political regime, which took a limited interest in these matters. The cultural aspects of such movements, then, cannot be neatly separated from their role as self-conscious creators of infrastructure and know-how (Mathews, 2000, 12-19).

That the cultural nationalism of the “national character” formulation had a distinctly political echo is also clear from the Quebec example. Take, for instance, the complex bi-level nationalism of Quebec’s Henri Bourassa. Arguing at the end of the nineteenth century, Bourassa’s position combined support for the

development of *both* a greater Canadian and a Quebec-based (*Canadien*) national community. He was also a staunch advocate for French language rights within his own province and in Canada at large. But his interest in language – usually considered a cultural matter – was explicitly connected to Quebec’s role in the Canadian political union (Bourassa, 1970, 134). Maintaining a linguistic presence in the developing Canadian nation was in his view part of maintaining a political stake in the larger project.

Later on, the nationalism of figures like Lionel Groulx, a leading exponent of the “national character” formulation in twentieth century Quebec, served to supply political ideas on how key infrastructure services should be delivered. This infrastructure was to remain in the hands of the Church, he believed, for the reason that the Catholic faith was the best insurance for national preservation (Groulx, 1973, 161). To realize cultural goals, therefore, meant having an opinion on, and sometimes an influence on, political affairs.

The same idea – that nationalism rarely fits neatly into dichotomous categories – holds true if we look at the relationship from the other end, from the perspective of political nationalism. Political nationalists readily drew on the cultural aspect of nationalism because culture supplied not only the rationale but also the resources and the goals for their endeavours. It is this crossover effect between the political and cultural arenas that explains why so many of the leaders of the 1916 Rising in Ireland and of the early Irish State began their careers with the supposedly culturalist Gaelic League. Indeed it has been estimated that half of all government ministers and senior civil servants in

the first fifty years of the Irish State had been Gaelic League members in their youth. (Foster, 1988, 450).

Ultimately, I am in agreement with those who question the usefulness of dichotomies as an approach to understanding nationalism (Seymour *et al*,1996). In particular, it does not seem to me to be possible to define the ‘civic’ or ‘ethnic’ ideal in a way that accurately reflects what motivates actual nationalist movements. Although, in the previous chapters, I have discussed these nationalist figures in terms of the “good government” and “national character” formulations, I do not believe the two formulations are ever all that far from each other. Certainly I do not want to suggest yet another dichotomy of nationalist thought or conduct. Instead I want to emphasize the common themes between what appear on the surface as different formulations, and stress how, in the ideas of leading Irish and Quebec nationalists, there are elements of both formulations, even if the combination is subject to change.

While nationalism may take on many forms and formulations, the introduction of dichotomies lead us to focus on differences when we should be seeking commonalities. My next task, therefore, will be to go back to the two formulations I have already identified and ask – from a conceptual rather than a historical perspective – how these two came about and what the nature of their relationship might be.

INVERTING THE LOGIC

In this section I attempt to trace the conceptual development of the two formulations under discussion. Not only can this exercise tell us more about how

the two arose and are related, it also gives us valuable insight into the logic that is unfolding through the evolution of these ideas. If I had to give a name to the logic or idea that is at the centre of these developments, I would say that it concerns representation. But it begins with representation as representative government and ends with representation as cultural practice. Throughout these series of developments the struggle is always to define or organize the system of representation in a new way. Put simply, the goal is to re-appropriate the representation of this population, on the grounds that the existing representation system is omitting or misrepresenting critical elements. Although I describe below how one idea follows another, in a process largely driven by the strategic efforts of nationalists, I don't believe these developments can be reduced to a kind of political manoeuvring. These shifts in approach looked fruitful to nationalists not just because of some opportunism on their part, but because there was something already there, in the original idea of nationalism, that made these shifts make sense.

One attempt has already been made to map the shifting meanings associated with the term 'nation' by theorist Liah Greenfeld (1992, 3-25). As a complement to her work, I want to trace the conceptual developments that yielded different kinds of *arguments* for nationalism. Whereas Greenfeld thinks that a zig-zag process describes the shift from one understanding to another, I am going to suggest that a complete flip has taken place between two formulations of the argument for nationalism. Like Greenfeld, however, I believe single thread holds the entire process together. And like her I believe we will see that thread more clearly once we see how it unwound over time.

Greenfeld believes that the origins of nationalism lie with the idea of popular sovereignty. The word “nation,” she tells us originally referred to an elite – those that held political power. And as such, the term conveyed a sense of moral elevation as well as political privilege. But by the early sixteenth century, she argues, the term had broadened out, and the entire people became the nation. This implied, she says, “the elevation” of the population to a status once reserved for a fortunate few (1992, 6-7). But the concept of “nation” still carried within itself its earlier meaning – the idea that nation-hood was a reflection of a kind of fitness or worthiness, especially worthiness for political authority. Establishing nationhood, therefore, was conceptually linked to establishing a claim to fitness for political sovereignty.

I will pick up the story at the point where Greenfeld suggests that the nation becomes the basis of popular sovereignty and where political rights are expanded beyond an elite group. But before I turn to the development of nationalist argument, let me begin by saying a few words about this idea of popular sovereignty, because I want to make clear its link to representation.

As Hannah Pitkin wrote in 1967, under modern conditions popular sovereignty (which Greenfeld links with nation-hood) essentially means representative government, in one form or another (2). The connection between nation and representation may go even deeper, however. Both Greenfeld and Pitkin adopt an approach based on an analysis of language use and the evolution of particular terms over time. And notably both trace the origins of their particular terms (“nation” for Greenfeld, “representation” for Pitkin) to the same development. Both argue that their term first takes on political salience with the

sending of university experts (“representatives” from the “nations”) to church councils in the 13th and 14th centuries (Pitkin, 1967, 3, Greenfeld, 1992 4). The two terms are linked by more than just the circumstances of modern mass society, then, since it appears that they both derive from same pre-modern development. What gives rise, in Pitkin’s account to “the rights of Englishmen” (1967, 3) and thence to representative government, gives rise according to Greenfeld to the kind of nationalist thinking that eventually leads Grattan to make a claim that the “rights of Irishmen” include a national parliament (Grattan, 1865, 37-51).

Turning now to the conceptual development of nationalist argument, it is Henry Grattan who set the stage in Ireland for the development of nationalist argument, so I will begin by considering the role that the national concept played in his arguments. Interestingly, Quebec history does not offer up a figure equivalent to Grattan in this period, although this is hardly surprising. In this period the community in Quebec went from a small but relatively autonomous French outpost to a conquered and occupied British colony. In short, this was a small population still coming to terms with its political losses.

In his arguments for national self-government Grattan rested his case on three related points. He stressed first, the past legal practices that included indigenous self-government practices (the “ancient rights of Ireland”), second, that the interests of the Island that were marginalized under a union system, and third, he stressed the status of the Irish as a nation. Grattan connected this national status to differences in the population’s circumstances, which required that governors share certain local knowledge in order to govern well (Grattan, 1865, 37-51, 54-70).

What is not explicitly addressed in these arguments, however, is whether this population has the *capacity* to represent its own interests. In other words, the Irish as a population may have distinct circumstances, they may even have ancient practices, but in the thinking of the period, to merit participation in the new form of representative government they need to establish that they are fit to represent themselves.

This is where the idea of nation-hood comes in, and explains Grattan's interest in the population's status as a nation. Nation-hood implies worthiness for sovereignty, for collective self-rule through representative government. If the Irish are a nation, then given the contemporary meaning of the term, there is a *prima facie* case for self-representation (Grattan, 1865, 44). Conversely if they fall short of the status of nation, even given distinct interests and circumstances, the case for representation falters. A need for local knowledge, and for sharing a stake in the distinct circumstances of the population may create a need for representation. But for a population to merit the privilege and status of separate representation the population must be a national population. This idea represents the first stage of nationalism and the point from which its conceptual development unfolds.

However, this position immediately raises a difficult question, and the effort to address it provides the drive behind the unfolding of nationalist logic. If nations are groups that have a *prima facie* claim to sovereignty, then we need to know what makes a group a nation. Or to put it more pointedly, how can a population demonstrate their nation-hood? Grattan makes two sets of appeals to address this question. In one, he appeals to the authorities in London to

recognize the distinct “sympathies and interests” that prevail in Ireland (1865, 255). In other words, he points to unique local circumstances, both practical and emotive. But his appeal is not only to English audiences. He also addresses himself to his compatriots in Ireland, telling them to “become a nation” (1865, 48). In these two brief passages is prefigured the entire logic of the national claim that would unfold over the ensuing two hundred years. For in them are contained the twin realities of nation-hood: that on the one hand circumstances create a nation, and that on the other, a population does.

Grattan himself didn’t specify what becoming a nation involves, but at the opening of the short-lived Irish parliament (1782-1800) he congratulated the Irish for “mould[ing] the jarring elements of your country into a nation” (1865, 71). Evidence that for Grattan, it’s not just distinct circumstances that demonstrate nation-hood, but also solidarity – and public solidarity at that.

The nationalists that followed Grattan in Ireland had their work cut out for them. They needed to establish both to their own population, and to outside authorities, that they had distinct circumstances and a distinct basis of solidarity to underpin the claim to nation-hood. The necessity to demonstrate these features of nation-hood motivated the efforts of nationalists such as Daniel O’Connell in Ireland and Papineau in Quebec. These figures focused on rallying and organizing political action in their respective populations, while raising consciousness about the differences in the Irish or Quebec situations. Focusing on issues such as Catholic emancipation, land tenure practices, or legislative rights served two purposes. There was always the possibility that some reform might be achieved (as was the case with emancipation, for instance), but these

issues also served to highlight the asymmetry in the situations faced by these populations as compared to those in England, where authority ultimately rested. O'Connell and Papineau both highlighted practical differences in the legal/institutional structure of their local system in order to make the case for nationalism (O'Connell, 1868, Papineau 1970). The nation, meanwhile, was understood as those people who faced the consequences of these systems.

To sum up the story thus far, we begin with two conceptual elements to nationalism - nations as an indicator of fitness for political self-representation and nations as distinctly-situated populations. Both are subject to demonstration, and this becomes the chief task of nationalist figures. Grattan issues a vague call to become a nation, and stresses distinct interests and sympathies, while figures like O'Connell and Papineau give this idea more concrete reality by emphasising specific legal/institutional differences. Nationalists of the period therefore added to the initial idea of popular sovereignty the idea that good government (or more precisely, good representative government) required local knowledge and a shared interest in the well-being of a population.

What followed was perhaps the most significant development to take place in the conceptual evolution of nationalism. In Ireland it grew out of O'Connell's populist movement, and in Quebec it was personified in the ambiguous politics of Henri Bourassa. Out of it arose a new formulation of nationalism that seems a stark contrast with what went before. But this contrast is rendered less stark when we understand how the conceptual shift took place.

The idea of nationalism we have already encountered held that to make the case for the national cause – to make the case for nation-hood – a population must be distinctly situated, must share an understanding of and a stake in these circumstances, and must show evidence of moral development or advancement. It should come as little surprise, then, that nationalists soon turned their attention to cultivating a collective self-understanding as a distinct and worthy group and to making sure that the population shared this understanding. In essence, this was the filling out of Grattan's call to become a nation, by building on the idea of distinct circumstances and taking it into the cultural/psychological realm. It implied education and exhortation, and not a little invention if necessary. Since it was domestically focussed, the original concern was not so much with authenticity. Initially the intent was to make an external point. By these efforts nationalists hoped to make evident their fitness to represent themselves in their own government.

Yet though this was a significant innovation, I want to stress its continuity with what went before. This was not a new idea of nationalism; it was a broadening out of the existing cause. It was the opening up of a second front, and it did not develop *ex nihilo*. It developed out of the drive for popular sovereignty, the same drive that brought "the people" into politics, and allowed them to participate in the privileged status of nation. If they were to be recognized as a cohesive group with the moral character to self-govern, then a population needed to have the character of a nation – it need a national character. Creating and reinforcing that character became the work of this second front. In this way, this

second stage of nationalism flowed directly from the original logic of the national idea and the privileges associated with it.

The nationalists who adopted an approach based on national character shared with their predecessors the conviction that there were real differences to their population's situations, and that these translated into differences in their "interests and sympathies," as Grattan put it (1865, 255). And they recognized that people's behaviour could reinforce the political case by demonstrating a kind of cohesiveness and solidarity. So they set about rallying the people to this cultural or psychological movement, in much the same way as O'Connell and Papineau had rallied people to their political movements. But part of rallying people involves giving them something to rally around. The first task of these nationalists, therefore, was to identify a particular understanding of the nation as well as ways to mobilize the population behind it. In other words, they needed to define what national behaviour looked like, and to promote this definition.

Note the order of causality here. The nation is defined so as to provide goals for national mobilization. This is reminiscent of Gellner's claim that nationalism begets nations and not the other way around (1983, 55). But it also has something in common with what A.D. Smith calls the perennialist idea of nationalism, which holds that there is something prior to the nationalist drive that gets translated into a new, more discernible form, through the agency of nationalist mobilization (1998, 159-69). In either case what is clear is that for these nationalists the national character was a means to an end, the end being political recognition and cultural self-representation.

Movements like the Young Irelanders attempted this definitional task. And their motivation was clearly linked to the question of fitness. Their emphasis was on things to be proud of – manners, history, literature, landscapes – things that defined a population, set it apart and gave it standing (*The Voice of the Nation*, 1844). This definitional drive also helps make sense of the paradoxical logic encountered in Henri Bourassa’s call for French Canadians to retain their language so that they could be a “worthy part” of the Canadian national project. Clearly differences existed between the French-speaking and English-speaking populations in Canada, and so the French population had little choice but to demonstrate its worthiness through the maintenance of its own nation-hood. To make the equation quite explicit: Difference based in nation-hood was an elevating kind of difference. Difference without nation-hood meant a lesser status for a population.

So Bourassa, the crossover figure between the two major stages in Quebec nationalism, defines language as central to the national character. By maintaining the language, therefore, the population can maintain its claim to be a worthy community, fit to manage its own affairs. It is a legacy that still has a hold on the Quebec imagination and which has come to typify Quebec nationalism for those in the rest of Canada. But at this early stage (the mid-nineteenth century), the national character definition remained relatively open. And it needed to be, in order to recruit adherents. The aim was to overcome that which could divide a population, and foster that which could solidify them. In Ireland, for instance, the national character could not at this point be religiously exclusive without

defining-out most of the nineteenth century nationalist leadership, who were not of the majority Catholic religion.

Stepping back from the particulars of the definition, though, what we see is that the efforts of these nationalists were focused on creating change. They wanted to change how Ireland or Quebec was seen by outsiders and by the populations themselves. By taking nationalism into the cultural/psychological realm, therefore, nationalists were shifting the focus to a new kind of representation. As with politics, the dominant cultural or literary representation of Ireland or Quebec was largely the work of non-Irish and non-Quebec figures. In the literature of the period Ireland was, as Declan Kiberd argues, cast as the land of England's unconscious, both more magical and more depraved than the solid, rational English self-image (1995). Quebec on the other hand, was Canada's mental block. It was the land that people (or at least those people outside Quebec) wanted to forget. Its very presence was supposed to have been erased by the measures recommended in Lord Durham's Report (Durham, 1992). Because it had a bearing on their perceived fitness to govern, nationalists began to take a conscious interest in the image of their population being presented to the world, and to themselves. Rehabilitating that image so that it supported the claim to nation-hood became a critical goal.

In Ireland this effort yielded a remarkable cultural renaissance in the form of the Gaelic Revival. The movement was aimed at creating a national literature that could replace old and unflattering stereotypes with a new appreciation of the Irish situation (Kiberd 1995, Deane, 1997). It was quite clearly, a *re*-presentation of Ireland to audiences at home and abroad.

Although again, authenticity was not the primary goal here, this act of representation – the effort to define the national character and to re-present the population as a cultural presence – needed to be grounded to some degree in local history and practices. The need to tie this representation effort to local conditions and circumstances in turn generated the idea that the national character must be inherently connected to the situation of the population. This character, these practices, it was argued, are suited in a way that nothing else could be, and individuals have something special to gain from participating in or adhering to this character (Moran, 1901, 39).

The drive to closely define the national character and to establish its inherent nature also paid dividends in terms of national mobilization. Having one true ideal of the national character made it easier to ensure continuity and to concentrate collective resources on a single performative effort. Once this conceptual element is added to the mix – that only *this* national character will do, and that only through it can a people flourish – then all the pieces are in place for a complete inversion of the nationalist logic. The essentialist variant of the national claim flows from the drive to define a national character, and more specifically, to rally people around this particular understanding of the nation. It began with the need to define and display a national character so that political representation might be reformed. Then came the need to mobilize the population behind this definition. By adhering to this definition, nationalists say, the affairs of the population will be improved, and dignity (a sense of worth) will be recovered.

Nationalists may have originally meant that these benefits would be achieved through the reform of political representation, and that the national character was only indirectly part of this effort. But these benefits came to be associated with the national character itself, as if it could yield these results directly. The cultural cause that people were to rally around soon became the centrepiece of the nationalist effort. In the process nation-hood becomes so elevated a status that it is no longer merely a justification for self-government. It is a goal unto itself. It becomes, in fact, the reason *for* seeking political authority. Achieving political power is eventually seen as important because it is a way to protect and promote the national character. With this, the inversion of the nationalist formulation is complete.

The full fruition of this second stage of nationalism is reached when political power is put at the service of the national character – as it was in Ireland after 1920's and as was increasingly the case in Quebec in the same period. At this point, the value of political authority for leading nationalists arose in the fact that it enabled them to uphold certain kinds of characteristics and conduct in the population. In other words, the distinct situation of the population was no longer the *source* of the nationalist imperative, it was its *objective*. And good governance, once the chief concern of nationalists, was now secondary to secure nation-hood.

Summary

Built into the idea of political representation is the question of who gets represented and why they, in particular, deserve this privilege. Nationalism is an

attempt to answer this question. But the effort to become a nation eventually overshadows the political objectives of the phenomenon. The antithesis of the original idea of nationalism – an antithesis which takes the form of the national character idea – is a product of the unfolding of the thesis. In true Hegelian fashion, political representation yields its opposite – something unamenable to politics. The antithesis appears mystified where the thesis was practical, worldly and pragmatic. But it is no mere perversion. It also completes a task – the re-appropriation of representation in the non-political realm to something self-defined. This is the significance of the cultural revival fostered by the second, “national character” stage of nationalism.

Thus the two formulations of the nationalist claim are indeed mirror images, representing the inverse of one another. But as with a mirror image, we have the same elements throughout. Both formulations, and the stages of nationalism that coincide with them, are concerned with struggles over representation. The focus shifts over time from political to cultural representation, yet a similar process is unfolding. It involves the reclaiming of a power (the power to represent) that is felt to be no longer in accord with the interests and experiences of the population.

My argument is that this inversion in logic was implicit in the original idea of the nation, because it made nation-hood the basis for the claim to sovereignty and representation. As nations exist only in the head, to secure the national status, it was necessary therefore to secure the idea in people’s heads. This imperative leads to a promotional effort in the name of the nation, which in turn was thought to require a finite definition of the nation.

I began by asking how it was that we recognized these two very different formulations of nationalism as varieties of nationalism. We do so, I think, for a couple of reasons. First, because they are interconnected from the beginning. They are inherently, though inversely, related. Second, because they revolve around a common concern for representation, and because they seek to reclaim the power to represent a population so that it can be exercised in a way that better serves their interests. Of course, we may disagree with these nationalists' interpretation of these populations' interests, but we should understand their motivation nonetheless.

Nor should this argument be taken to suggest that all those who don the mantle of nationalism share such noble aims. Like any ideology it can be misguided and abused, and both the Irish and Quebec case can readily furnish examples of nationalism that supported authoritarianism, intimidation or exclusivist public conduct. Recognizing its evolutionary development or its association with representation in no way exempts nationalism from critical scrutiny.

But if what we are looking at here is, as I am suggesting, a Hegelian-style unfolding of an idea, then the natural question is: might there be a synthesis in the wings? In fact I do believe that some kind of resolution – a kind of “settling down” into a secure nationality complete with political representation and open cultural expression – may be in the offing in these two cases.

Both Ireland and Quebec, in the first half of the twentieth century, saw a sustained effort to institutionalize a particular conception of the national character. In the latter half of the century, however, both experienced a period of

dramatic social change. So dramatic in fact, that the character of their populations today – their social, political and economic habits – no longer reflect the previous national ideal (Crotty and Schmitt 1998, Langlois et al, 1992). Yet both communities continue to manifest strong attachment to their national identity. According to the 1990 European Values survey, for instance, an impressive 78% of Irish say they are “very proud” of their nationality, as compared to a European average of 38% (Crotty, 1998, 14). And in an even more pointed test of national attachments, a referendum held in Quebec in 1995 on the question of potentially exiting the Canadian union was lost only by the narrowest of margins – less than 1%.

What we may be witnessing in these two cases is a freeing up of the national character idea – a readiness to redefine what being Irish or being Quebecois means – combined with a sense that nation-hood still matters politically. If this development truly indicates the possibility of an eventual “third stage” to nationalism, it will be one that must arrive at a synthesised idea of representation, and which can reconcile the twin realities of both being a nation, and creating one.

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