

Bismarck, Tom Paine and the Good Soldier Schweik: Modalities of Nationalism and Individualism in the Work of Ladislav Holy and the Durkheimian Tradition

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Introduction

First of all,¹ I would like to thank the Association for the great honour it has extended to me in asking me to give this lecture.² I saw Prof. Holy just once, at the 1992 EASA conference in this city, held when the dissolution of Czechoslovakia was already in the air, but I never knew him personally or corresponded with him. For many years, of course, there have been a number of named lectures of this sort on the anthropology circuit, including in Britain the Huxley, Frazer and Malinowski lectures; one has recently been instituted in honour of Mary Douglas. The

¹ This is for the first time that the Czech Association for Social Anthropology (CASA) decided to publish a text of the annually held Ladislav Holý Lecture, hoping that future guest lecturers will also contribute with their texts. The editors would hereby like to thank to Dr. Elizabeth Hallam of the Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute for her invaluable advice related to the design of peer review in the case of lecture texts.

² Text of the 2019 Ladislav Holy lecture, delivered in Prague on 12 January 2019 at the invitation of the Czech Association for Social Anthropology (CASA). I would particularly like to thank Dr Martin Heřmanský, President of CASA, for formally inviting me to lecture on behalf of the Association. I am also immensely grateful to Nikola Balaš for initiating and arranging my visit to Prague and for looking after me so expertly while I was there. I also thank those present at the lecture for their comments on it and the two anonymous referees for their careful reviews of the submitted text. However, I have not incorporated all these comments into this published version in order to remain as true as possible to the text as delivered. Indeed, apart from a few minor changes of wording in response to some of these comments, the only alteration to the oral version is the addition of headings, footnotes and references. I would also like to thank Dr Johanna Wyss, my former student, for her support of and interest in this venture. Needless to say, I accept complete responsibility for the contents of this published version.

one I am most familiar with is the Marett lecture, as it takes place in Oxford every May. Over the years it has been noticed that most of its invited speakers fail to make any mention of Robert Ranulph Marett or his work, possibly because there is not that much actually to say about it, being the work of a largely derivative late evolutionist that had already become out of date in his own lifetime.

I sincerely hope there is no such convention here, as I shall certainly be discussing Holy's ideas on nationalism and the individual, in which he used the Czech case as his leading example. Unlike Marett's work, Holy's has plenty of possibilities and carries the potential for further development, as, in his clear-thinking way, he was always at or near the cutting edge of developments in anthropology, though fully prepared to criticize them when he felt it necessary.³ More particularly at the present time, although I do not address this specifically in this lecture, his ideas on nationalism and the individual might help us understand the wave of nationalism that is breaking out across the western world currently in both Europe and the United States, not to mention now (2019) Brazil and Australia; though in Europe it also experienced a revival after the fall of communism, which in some cases, as in the former Yugoslavia, it is even suspected of contributing to (e.g. Denich 1994; Verdery 1991: 433). Both in 1989 and today, nationalism – exclusive, particular, rooted in history – confronts internationalism: inclusive, all-embracing, with an agenda that more usually looks forward, though it may have its own myths and mythical heroes, as the European Union certainly does.⁴ In 1989, at least in eastern Europe, internationalism primarily meant communism; today it means globalization and its alleged ills, as well as experiments in international integration like the European Union. In 1989 liberal opinion felt able to praise the sight of oppressed populations freeing themselves from the internationalist Soviet yoke and resuming their national independence as a positive development. Now liberal opinion is alarmed and confused by the nationalist resurgence, accompanied, it seems, by growing political violence and hatred, and the revival or generation of popular prejudices against others in a wave of strong rejections of internationalism, symbolized for many by allegedly uncontrolled migration. What unites both developments, though, is the reference to democracy as their ultimate justification.

Let me proceed at this point by outlining the theme of my lecture, which I hope will strike you as sufficiently anthropological, despite the reflections on

³ One example of his critical acumen (Holy 1996b: 167–168) is his dismissal of Janet Carsten's notion of relatedness as “analytically vacuous”, a charge she briefly replied to (2000: 5).

⁴ Above all, the French foreign minister in the 1950s, Robert Schumann, and a leading French civil servant of the same period, Jean Monnet, can be considered the EU's main heroes (see Dedman 1996).

history it also contains (my first discipline, incidentally). My main aim is to situate Ladislav Holy's remarks about nationalism and individualism in the context of similar work by certain adherents of the scholarly tradition of Émile Durkheim, especially Marcel Mauss (1969 [1920]) and Louis Dumont (1986a; 1986b; 1994 [1991]; see also Parkin 2002; 2010). While I do not claim that Holy is explicitly basing himself on this tradition – indeed, he scarcely mentions it – both he and Mauss discuss nationalism and individualism in the context of what were recent political events at the times they wrote, respectively World War I and the collapse of communism in eastern Europe in 1989/90. Both see the nation as a homogeneous set of individuals, its political form being the nation state. Both come close to treating the nation as an individual person scaled up or, perhaps, as a collective individual, to which physical and emotional characteristics may be attributed: idioms of the fatherland or motherland, for example, or of the soul of the nation, of how the nation bleeds in its suffering, and so on. As for Dumont, it was he who reminded us (e. g. 1994 [1991]) that theories of individualism differ cross-culturally, even within Europe, as do political theories about the relationship of the individual to both state and nation. This can endow different nationalisms with different characteristics, even though in other respects all nationalisms, at least in Europe, seem to obey certain common traits – a point I shall end with. Thus for Dumont the German tradition is distinctive in allowing the individual freedom in private until the state demands his or her unequivocal support in a crisis, while the Anglo-American and French political traditions are prepared to position the individual against the state if necessary, a principle extending even to the right to break unjust laws. Ultimately this can be construed as a difference between the power of the state – any state – as an entity in its own right over the individual, as enshrined in a figure like Otto von Bismarck, and the libertarianism of Tom Paine, the theorist of republican revolution, political democracy and their freedoms everywhere.⁵ For Holy, however, there is a third image, that of the self-effacing, supposedly inept Soldier Schweik, who, rather than confronting state power, evades it, often by deceiving it in what is almost an embodiment of James Scott's everyday forms of resistance (e. g. Scott 1987). For Holy he is the epitome of Czechness, though not the only one, and as a stock literary figure Holy claims he lacks individuality. Yet as I shall argue later, while specifically Czech in one sense, he also represents a type of trickster figure who is ultimately universal, or at any rate cross-cultural.

⁵ In fact I shall have much more to say about the former than the latter based on their respective impacts on Realpolitik.

Ladislav Holy and Czech National Identity

Holy's discussion of these questions appears in his book *The Little Czech and the Great Czech Nation*, published in 1996 and written in the wake of the collapse of communism (Holy 1996a).⁶ For Holy, communism, an alien importation that shaped the post-1948 Czechoslovak state, pitted the state against the nation and the individuals making up the latter. The state was explicitly communist and therefore internationalist, not a nation state and therefore particularist: in fact, it contained within it two principal nations (or nationalities) plus a number of minorities. Mostly Holy's book is about the Czech nation, and in so far as he deals with other identities, including the Slovaks, it is mostly through Czech eyes, though not necessarily his own.

Thus for Czechs, he says, the communist state was as alien to the Czech nation as the Habsburg dynasty in Vienna and the much shorter but more repressive Nazi occupation. Indeed, any Czech state is apt to be seen as artificial given this history, even the then new post-communist democracy, which, after all, could be linked, at least in part, to west European precedents. The nation, by contrast, is natural, not having to be created like the state, but enduring even while states of various sorts come and go. In that sense it is like the family, which is similarly natural: no one has to create it, and it has continuity through descent and inheritance, as does the nation. The nation is also maintained through the power of symbols, generally the best tool with which to mobilize it, especially against alien states. The nation is thus a far cry from Max Weber's rational bureaucracy on which the modern state supposedly depends. The difference between state and nation is also a matter of agency for Holy: the nation should be the subject, that is, the agent, of its own history and future. All too often in the Czech case it has been the object of someone else's history, embodied in the different alien states imposed over it, which deprived it of that agency, and of its own subjectivity. What was different about communism, however, was the fact that, like the nation, it was a collective-oriented state that required the embeddedness of the individual within it and that expected his or her conformity and obedience on pain of discrimination and/or a loss of privileges, if not actual legal penalties.

Holy also suggests that there are two varieties of relationship between the individual and any collective, one cooperative, the other conflictual. One is reminded here of Durkheim's *homo duplex* (e.g. Durkheim 1982 [1895]). Normally, for Durkheim, the individual is cooperative, as he or she obeys the dictates of the collective. Also, however, the individual is so subsumed within the collective as to

⁶ See also Holy (1994) for a shorter version of his main arguments. Holy appears to have done some fieldwork or interviews for this work, though he was obviously also relying on his own sense of Czech identity.

disappear into it and become invisible – as part of an undifferentiated mass observing rituals designed to reinforce precisely this sense of a collective or a community, for example. It is only as a sinner, criminal or other malefactor that the individual appears as such, then having to be dealt with and either expelled from the group or brought back within it after suitable punishment. Examples include the Catholic confessional – which, as Durkheim's student Robert Hertz remarked (1996 [1922]), takes place in public, even though the exchange between sinner and priest is intensely private – and the Indian caste, to which I shall shortly return.

I do not think this was Holy's explicit idea of the individual, who for him was characterized by something more like the Malinowskian notion of agency, that is, of the individual feeling a way through and around the constraints of society's rules and norms in pursuit of his or her own ends, many of which are nonetheless socially approved. Holy's joint book with another Czech émigré, Milan Stuchlik, *Actions, Norms and Representations* of 1983, more or less adopts this position. However, when it comes to freedom in, or from, communism in Czechoslovakia, this notion of embeddedness returns: Holy says that in these circumstances the individual and the nation become collapsed into one another, each becoming a metaphor or proxy for the other (my words, not Holy's), as the individual can be free only if the nation is free. This, for Holy, is the significance of the demonstrations of 1989, which initially, at least, were for the freedom of both nation (from the alien communist state) and individual (from communism's restrictions on freedom): for the protesters, they were in effect one and the same. Only later, says Holy, did they change into demands for an entirely new political and economic system.

At this point Holy comes somewhat closer to Durkheim in saying that this development involves the individual cooperating with the collective, making the latter, here the nation, a homogenous set of individuals. This, of course, is a standard tool and argument of nationalist politics, not a specifically Durkheimian trait, but it still sees the individual as properly embedded in the nation and regards individualism as subversive of it.

Marcel Mauss on Nationalism

It should not be surprising, therefore, that we can find even closer similarities between Holy's position and the thoughts on nationalism of Marcel Mauss (especially 1969 [1920]), Durkheim's nephew and key collaborator. In discussing Mauss in this context of nationalism, I am relying greatly on an earlier study by a leading Marxist scholar of nationalism, Josep Llobera (1996), now sadly deceased.⁷

Mauss commented on nationalism in the context of the First World War, which he regarded as both the height of nationalist rivalry in the Europe of his time

⁷ See also Llobera's critique (1996) of Dumont's work on German ideology (1994 [1991]).

and a disaster for the group of scholars around Durkheim, many of whom lost their lives in that conflict. For Mauss nationalism was an example of a total social phenomenon – a key Durkheimian methodological concept for any social phenomenon that had a lot of aspects, so that they should all be taken into account. A famous example is Mauss's classic text on the gift (2016 [1925]), which not only had its economic aspects, but legal, juridical, ritual, symbolic and identity-loaded ones as well. However, unlike the gift, the nation was recent for Mauss and predominantly west European, raising doubts over whether he really acknowledged the new nations that had arisen out of the wreckage of the German and especially Austrian and Russian dynastic empires after 1918. Mauss was also influenced by Jean-Jacques Rousseau's notion that the nation consists of the citizens of a state; in Llobera's words, Mauss sees it as "made up of citizens who live consensually" (Llobera 1994: 107). And there are yet other characteristics Mauss mentions, such as the integration, or alternatively the effacement, of all social institutions between the nation and the individual (what in a modern state is often called civil society), which should be in direct contact with one another. One is reminded here of the Protestant idea of the individual being in direct communication with God, unmediated by any priest, though similar ideas also occur in Islam, in which, incidentally, Ernest Gellner denied there was any civil society (e. g. 1969). Then there is the territorial boundedness of the nation, which also has its economic aspect: Mauss makes an explicit link between national boundedness and economic protectionism, as we see being revived in America right now (2019). Mauss therefore recognizes that nationalism is not just political but also economic, symbolic, metaphorical and affective (i. e. emotional), the nation itself forming a moral community, one moreover with a sense of sacrifice, and constituting a specific race or at least a stock bounded by notions of common descent, its own language, and so on.

Note that Holy's conflictual version of the relationship between individual and nation is left undeveloped here. This is despite all that has been said about the French Revolution of 1789 creating the modern nation and having to enforce it against reactionary opposition by means of the guillotine internally and the revolutionary and Napoleonic armies externally. This task was only completed roughly a century later by the Third Republic, which not only ended royal and Napoleonic dynasticism in France but also, as Eugen Weber has documented (1976), spread its message about French nationalism to the recalcitrant and more particularist west and south through education and propaganda: France has been one of the most highly centralized European states ever since. Here we might also recall Ernst Renan's point about the importance of forgetting in creating a nation – that is, forgetting particularisms which, if remembered, would undermine national unity, even though that may mean denying the historicity of certain facts (Renan 1992

[1882]). One thing we should not forget is that the ideals of the French Revolution were treated as universal by their advocates and were spread across Europe in the wake of the French armies. Although many of them were adopted, sometimes under duress, by Prussia and other German states, this was done not in sympathy with French revolutionary aims but quite the reverse – to increase resistance to them. This was seen as a means of putting Prussia in particular – weakened after its defeat in the Battle of Jena in 1807 – in a better position to defend a German particularism that was opposed to all universalisms, French or otherwise. The key figures in this particular development are not only Robespierre and Napoleon, but also Herder, the German poet of the rights of nations, and Prussian reformers of the early nineteenth century like Stein, Hardenburg and Humboldt, who laid the foundations for dynastic Prussia to become nationalist Germany under Bismarck later in that century. I shall return to this aspect of my theme later.⁸

Mauss also discusses cases in his time that, he alleged, might have turned nationalist but didn't. Thus, although, like Germany, Italy was reunited in the 1860s, it has since retained many local and regional identities – the famous Italian *campanilismo* or local particularism: this suggests that Italy had to await the arrival of Mussolini, just after Mauss was writing, to make it truly a nation. Britain too is an exception, says Mauss, with its latent feudalism and monarchism and its pioneering form of parliamentary government, perhaps linked to Britain's lingering class system and relative if not always so splendid isolation.

Finally, Mauss points out that nationalism is populist in the sense that it brings the masses into the national polity. It is thus like communism and democracy and unlike the dynastic empires of the past (i. e. Ernest Gellner's hierarchical agrarian states; see Gellner 1983), with their firm class differences that were cultural, linguistic and ethnic as much as political and economic. In other words, however much the masses may continue to be despised by their leaders in practice, under nationalism they were no longer ignored or dismissed as of no account, but told they mattered, even while being manipulated and exploited politically. At its extreme, the nation could be assembled in arms and mobilized for war against others, giving the nationalists the mass sacrifice they craved and that they often relied on to justify their project. One difference from communism is that the latter claimed to be scientific and to have a scientific view of history, which it used in order to build its vision of the future. Nationalism, conversely, generally rejects the rationalism of science and always, it seems, although claiming history to be real, treats it metaphorically, mythologizes it and locates its own origins in it (i. e. is ultimately backward-looking). And neither, of course, tolerates dissent, unlike a

⁸ In arriving at my own understanding of German history, I have relied greatly on Mann (1990 [1958]) and, specifically for Prussia, Burgdorff et al. (2009).

genuine democracy. All three, however, claim to speak and act for the masses, with the qualification that it is in democracies that the masses are most able to speak and act for themselves.

The Nation as Totem

There is one other respect in which Durkheimian thought casts light on the phenomenon of the nation. One of the salient features of Durkheim's last major work on religion, *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life* (2001 [1912]), is the totem, that is, an emblem, usually drawn from the natural world, that marks and identifies distinct social groups of one sort or another. Prominent examples were the totems of the clans, marriage classes, etc., of the Native Australians with whom he was particularly concerned in this work. However, what he had to say about the totem was of much wider relevance. More than just an emblem, the totem typically plays a role in the origin of the group in the social group's cosmogony and is usually considered inviolate, though it may be sacrificed in periodic rites of renewal, when it is also honoured or even worshipped. However, when Durkheim turns from ethnographic to sociological facts, we are shown the totem as something different, as a mask, a distraction or tool of cognitive displacement from what is really happening in the ritual. For Durkheim there is a clear sense in which the totemic rite involves the group assembled at it worshipping not, or not only, the totem, but also itself by virtue of its association with the totem. Now, presumably no group would see the sense in worshipping itself. Totem worship therefore acts to displace the focus away from oneself and the group one belongs to and on to a special kind of symbol. The nation is surely a totem in that sense, and it is even imagined as such through monuments, statues, buildings, graves, birthplaces, battlefields, etc. Its birth is that of the people who make it up, one of whom in, for example, the various tombs of the Unknown Soldier has symbolically been sacrificed for its sake. In honouring the nation of which one is oneself a member, there is thus a similar process of displacement, from oneself as the focus of the ritual on to this useful symbol.

Louis Dumont: From Indian Caste to German National Identity

But this is not all one may draw from the Durkheimian tradition in this context. Another scholar who thought and wrote extensively about what he called *The German Ideology* was Louis Dumont, Mauss's student and the structural anthropologist of India and later of the origins of modern western thought. Indeed, *The German Ideology* (1994 [1991]; also 1986b) was his last major work, the title, with its reference to "ideology", being typical, I would argue, of the tradition he represented: although today we might rather use a term like "identity" or even "ethnicity", they have never been as prominent in the French social sciences as

elsewhere.⁹ In a sense Dumont was uniquely qualified for the task, one might think, having been taken prisoner as a French soldier early in the Second World War, despite which he was allowed to go off on day release to study Sanskrit with a professor in Berlin and otherwise spent his spare time translating German books on French folklore into French (Parkin 2010).

Although Dumont was originally more of a folklorist (see Dumont 1951), after encountering Mauss and the French Indologist Silvain Lévi he was drawn more to India, where he did fieldwork with a low but not untouchable Tamil caste, formerly local rulers and warriors. The first collectivity of interest to him, therefore, was not the European nation state but the Indian caste (see especially Dumont 1980).

There are similarities as well as obvious differences between these two institutions. Like the ideal nation, the individual is embedded in caste for Dumont, being subject to its dictates in an extreme form: expulsion or other punishment awaits the individual who violates caste rules regarding issues such as marriage, commensality and religious observance (rules that are generally specific to each caste, however, rather than the caste system as a whole). This supposed lack of agency for the individual has been attacked as unreal by both Indian and western Indianists. There are, of course, individuals for Dumont, but as for Durkheim they act as such in a specific context. However, this is not only because they go against the collective in some way – in this case the caste – but also because they many of them take an independent decision to reject caste, or rather, in religious terms, to cut the ties that bind them to this earthly existence. What is more, they do so in a way that is entirely approved of socially and is even enshrined in the ancient legal texts as the last of the four stages of the ideal, religiously informed life of the upper-caste male: student of the sacred texts, married householder (acting as a domestic priest in this capacity), hermit in the forest, and renouncer or religious ascetic (*sadhu*). In this way the renouncer escapes the hierarchy that pervades the caste system and that traps the individual within it in order to seek salvation as an individual. And the renouncer seeks to do so in this biological lifetime, thus avoiding the aeons of existences, governed by the operation of karma or the worth of successive rebirths, before the householder still within society can hope to do the same. As the renouncer has to leave society to do this, Dumont calls him an “outworldly individual”, the further significance of which will become clear a little later. For the moment, let me reiterate that this individual is acting in socially approved ways, unlike the girl who marries against her parents’ wishes or the Brahman who secretly eats beef and drinks alcohol with his untouchable cronies: the Durkheimian individual, in other words.

⁹ See also Llobera (1996). In fact, Dumont himself used “identity” in an earlier article on this theme (1986b).

On returning to Paris, Dumont embarked on his influential but also controversial anthropology of the caste system, *Homo Hierarchicus*, published in French in 1966.¹⁰ He then turned to work on the genesis of the ideals of equality and individualism in the modern west (by modern, I really mean post-Reformation), which for Dumont are diametrically opposed to India's combination of hierarchy and the embeddedness of the individual in society (see Dumont 1986a).

Dumont locates the origins of this change in the Reformation, which led to the formation of a large number of churches independent of and rejecting Rome. These churches typically had much less ritual, removed or downgraded the priestly function and, through their emphasis on work and associated habits of frugality, honesty, punctuality etc., brought religious asceticism out of the Catholic monasteries and into the workaday world of Protestant society, in which one's trade or profession – one's "calling" – is something to which one is called by God. Others, like Max Weber and especially R. H. Tawney (2017 [1926]), have argued that this led inadvertently to the rise of modern capitalism, which invested the savings thereby generated. For Dumont, however, it is associated with the Protestant idea of the individual having a direct and unique relationship with God, unmediated by any priest. Certainly the idea of predestination, in denying the significance of free will in deciding one's fate in the afterlife, may seem to deny individual agency, but nonetheless people act as if they are among the saved, which itself can be said to involve individual choice. At all events, with the Protestant Reformation the individual becomes for Dumont an "in-worldly individual", unlike the out-worldly Indian renouncer.

And what of equality, normally associated with individualism in the post-Reformation West? That, of course, is diametrically opposed to hierarchy, equally associated with India, but for Dumont it is also an illusion in a way that hierarchy is not. Dumont has frequently come under fire for writing as if hierarchy, not equality, is normative universally, whereas the standard position in the west is that equality ought to be the norm and hierarchy shunned, scorned, or at least minimized as much as possible. It is clear that modern societies are egalitarian in their principles without being able to do away with hierarchy altogether, despite it being treated ideologically as secondary – in fact not as ideological at all, but as a matter of unfortunate but practical and unavoidable necessity. For Dumont, therefore, it is encompassed by egalitarianism as a value, just as the hierarchy encompasses individualism in India. For those seeking examples of hierarchical opposition in all this, incidentally, this is one place in which they can be found. But more particularly here, for Dumont hierarchy is not just a matter of social stratification but of

¹⁰ The first English translation came in 1970. It was followed by a revised and expanded English edition in 1980.

assigning different values to everything: thus we only distinguish things in order to value them differently, that is, to place them in a hierarchical relationship.

Nonetheless equality does exist as a value, and one of its examples, surely, is the nation and the nation state that is nationalism's political form: though social hierarchies are not abolished, and indeed nation states have their elites and rulers like any other polity, class differences are treated ideologically as insignificant, while all members of the nation are equal in both their rights before the law and their obligations to the nation, regardless of their actual economic status or condition. Thus Mussolini's corporatist state insisted that trade unions and employers work together to compose their differences in a compact, even though this was clearly to the advantage of the latter, while both he and Hitler simply suppressed all alternative political parties and movements to enforce an ideology of uniformity premised on the equal membership of all those who belonged to the nation, defined in racial terms at least for Hitler.

Lessons from German History

This brings me to consider an earlier Germany, where we might hope to find the roots of this development. While Germany could be considered a nation before 1871, in the sense of an ideological and spiritual ideal, it lacked a political institution it could call its own. Instead it was divided politically into several independent states, some very small, but all dominated initially by Austria and later by Prussia. This latter change, of course, was brought about by Bismarck, the master political manipulator of the mid-nineteenth century who was Chancellor of Prussia and later of Germany from 1862 to 1880, though also, according to the historian Golo Mann (1990 [1958]), all too human in his hypochondria and the sleepless nights his bold political moves cost him, not to mention his acquisitiveness and capacity for revenge against his political rivals. The dilemma he saw Germany facing was reflected in his own origins. Although his mother's family were middle-class officials and university professors, on his father's side he was a Juncker, a Prussian aristocrat, though an unusually intelligent and politically aware one, and he saw it as his task to preserve both his state and his own aristocratic class in a situation of rising middle-class nationalism and demands for German unification. Despite his personal lack of sympathy for nationalism and unification, Bismarck ultimately decided to unify Germany on his own terms in order to outbid the nationalists and thus preserve both Prussia and its ruling class by ensuring that the latter would continue to be in control of the new state. To see Bismarck as a nationalist in his own soul would be a mistake: it was left to others to make that shift, with the disastrous consequences, twice over in the twentieth century, we all know about. However, he established the conditions for it. Thus to unify Germany he had to remove Austria from it, despite its ruling class being German, and to ensure that the French offered

no interference either—hence his various wars, limited in comparison with what was to come in the next century, and almost the embodiment of Clausewitzian principles. This, of course, resulted in a lesser, smaller Germany because of Austria's exclusion – necessary not only to exclude a rival for power, but also because of the masses of non-Germans it would have brought with it were it to be included – and Germany already had enough of those (Bismarck's famous *Reichsfeinde*).¹¹ However, Austria soon reinvented itself as the Austro-Hungarian Empire through a compact with the equally dominant Hungarians and, despite its defeat and expulsion from pan-German institutions, became a firm ally of Germany until its break-up after the First World War. The alliance with Austria was also Bismarck's doing, of course, once he had managed to dissuade the Kaiser from humiliating Austria by staging a victory parade through Vienna after Prussia's bloody victory – another sleepless night, no doubt.

Despite emerging middle-class nationalism being outbid in this way and thus being provided with a sense of unification at the cost of having its own path to power blocked, and despite the proclamation of the German Empire in the Hall of Mirrors in Versailles in 1871, Bismarck's creation was something of a fudge, with Bavaria and a handful of other states retaining nominal independence and Prussia establishing itself as the only entity of any importance. Indeed, it retained its sense of separate identity until the Allies abolished it in 1945, shortly after Bismarck's own daughter-in-law had committed suicide on the family estate in Pomerania in the face of the advance of the Red Army – a tragic personal symbol of Prussia's own demise. This was some three generations after Wilhelm I wept at the declaration of the German Empire at Versailles in 1871, after the defeat of the French in the Franco-Prussian War, at the loss, as he saw it, of his beloved Prussia (which, with its allies and fresh conquests, became the new Germany) and his snubbing Bismarck accordingly. Nonetheless there is a sense in which an older idea was retained, of the state as a phenomenon in its own right, devoid of other purpose, being rooted in Prussia, which remained its core, an artificial state that contained only some Germans and a lot of Poles, as well as Rhinelanders who were almost too French to count as German, and after 1871 real Frenchmen too when Alsace and Lorraine were annexed, much against Bismarck's own wishes.

Prussia was also a state formerly ruled by a monarch, Frederick the Great, who despised the German language and, whenever he spoke it, larded it with Frenchisms of his own invention (e.g. *Peuplierung* for “peopling”),¹² preferring to

¹¹ Literally, “Enemies of the Empire”.

¹² This coining combines the French word *peuple*, “people”, with the German gerundive suffix *-ung*. The closest standard German word I could find to translate “peopling” is *Bevölkerung*, which more usually means “population”.

communicate in French with the likes of Voltaire; although he fought multiple wars for Prussia's survival, it was Prussia as a state pure and simple, not Prussia as the heart of German nationalism. It was not a communist state, certainly not a nation state, but perhaps closest to one of Ernest Gellner's "agrarian states" (1983), which were pre-national, that is, dynastic, multi-ethnic, multilingual, and with a weak and unimportant middle class of urban merchants and artisans. It was Bismarck's realization, ahead of anyone else, of what the German middle classes, growing fat on the new industries and trade, intended to do that led him to act as he did. Not that this made him a democrat: this state without a meaning outside itself is the real reason for the famous words, his or someone else's, that "the state is everything, the people nothing".

If at this point we look forward to Hitler, we might detect something of the same situation: although Nazism was seemingly nationalist, it has often been suggested (e. g. by Mann 1990 [1958]) that the real point of Hitler's project was to exploit the state for purposes of winning and keeping power: that is, the state served Hitler as much as Hitler served the state. In this view, everything else, including the extermination of the Jews, but also nationalism itself, was just a pretext for his lust and drive for power. This may be to see such extraordinary events as impelled by the will of one man alone, regardless of other actors and contemporary political currents. Whatever the truth of that, one lesson that Prussia and Frederick the Great surely taught the later united Germany under Hitler, if not already under Bismarck, was precisely this notion of a state existing for itself and using its power exclusively for its own survival. However, under these later rulers this idea became linked to a sense of Germanness, resulting in an exclusive, aggressive and increasingly lethal nationalism, an extreme nationalism that lauded the Reich and subordinated, even exterminated, all non-nationals, rather than simply discriminating against them in a gentler way. The state therefore became a weapon of power. Conversely, for the democratic revolutionary Tom Paine and those who followed him, the state should be strictly limited in what it can do.¹³

How does the individual fit into all this? More particularly, perhaps, what does Dumont have to say about the differences between French and German notions of personhood in this context? We may start by recapping Dumont's argument that the German individual is a very private individual, an individual whom the state is usually content to leave alone to pursue his or her talents and interests as a private individual, provided only that in a crisis all that must be given up in the interests of the state and its survival. As already noted, this can be opposed to the Anglo-Saxon

¹³ That is, it should be as small as possible, on the basis that the less government there is the better. In the new free republic, the individual should be able to govern him- or herself in a self-reliant manner and not depend on the state to do it instead.

and French traditions, which cast the individual as a transcendent figure able ultimately to challenge unjust laws by, for example, disobeying them. In Wilhelmine and Nazi Germany it was rather the state that was transcendent and obedience to it the only possible course of action for the individual. Of course, since 1945 things have been different in Germany, in many ways now an exemplary democracy, which enshrines the freedom to express individuality as in the Anglo-Saxon and French traditions. But even now one can see vestiges of the former situation of the collectivity transcending the individual, alongside the great respect shown for the personal space of others;¹⁴ the famous first clause of the German constitution, embarrassing even to many Germans, which allows people to do what the law allows, rather than allowing them to do whatever the law does not prohibit, as in France, America or Britain; the equally famous *Verfassungsschauvinismus*, or legalistic obsession with the law and the constitution; the way in which trade unions and employers agree to avoid both wage rises and redundancies to overcome financial and economic crises like that of 2008; the nation coming together, at least in 2015 if not today (2019), to cope with the million plus refugees who entered Germany in that year. This is therefore not quite what I call the Tom Paine version of individualism, revolutionary in both its aims and methods, which was more influential in creating the institutional foundations of individualism and egalitarianism in other western states. It is rather one with a greater emphasis ultimately on consensus and the good of the collective, where disputes can be deeply unsettling rather than accepted as the rough and tumble of democratic politics, and where economic success can be linked to the operation of precisely these values.¹⁵

However, this does not exhaust what Dumont has to say about the relationship between nation and individual in Germany, which he compares to his native French case. Being French, he says, is treated like an accident of history, since what outsiders consider French culture is really at root a universal human culture seen from the perspective of the French themselves. Being universal, therefore, it is also French, as well as everything else. Being German, on the other hand, is specific to Germans: while in principle one can become French despite having been born as something else, in the German folk model, if no longer entirely in respect of legal citizenship, one can only be born a German, if only in part (one German grandpar-

¹⁴ What I have to say in the rest of this paragraph comes largely from my own personal experience of having lived in Germany from 1986 to 1993 and my attempts to remain familiar with German affairs since.

¹⁵ Still today, one might argue, German government is big government, at least on the welfare side of its policies and activities. This is diametrically opposed to the minimal government of Tom Paine, which still survives as a political creed in the USA, if no longer in France, the other revolutionary nation of Paine's time.

ent being enough); moreover, other cultures are clearly different, though some nations, like the Dutch, Scandinavians and possibly the British, are less non-German than others (see Forsythe 1989). This opens the way to tolerance of others, as with Herder, but also, and notoriously, to their dismissal and treatment as non-human by the Nazis, or merely as inferior under Bismarck. This thus makes Germans individuals through their Germanness, not as members of a common humanity with common values but different cultural expressions that are ultimately superficial, as for the French. As we have seen, in and after 1789 the French adopted universal values that they sought to make universal by military conquest – unlike later German conquests from Bismarck to Hitler, which were for the good of Germany alone, not of all humanity. Again we have the idea of a state existing for itself that later became fused with a newer German nationalism that was equally particular and exclusive. As for France, the fusion of French and universal culture has made the country strongly assimilationist not only of immigrant ethnic identities but also of internal regional ones like the Bretons, Basques or Catalans, not to mention Languedoc. The process of assimilation is nonetheless compromised for many by the failure to incorporate some five million Muslims properly into the French nation: despite France's formal secularism, in practice being French tends to mean being Christian and speaking the language in at least one common version of the national folk model.

The Good Soldier Schweik¹⁶ and the Little Czech

I have dealt with Bismarck at some length and Tom Paine much more cursorily: what about Schweikism, which, unsurprisingly perhaps, Holy himself introduces as the epitome of Czechness? As I noted earlier, Schweik is also an embodiment of James Scott's everyday form of resister (1987), self-effacing, avoiding trouble with the authorities rather than confronting them, "foolin' massa" in the idiom of New World slaves and other subordinated Black populations (Irek 1994), casting himself as inept, as too stupid to carry out his instructions, etc., qualities that Holy does not always emphasize. He does link Schweik with egalitarianism, a reminder of the different forms that it may take as well. But for Holy he lacks individualism, being a stock character in a genre of Czech fiction. Actually, for anyone who has read the stories or watched the films, Schweik appears as remarkably individual, resourceful beyond the average precisely in his mock displays of ineptness and dim-wittedness, though also lucky: for example, he only avoids being shot, and that narrowly, by the sudden ending of the war in which he should have been serving, but had been uncovered instead as a draft avoider or deserter. In fact these values and the tactics

¹⁶ I retain the German form as this is what Holy uses, and it is more familiar to a general readership. The proper Czech form is Švejk.

associated with them are worldwide and not specific to Czechness: Scott's major examples (1987) are not Schweik but contemporary Malay peasants and French peasants of the feudal period. Schweik himself may be specifically and necessarily only Czech; but Schweikism – the values, or at least tricks, he represents – can be found sufficiently frequently to be considered universal.

Holy makes rather greater use of another Czech stereotype, the “little Czech” (*malý český člověk*) of his title. This, he says, is a stereotype that all Czechs will recognize, though it is hardly flattering: the quarrelsome mediocrity who is jealous of others, but nonetheless passive in action, who is also egalitarian (Holy mentions the slogan “We all have a stomach” more than once in support of this sentiment), though for Holy again, and perhaps more convincingly this time, also lacking in individuation. Like Schweikism, it is a mode of survival, a way of not drawing attention to oneself, but also, under communism, of precisely the opposite, namely personal advancement. Holy quotes a Czech writer here: “stupidity had better prospects of advancement than vision and education...”¹⁷ More positively, Holy also draws attention to the triple values of being cultivated, having a good education and democracy as constitutive of Czech national identity. Where he ends his book, though, is in bringing individualism back into the picture as a western-influenced value that is in tension with the collectivism of the nation and nationalism, the latter being especially emphasized in a crisis. He even talks of a search for a middle way, without really substantiating its existence with evidence. This deprives his work of a very convincing conclusion, despite the rich material he presents documenting every facet of Czech identity and values.

Towards a Conclusion: A Structuralist Explanation, but only in Part

However, the lessons of Holy's study go beyond forgivable details such as this. Rather, they relate to two questions about nationalism, or at least certain aspects of it: first, whether such aspects can be considered universal, or at any rate liable to arise in any case of nationalism one encounters; and secondly whether, despite not being an obvious Durkheimian, or doubtfully one at all, Holy nonetheless aligns himself with that school in this context, at least in some respects.

I start with the second question. In his book Holy does not mention Durkheim or Mauss and only cites Dumont once (Holy 1996a: 164), very much in passing. Nonetheless, as I hope to have shown, much of his work on Czech nationalism and identity (including his reference to Dumont) recognizes the pressures to conform and more generally the notion of the individual being embedded in society such that his room for deviating from its dictates is heavily restricted and subject to sanction. This, of course, immediately reminds one of Durkheim and Mauss, and

¹⁷ Holy (1996a: 27) quoting Šimečka (1990: 104–105).

by extension the latter's pupil Dumont. Nonetheless there is a difference, namely between treating this notion as purely ideological, as Holy does in the context of Czech identity, where it is clearly only partial, and elevating this ideological notion to the status of sociological fact, as in the Durkheimian tradition. Although Durkheim's ideas in this respect have often made him seem conservative, if not reactionary, it is clear that he intends them to apply universally. Although Durkheim concedes now and then that modern European society has developed somewhat differently from, say, his favourite Native Australians, the implication is that even multi-stranded and multi-vocal societies with liberal ideals of personal freedom are ultimately no different. Perhaps this is more evident in relation to the social groups that make up modern societies of this type than the latter taken as a whole. However liberal and tolerant the wider society may be, the groups that make it up, often called "tribes" in sociological writings, may well be less tolerant, being marked by shared ideals, values and accepted practices, and they may shun individuals who fail to conform, to live up to them, to share them. This is hardly a sanction as severe as imprisonment or execution, and even if one is expelled there is generally somewhere else to go, but the basic Durkheimian principle remains the same. For Holy, of course, individualism also comes into the picture in a way it does not for the Durkheimians: but again there is the same dichotomy between the actual freedoms the individual can hope to enjoy in practice and individual freedom as an ideal, which, like all ideals, is doomed to remain partial and unfulfilled. Durkheim and Holy both treat one term of the dichotomy between social conformity and individual freedom as sociological fact, the other as an ideal, but in reverse.

As for the other question, that of the universality of nationalism, this is not one posed by any of our authors. Indeed, nationalism is obviously not universal, given the fact that there have always been alternatives to it stretching back to the beginning of recorded history. Although Anthony Smith (1986) has drawn attention to longstanding identities that could be considered national, or at least ethnic – he uses the French term *ethnie* for them, like China, Japan, Iran, Greece or the Jewish tradition – most modern commentators, following Ernest Gellner (1983) and Benedict Anderson (1983), see nationalism as an essentially modern phenomenon. More specifically for both the latter, it originated as the project of emerging middle-ranking social groups like the European middle classes of the nineteenth century grown rich through the Industrial Revolution and free trade, or partially Europeanized colonial subjects struggling for the independence of colonial territories as states they themselves hoped to govern in the twentieth century. For T. H. Eriksen (1993: 104),¹⁸ moreover, nationalism's appeal is also linked to

¹⁸ Citing Ernest Gellner and Ralph Grillo.

the Industrial Revolution and more particularly to the disruption to an emerging working class caused by the migration and urbanization it entailed. In this argument, these factors disrupted existing ties of kinship and locality, leaving industrial workers bereft of satisfying relationships and identities until nationalism came along and filled the void. This can be added to what all these authors have said about new modes of communication and travel, as well as the urge to uniformity (especially cultural) of the new nationalism. It neglects the rise of trade unions and other working-class forms of organization and movements, some of them religious, as alternatives, but nonetheless this historical specificity is what makes nationalism just one possible identity and polity among many within the whole trajectory of world history. And of course, not all middle-ranking social groups in history have invented nationalism, though as Max Weber noted they are more likely to be social innovators of some sort or another than the groups above or below them in the social hierarchy. Nonetheless, if you have nationalism you are likely to have certain features in common with other nationalisms, like a mythologized history of struggle against an alien oppressor; a concomitant focus on the past at least as much as on the future; mobilization of the masses through symbol and metaphor rather than scientific or other rational argument; a sense of the nation still under threat and/or having been wronged by history; a rejection of universal values, institutions and processes; an exclusiveness in relation to other states, groups and individuals who patently do not belong to the nation; and a sacredness through which the nation becomes a modern version of Durkheim's totem, that is, a displacement vehicle for the self-worship of those who belong to it. All this may translate into anything from informal prejudices against minorities to foreign conquest in order to make the borders of the state fit the nation, and even to the extermination of those who do not belong: it is curious how, once a nation achieves freedom in its own state, it is intolerant of any minorities within it who may be seeking the same outcome for themselves.

While there are many specific features of the Czech case, one can find all the above (apart from the more violent ones) in Holy's account of it: there is nothing surprising in his interpretation to those familiar with other such cases. Moreover, as I have tried to argue, not even Schweikism (unlike Schweik himself) is specific to the Czech case, given that it has analogues in other cultures. Here too we meet the dichotomy between ideas and realities: Schweik is a purely literary invention, unlike Scott's Malay peasant filling the bottom of a bag of rice with dirt to reduce the amount of rice he is supposed to pay as *zakat*, the Islamic religious tax. Both, however, are trickster figures playing the same sort of game, and there is no shortage of other examples worldwide.

There is something of a flavour of structuralism in all this – not the abstract mental structures of the whole of humanity, as for Lévi-Strauss and his deductive

mode of argument, but a more partial structuralism which identifies similar features in a social phenomenon that is more limited in scope or incidence. A pioneering example was the work of Georges Dumézil, the French scholar of comparative Indo-European mythology who identified structural patterns in myth, religion and social classification throughout the Indo-European-speaking world but was careful not to extend them beyond it (e. g. 1988 [1948]). Although nationalism is an ideology, not a historically connected group of societies, so that the restriction is thematic, not culturally specific or linguistic, and is no more universal than speakers of Indo-European languages, where it exists it generates similarities and common features. One cannot rule out the operation of diffusion here, as nations influence and are explicitly influenced by one another and may become similar as a result (though Lévi-Strauss would probably have said that the minds of those who make up the nation are predisposed to accept such influences).

Certainly I accept, if with definite misgivings, that Lévi-Strauss's structuralism has long since fallen out of fashion, not least because of a certain ethnographic aridity that seemed to remove flesh and blood individuals from the overall picture. However, it seems to me legitimate to compare different examples of a phenomenon in terms of what unites them as well as what differentiates them. What unites them is frequently a pattern of features related in specific ways that are repeated from case to case. What differentiates them is the specific cultural expressions these features receive. This allows different nationalists of different nationalisms to proclaim their own identities from one another – but ultimately they are all doing the same things and thinking in the same ways, and of course today (2019) they are often prepared to share political platforms. Of all the authors I have discussed, only one, Dumont, would acknowledge himself as a structuralist, but the others are not immune from the same way of thinking, however inadvertent – not even Ladislav Holy, as I hope to have shown in this lecture.

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