

## Scottish Nationalism and a New Generation's answer to the question of Being-in-the-World<sup>1</sup>

Paul Gilfillan  
Lecturer in Sociology  
Queen Margaret University

In this article I will outline the contours of an argument which will be of interest to those involved in community education in contemporary Scotland; an argument which claims that, against the characterisation of postmodernism as an incredulity towards foundationalist projects, the post-modern condition offers the opportunity to address the question of 'human being' by developing a *systematic integralism* in Scotland today. I argue the task faced by the first post-conventional working class generation empowered by literacy and affluence, is nothing less than re-thinking human being within the 'mirror of production' but *outwith* previous working class generations' dominated relationship to the realm of meaning and confinement within the 'dictatorship of scarcity'. This task encompasses re-thinking localities, governance, the purpose of education, the question of transcendence and the relationship to the natural environment, and a host of other relationships outwith the era of industrialisation and modernisation (Gilfillan 2009).

Based upon ethnographic fieldwork conducted between 1998 and 2002 on the politicization of national identity in the former coalmining village of Cardenden in Fife, I argue that manual workers constitute and perform locality and nationality through a class-based idiom of "life as a physical existence" (Connerton 1989: 101); an enacted (i.e. non-objective) or *reduced* subjectivity brought about by manual labour that is taken up by freedom and, becoming reflexive, constructs the self and its relationship to the realm of meaning in an integral manner via the 'mirror of production' but in a post-modern cultural context. This is the basis for my contention that there is an emergent integralism and I deploy the term 'politics of being' rather than the more familiar 'politics of identity' to reflect the fact that 'situated being' in all of its aspects is at stake among a younger generation.

As my starting point I propose the terms (1) integralism and (2) liberalism as two Weberian 'ideal types' to organise a variety positions that may be thought of as describing two opposed conceptions of politics and approaches to 'being-in-the-

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world'. In terms of understanding nationalism I take the findings of sociologists that 'support for a Scottish parliament has been higher in working class than in middle class groups in every survey that has ever asked the question' (Brown *et al* 1996: 153), and propose that the working class integralism that has already (partially) achieved a nation-state of its own, is one element of a wider 'politics of being' or emergent systematic integralism. I identify four basic positions regarding nationalism in Scotland today:

1. **Enlightenment Unionism.** Outright opposition either in the style of Left-wing internationalism or Right-wing one-nation Toryism which both understand nationalism as "false consciousness"
2. **Modernization Nationalism.** Instrumentalist acceptance of nationalism as functional to economic modernization of Scotland and breaking free of 'feudal' structures of the UK.
3. **Integralism Lite.** Acceptance of nationalism as good 'in itself' and not simply welcomed for being functional to modernity.
4. **Systematic Integralism.** The systematic or integral de-differentiation of lifespaces; characterised as nationalist, post-secular, regionalist, sustainable, pluralist.

If the first three positions can be described as variants of liberalism, the fourth position of integralism among the first post-conventional working class generation is characterised by systematic de-differentiation which does not simply retrieve the nation but re-opens every aspect of the question of human being-in-the-world. This fourth position transcends those liberal devolutionists and 'home rulers' who, allowing the return of the nation, keep any 'medieval' or post-modern project of de-differentiation at arms length and refuses to re-open the question of being.

Viewing the two 'politics of being' I have labelled integralism and liberalism as Weberian 'ideal types' allows us to recognise that the integralism adverted to here is by no means unanimous or uncontested even among younger generations, as 'the working class' is not a unitary subject but is riven with cultural and religious differences. Each ideal type cannot be neatly demarcated, since even within the nationalist camp these two 'structures of perception' are reproduced insofar as we can identify 1) the integralist and 2) the modernist. The integralist asks, if the modernist de-politicisation of the relation between nation and state was defended for so long by many working class political and cultural activists, what other relationships require liberating from their modernist privatisation? If we now admit that the 'medievalists' who, lest we forget, were confidently classified as advocating a hopelessly out-of-date 'medieval' programme throughout the modern industrial period, if they in fact articulated a superior de-differentiated conception of the relation between nation and

state, what other superior de-differentiated conceptions do they offer a post-industrial working class generation recently liberated by literacy and affluence and a non-dominated relationship to the realm of meaning?

Integralism, then, thrusts the full-weight of the advent of liberation onto the shoulders of particularity. Faced with difference, the integralist wishes difference to flourish and to constitute History and Politics and Culture and Transcendence upon the basis of a genuine pluralism i.e. an embrace of multiple integralisms.

If a working class integralism is to emerge it must successfully deconstruct the myth of the Enlightenment and the concept of 'civil society'; the alleged opposition between state and civil society of Adam Ferguson which is alleged to have allowed the Scottish Enlightenment to liberate Man and Reason from their aristocratic confinement as lapdogs to the absolutist state of the ancien régime. After July 1999 it is no longer wilful to maintain that the post-national bourgeois Enlightenment figures legitimised the dissolution of Scottish Society, Nation and State. The current integralist position then rejects this Enlightenment politics and vision of being-in-the-world along with Ferguson's 'abstract idea of society' which is a de-politicised and de-historicised fiction that follows on from and legitimises Scotland's original dissolving itself in the act of Union. If the abstract idea of 'society' was all that was left of Scotland, then, Ferguson's *Essay on the History of Civil Society* (1767) remains the longest suicide note ever written for a nation.

In contrast to integralism is the view of an enlightened liberalism which conceives its historical role as one of liberating peoples from their pre-modern particularity to usher them into the Open Society. Liberalism proclaims it alone has learned the lessons of history and how to conduct politics and negotiate the reality of multicultural difference in a way integralism, by definition, can not. In this view, integralism can only be a danger to the liberal project and can never form the basis for a viable post-gemeinschaft or post-conventional social order. Only liberalism, via its principled disavowal of all integralisms, can meet the threat of discrimination in highly differentiated societies and polities. The liberal imagination, then, cannot imagine a species of integralism that can escape this 'essential' connection with the historical violence perpetrated by the likes of 'blood and soil' nationalism and this is why liberalism cannot trust 'medieval particularity' and so has to repress and resist particularity in order to save these social formations from themselves. Faced with difference the liberal wishes to make History and Reason and Politics upon the basis of banning integralism i.e. wishes to 'end' history and inaugurate perpetual peace, which leads to a highly repressed and repressive public sphere.

Another difficulty with the liberal / unionist 'politics of being' is its inability to recognise, far less politicise, the exigencies generated by class-based society. Any emergent working class project of systematic integralism that has been made possible by literacy and affluence is expected to end before it has developed. However

peaceable in intent, life under liberalism for politicised working class individuals and communities is characterised by a toxic public realm where accepting the caesura between the personal and the political is regarded as the acme of political wisdom. The complaint of integralism, then, is that liberalism is a species of the very fundamentalism it sees in others as a result of its a priori rejection of any rival imagining of the relationship between ‘situated being’ and the state, politics or the public sphere generally. For liberalism, all differences except the non-privatising *integralist* imagining of the relationship between self or social class and state / society and the realm of meaning are respected. For integralism, the price of entry to politics is too high: the depoliticisation of the question of human being and the confinement of such questions to the private sphere, so that politicians inevitably become managers of the status quo and electoral contests become rivals tendering bids to administer the system most efficiently.

While the modernist nationalists celebrate the return of the nation, what horrifies their modernist sensibilities in a globalising twenty-first century is the prospect of an ‘integral particularism’ whose historical consciousness positively takes to the reconstruction of all of those other tasks that three centuries of ‘scarcity thinking’ have accumulated and modernity wished to liquidate – such as constructing a pre-modern regionalisation of freedom and identity and a pre-modern relationship to the environment and a pre-modern relation to locality via allowing the return of suppressed regional identities and their resurrection from the no-man’s land in which they have likewise languished throughout the modern period.

While the fortunes and make-up of integralism will be a matter of empirical inquiry, we can say in an a priori manner that all of this horrifies unionist subscribers to the dualistic ‘politics of being,’ whether they be far-left working class radicals still keeping faith with the modernist ‘separation of powers’ and ‘evacuation of being’, or the middle class liberals confidently reassured by liberal politicians that they can safely bid farewell to previous ethnic and class loyalties and settle down to enjoying autonomous individuality and ‘modernity for ever.’ Here we may identify the will-to-power of liberalism whereby the arrival of affluence and literacy to the working class and the project of thinking ‘situated being’ that it liberates is not allowed to enact the reversal of the liberal settlement of the separation or differentiation of the spheres of religion, politics and the economy that is alleged to have happened in the early modern period, and which has been legitimated by social theorists such as Ferguson, Weber and Parsons so that, among these social theorists, this differentiation is imagined to form part of the DNA of ‘modern’ societies. In contrast, I argue that if a working class generation is breaking with modernity, their ethnographers must follow the likes of Bruno Latour and break with Ferguson, Tonnies and Weber’s acceptance into social theory of the narrative modernity tells itself.

## Working Class Nationalism & the Perennial Medieval

The Holyrood parliament on 1 July 1999 represents the ‘putting right’ of the failure of modernity and the long trek ‘back to the future’ and the (partial) restoring of Scotland’s political structures to its *medieval* standards. This indicates the failure of modernism not only as a politics but as an ontology or vision of being-in-the-world. If we may describe the medieval as perennial this refers to the fact that the historico-symbolic complex that first imagined and achieved national sovereignty occurred thanks to a non-modernist conception of the polity. In response to the ‘long event’ of 1979-1997, there emerged amongst the working class a politicisation of national identity and a disposition to de-differentiate what modernity had successfully differentiated until July 1999; a disposition not to reproduce its traditional accommodation to modernity and subordination but break from fundamental relations (geo-political, inter-generational, familial, political and cultural) by the deployment of a long inert historico-symbolic complex. As one informant told me:

It seems tae hae been oor generation that started it and they're gonnae finish it off. Ma mum an that, she thinks we should get it [independence] noo, bit when Ah wis growin up she jist voted Labour. Whereas noo they see us, me an aa ma mates vote SNP so we're startin it. We've got the parliament and the ones that are growin up they'll hear it mair fae us than we did fae oor mum and dad, so they're gonnae pick up on it.

Fundamental to the sociology of Scottish nationalism is the fact that by destroying dualist strongholds among the Scottish working class such as all-British industries and all-British trade unions, the ‘post-national’ neoliberal globalisation of the economy pursued in the 1980s and 1990s has begun the process of deconstructing the geo-political relationships of Scottish modernity insofar as it destroyed the mundane bases for the symbolic reproduction of Britain among the post-industrial working class. Among a younger generation there has emerged a re-articulation of the political field in the shape of nationalism: a politics without England.

However, even in the renaissance of working class writing that occurred in the nineteen-eighties and nineteen-nineties, the inadequacies of the modernist consciousness and ontology were still on display in working class authors who have internalised the modernist ontology so that in the likes of James Kelman and Irvine Welsh, for example, one can still identify a traditional ‘evacuation of being’ insofar as they produce pictures of working class being-in-the-world with some of the primary colours of human being removed as a matter of realist principle; evidence of how recent is the emergence from scarcity and the truncated and colourless vision of working class being it inspires.

## Conclusion

What remains is the systematic re-imagining of being-in-the-world that is free of the inherited limitations and dominations placed and projected by older generations; the articulation of an integral vision of authentic cultural and psychological and social and spiritual and intellectual development that responds to the Western ‘crisis of meaning’ in post-Enlightenment societies and avoids the Scylla of scientism and the Charybdis of nihilism. In fulfilling this twenty-first century task the pre-modern era will be significant as it knew nothing of the modern ‘separation of powers.’ Only if a new working class generation articulates a post-scarcity and post-modern ‘vision of human being’ can it be claimed that the post-sixties working class generations were not liberated by literacy and affluence simply to reproduce the same materialist ‘evacuation of being’ committed and practiced by previous working class generations throughout the modern ‘dictatorship of scarcity’ period. If a younger working class generation still looks into the ‘mirror of production,’ it does not reflect back what previous working class generations saw insofar as the image has been liberated from scarcity and a dominated relationship to the realm of meaning. If there is the prospect of a generation asserting with Heidegger: “We want ourselves” (in Wolin 1990 p. 86), it is mindful that for the slave to achieve authenticity “it is necessary fundamentally to choose himself on the ground of *slavery*” (Sartre 1956 p. 703).

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