National Culture and Political Legitimacy: Herder and Rousseau

F. M. Barnard


Stable URL:
http://links.jstor.org/sici?sici=0022-5037%28198304%2F06%2944%3A2%3C231%3ANCAPLH%3E2.0.CO%3B2-L

*Journal of the History of Ideas* is currently published by University of Pennsylvania Press.

Your use of the JSTOR archive indicates your acceptance of JSTOR's Terms and Conditions of Use, available at http://www.jstor.org/about/terms. JSTOR's Terms and Conditions of Use provides, in part, that unless you have obtained prior permission, you may not download an entire issue of a journal or multiple copies of articles, and you may use content in the JSTOR archive only for your personal, non-commercial use.

Please contact the publisher regarding any further use of this work. Publisher contact information may be obtained at http://www.jstor.org/journals/upenn.html.

Each copy of any part of a JSTOR transmission must contain the same copyright notice that appears on the screen or printed page of such transmission.

JSTOR is an independent not-for-profit organization dedicated to and preserving a digital archive of scholarly journals. For more information regarding JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.
J. G. Herder is usually credited with the parenthood of cultural nationalism and is said to have put exclusive emphasis on a people’s ethnic characteristics, whereas J. J. Rousseau is viewed as the doctrinal founder of political nationalism and is said to have equated nationhood entirely with the expression of a people’s collective will. Whether this assessment is altogether correct is the crucial question. Therefore, it matters less to my purpose which of two influential evaluations of cultural nationalism is closer to the truth, Friedrich Meinecke’s or Hans Kohn’s; the first considered cultural nationalism politically innocuous, the second politically dangerous. Both indeed could be right. Meinecke wondered whether Herder and the early German Romantics were still too universalist in their thinking, too reluctant to sever ties with the cosmopolitanism of the Enlightenment, and too naive, politically, to give effective political direction to their speculative visions; similarly, Kohn feared with reason that cultural nationalism could constitute a threat to the open society, to individual choice, and to the freedom of expression.

More central to my argument, however, is the question whether Herder’s “cultural” doctrine or Rousseau’s “political” doctrine would have contributed very much at all to the core ideas of nationalism had they been exclusively concerned with the celebration of customs, legends, language, and folkdancing, on the one hand, or the creation, preservation, and resurrection of statehood per se, on the other. Surely, the contention most commonly made by all nationalists, “cultural” or “political,” is that nationhood is something other than mere membership in any existing state, that it is not simply derived from de facto statehood in the sense in which Meinecke speaks of the Staatsnation.¹ It is precisely the lack of congruence between nationhood and statehood which prompts nationalists to seek a legitimation of the political nation’s distinctive identity. Because the congruence of nationhood with any given state cannot be taken for granted, the very basis of a state’s legitimacy is called into question. And on this question nationalists are as much guided by Rousseau as they are by Herder, for did Rousseau not insist that a state or political

---


Copyright April 1983 by Journal of the History of Ideas, Inc.
nation had to be built on the prior existence of a cultural nation, of a people uniquely defined by its own collective character?

But if this is so, if political nationalism, at least as understood since Rousseau, requires nationhood to precede statehood, the opposition between cultural nationalism and political nationalism loses its force. What, then, is left of the distinction? Are there still any contrasts to be drawn between the contributions of Herder and Rousseau? By addressing myself to this question I might also shed light on the more general question of whether cultural nationalism is something generically different from political nationalism or whether—as I wish to suggest—both are merely variants of essentially one nationalist doctrine.

Although I consider the opposition of Herder and Rousseau in terms of a contradistinction between apolitical and political nationalism at best highly problematical, by no means do I deny that there are important differences dividing them. Indeed, these differences are vastly more profound and fundamental in that they consist in their divergent conceptions of the political itself. It is not difficult to see why this should be so. From what follows it will be apparent that Herder’s views on natural man, on human language and social agreement, on the mode of historical development and the properties of societal wholes, differ sharply, if not radically, from those of Rousseau. In discussing these divergences I make use of four principal distinctions: the distinction between “making” and “unfolding”; the Thomist distinction between substantive and accidental wholes; the sociological distinction between consensus and cooperation; and Meinecke’s distinction between state-nations and nation-states. My contention is (1) that Herder’s contribution to nationalist doctrine involves not a depoliticizing of the idea of nationhood but rather, like that of Rousseau, a redefinition of the political itself; and (2) that Herder’s undertaking, though markedly different from that of Rousseau, embodies in essence a common quest for political legitimacy, a shared desire to uncover the sources of a society’s self-understanding by the sole means of which it is able to legitimate itself.

I. Culture and Nature

In spite of important differences in substance or emphasis, Herder and Rousseau share the Aristotelian assumption that whatever is capable of perfection is so because of its inherent nature. By virtue of this close interlacing of the given and the aspired to, of what is and what ought to be, the boundaries between fact and value, tradition and ideals, the discovered and the created threaten to become exceedingly blurred; whatever “culture” and “nature” are, taken by themselves, is consistently obscured.
The attempted fusion of culture and nature had, to be sure, its polemical intent. When Rousseau, Herder, or the Romantics invoked nature, they did so in order to oppose the contrived and artificial to the authentic and spontaneous. They wished to remind men that natural growth could be stunted, human capacities and human development warped, that, in short, "progress" could mean decay and alienation. Clearly, human culture was not simply a matter of historical continuity, a cumulative result of what in fact happened to men over time or was produced by them. To be judged legitimate, culture had to be recovered from the stream of apparent continuity, from a stream which deceptively concealed significant discontinuities of meaning and substance, and thus helped to disguise perversions as true developments. In order, therefore, to legitimize the future, one had to reconstruct the past. Hence, at every turn, one had to retrace one's steps and retake possession of one's true heritage. To present national cultures as true cultures, it had to be shown that their emergence involved the recovery of the original, authentic essence which, above all, was the impulse behind organismic imagery. One misses the point by indiscriminately attributing to organicism all sorts of sinister, reactionary, totalitarian, racist, or elitist designs. For the most part, and certainly in the case of Rousseau and Herder, organic metaphors were necessary tools for making the dynamic fusion of culture and nature persuasively intelligible.

That the attempted fusion between the naturally given and the culturally created involved perplexities that defied resolution need scarcely be gainsaid, but far from weakening nationalist doctrine, it in fact helped to enhance its appeal. For there can be little doubt that the ambiguities which the fusion entailed proved immensely fertile in the propagation of nationalist ideology. Although I propose to dwell on what distinguished two highly seminal approaches to the idea of nationhood, I would first like to sketch what they had in common.

To begin with, both Herder and Rousseau repudiated Hobbes's image of the state of nature. Rousseau, it is true, viewed man as naturally non-sociable; nevertheless he, like Herder, agreed that natural man was inherently peaceful. Secondly, both shared a profound distrust of cosmopolitanism. Despite being universalists at heart, they dismissed cosmopolitanism as an empty formula, as a meaningless abstraction. They held it to be part and parcel of the inherited natural law tradition which, in their view, rested on the mirage of a nonexisting international order. Thirdly, Herder like Rousseau, was a radical egalitarian, suspicious of wealth and the social privileges it helped to create. So-called high culture was repulsive to both chiefly because it had grown out of an unequal society. Quite unlike a number of their Romantic "followers," neither Rousseau nor Herder felt inclined to idealize the Middle Ages precisely
because its rigidly hierarchical institutions and entrenched inequalities held no attraction for them. It was the ordinary people, not the nobility, the clergy, or the intellectuals, in whom they saw the true and sole foundations upon which nationhood or statehood could be built. Although their views about "nation-building" were at variance, they wholly concurred that national foundations, to be truly authentic, had to be popular in origin. Fourthly, Herder no less than Rousseau, detested personal dependence in all its forms. Social relations outside the household do not require masters and servants; hence the rule of law is to replace the rule of man.

Furthermore, fifthly, both men thought of religion as something inherently national; historically, nationality and religion went together. Admittedly Rousseau valued religion chiefly for its instrumental effectiveness in strengthening national cohesiveness and political ties, while Herder, a deeply religious thinker, valued it also for its own sake. Nonetheless, they were equally impressed by the influence of religion in deepening a people's sense of collective identity and self-awareness. In this Rousseau and Herder drew on a common inspiration: the history of Israel. Moses was for Herder "an exemplar for all times;"² Rousseau made a point of urging the Poles to follow the example set by Moses and the Hebrews. On Christianity, too, their views converged closely. Bitterly lamenting the destruction of ancestral religions, Herder accused Christian missionaries and rulers of having cruelly deprived many native peoples of "their character, their heart, and their history."³ Rousseau went further. He saw in organized Christianity itself the seed of national destruction. By wishing to establish a spiritual kingdom on earth, Jesus separated religious institutions from political institutions and thus destroyed the unity of the nation. Christianity ever since, Rousseau adds, "has caused the internal divisions that have never ceased to stir up Christian peoples."⁴ Sixthly, although Rousseau and Herder upheld the idea of national uniqueness, they did not associate with this idea, as a number of Romantics did, some divine national mission analogous to the Messianic tradition of the chosen people, for in saying that each nation by fully realizing its distinctive essence enriched the quality of humanity at large, they did not at all imply that universal redemption rested on the self-realization of any one nation. Finally, in spite of differences over the transformation of a cultural nation into a political nation, Herder wholly shared with Rousseau the conviction that the

fundamental problem lay in one's awareness and understanding of oneself and of others as individuals like oneself. Such awareness and understanding, they felt, would only be gained within certain contexts capable of structuring our experience of ourselves and others. These alone could ensure the congruence of our self-understanding with what truly was at any given time or stage of development. The extent to which one's experience of oneself and of others like oneself would constitute an authentic experience of continuity and meaning depended therefore essentially on, and in turn determined, the legitimacy of one's contextual existence.

In the next two sections I shall turn to each thinker separately and focus on two questions of crucial relevance to our purpose. First, what transforms an aggregation of persons into a collectivity, or isolated individuals into members of a larger whole? What is it that turns people into a people or nation? Second, what enables a nation, once founded, to survive? Regarding both questions Rousseau and Herder were greatly indebted to Montesquieu, as they readily acknowledged. Like him they tried to come to grips with the problem of cultural interrelation and social interaction. In addition, however, they were also deeply concerned with the more specifically normative question of what constituted the most desirable unit for men to live in, and which form of government, if any, accorded most naturally, or least unnaturally, with such a unit. Although they surpassed Montesquieu in psychological insight and in a remarkable propensity for the unique and incommensurable, they wavered, just as he had, in the evaluation of internal or "genetic" agents, on the one hand, and of external or "environmental" factors, on the other, when they inquired into the causal forces at work in the formation of a "national spirit" or a "national character." On the whole, however, and perhaps rather oddly, Herder favored internal development, that is, the idea of spontaneous unfolding, whereas Rousseau gave prominence to external agents, in particular to the role of a legislator in the fashioning of a nation. I say "rather oddly" because of the two it was Herder who was the self-confessed reformer and not Rousseau. It was Herder who was possessed by an extraordinary missionary zeal and full of the most sanguine optimism, whereas Rousseau, less optimistic, if not downright pessimistic, was highly skeptical about doing the world over. Nonetheless, they both agreed that for development to be legitimate it had to preserve some balance between culture and nature. Culture, in other words, must never stray too far from the requirements of nature. But both Herder and Rousseau perceived such a balance as a highly precarious thing.

II. The Creation of a Political Nation: Rousseau

Rousseau's ideas are familiar enough. I shall therefore confine my
remarks to the barest essentials relevant to this comparative discussion. Herder fully acknowledged his debt to Rousseau, and there can be little doubt that he drew extensively on Rousseau's ideas even when he most radically opposed them. They formed, so to speak, the filter or screen for his own reflections on the emergence of nations.

A human being, Rousseau argued, was not generally capable of feeling affection for humanity at large. To make the sentiment of humanity active and meaningful, one had to confine one's interest in and compassion for others to those one came to live with. One had to experience it. Love of one's own country, for Rousseau, is "a hundred times more ardent and delightful than that of a mistress," and cannot be conceived except by actually experiencing it. To become patriots and citizens, however, people had first to become members: instead of being independent entities they had to become interdependent parts within a larger whole; but before this could happen they had to experience a sense of affinity with others, for only then could some rudiments of collective life assume reality. How, precisely, such a change could have come about Rousseau did not profess to know. He fully admitted that it could have occurred in a number of ways and that his own conjectures were no more than conjectures. At the same time, he considered them reasonable hypotheses which could not easily be destroyed "even though they cannot be given the certainty of facts." It is interesting for our purpose to note why Rousseau thought his hypotheses reasonable. Conjectures, he says, "become reasons when they are the most probable that can be derived from the nature of things." Rousseau then posits in the "nature of things" a certain evolutionary logic, by means of which humanity had to reach the "final stage in the state of nature." At this stage, though still not a fully social being, let alone a self-conscious member of a social whole, the individual had attained some consciousness of an affinity with other persons and had begun to recognize some standards of mutuality. Rousseau presents this final natural stage of human development as approximately halfway between unsociable animality and unconscious sociability, a stage characterized by language and communication beyond the family circle. It is during this stage that people are said to have become more settled and to have gradually formed separate nations with "shared customs and a distinctive character, unified not by regulations and laws, but by a single way of life," eating the same kinds of food and speaking a common language within a particular region and climate. These early collectivities still only

---

formed the rudiments of a nation, the *foundations* upon which the nation proper, that is, the political nation, could be built. For, though they were already "bound together by some union of origin, interest, or convention," they were neither aware of themselves as nations nor formally united by laws and regulations. In Hegelian terminology these unreflective collectivities could be viewed as merely nations *in* themselves, not nations *for* themselves.

Apparently, it is during this final stage in the (non-political) state of nature that "culture" enters "nature." For, with the emergence of sociability people begin to realize the need for some *standards*, some values other than the purely physical requirements of self-preservation. In other words, as soon as they become aware of mutual affinities and of values arising from mutual interdependence, standards for reciprocal understanding come to engage their minds and affect their daily pursuits. They begin to be persons of culture as well as of nature. From this point on, however, the natural, evolutionary, and organismic mode of internal development requires, in Rousseau's scheme of things, the outside intervention of a superior, god-like man in the form of a legislator or lawgiver. It is he who is to arouse a nation *in* itself to become a nation *for* itself.

Rousseau is quite explicit concerning the externality of this intervention: the legislator does not belong to the nation; a charismatic outsider, his function should be confined to bringing about the tran-

---

12 Rousseau, *ibid.*, and *Social Contract*, Bk. II, Ch. 10 ("On the People"), Masters, *op. cit.*, 74. Language would not, however, by itself keep people together, since, for Rousseau, it has no cohesive force capable of maintaining a sense of solidarity. Its value is essentially instrumental: it makes agreement possible. Thus, it is only indirectly that language contributes to social and political cohesion.

13 Rousseau, *Social Contract*, Bk. II, Ch. 7 ("On the Legislator").
sition from a non-reflective and non-political stage of nationhood to a reflective and political one. He has to be charismatic; this is all the power that he has, for Rousseau rules out the use of physical force, and his function is strictly limited since he has no recognized place or official authority within the structure of the emergent political nation. Rousseau is no less explicit or emphatic concerning the delicate dynamics of the transforming process of change. Although the transformation is radical and never leaves the nation what it was before, it must not erase its distinctive cultural identity. Change, in other words, should never eradicate the essential nature of a thing; it should rather help to recover, restore, preserve, and perfect it. Accordingly, one must proceed with caution. Change being for the most part irrevocable, what is done cannot easily be undone; building a political nation is not to be taken lightly. Rousseau stipulates three crucially important considerations: timing, suitability, and manageability as the when, where, and how of "nation-building." Peter the Great is taken to task for thoroughly bad timing; his attempt to create a Russian nation was made prematurely. Worse still, he wholly ignored considerations of suitability and manageability. As a result, instead of transforming a nation in itself into a nation for itself, instead of helping Russians to become more fully Russians, he tried to turn Russians into Germans and Englishmen. "By convincing them that they were what they were not," he prevented them from ever becoming what they could have been.

But if the attempt was made too early in Russia, it was made too late in Poland. Consequently, the paramount problem that faced the legislator was not so much the question of what ought to be created as the question of what ought to be destroyed. The timing for Corsica, on the other hand, was just right. It was the one country in Europe which, in Rousseau's estimation, was eminently ripe and suitable, as well as manageable, for becoming a political nation. There a wise legislator who knew what he was doing, who understood the nation for which he was working, and who through his personality and the "greatness of his soul" could influence without commanding, could exercise authority without formally having it, who, in short, possessed persuasive power without any need for physical power, such an almost superhuman man could there work miracles; he could turn the smallest into the greatest of nations, not in size but in stature.

When did a legislator know what he was doing? This was, for Rousseau, the decisive point. The most excellent constitution, he well
knew, was of no avail if it had no applicability to the nation for which it was intended. The wise legislator “does not start by drafting laws that are good in themselves, but first examines whether the people for whom he intends them is suited to bear them.” Each nation had to be given institutions that suited it best. The political culture to emerge out of the non-political culture of a nation had to be in harmony with natural relations since laws only serve to “secure, accompany, and rectify” these. The alternative was dismal in the extreme; a legislator who did not know what he was doing could leave a nation in a state far worse than before. There was not the slightest chance, according to Rousseau, that a political nation could be created independently of its nature, culture, and history. Nation-building, in other words, is not simply a matter of rational purpose and political will. To be a nation requires continuity as well as identity, a tradition of culture as well as the creation of a political structure.

Suitability and manageability raise the question of size. Here Rousseau was most anxious not to appear too dogmatic. There could be no fixed, mathematically precise ratio between a given area of land and the ideal number of inhabitants for it. Rousseau suggests that, generally speaking, “a small state is proportionally stronger than a large one,” for “the more the social bond stretches, the looser it becomes.” Poland, for example, in contrast to Corsica, was oversized. Rousseau advised the Poles to make every effort to reduce their state to manageable proportions. Not the extension of national borders, but the intensity of national consciousness was what really mattered. To achieve it, a people had to be small enough to experience itself as a distinctive self.

This turning upon itself required, in Rousseau’s view, quite drastic measures. A nation had to become totally self-reliant. Only that nation which shunned commerce and every comparison with other nations could hope to succeed in gaining true independence and that measure of seclusion capable of ensuring its survival. Only a nation wholly self-centered could truly remain itself. Furthermore, a nation had to be internally united to a degree which left no gap between the interest of the whole and the interest of every one of its members. In order to achieve this degree of unity, a national esprit de corps had to be created in which every citizen saw in citizenship a supreme moral good. It demanded no less than the emergence of a new kind of morality, a public ethos all its own. But for citizens to feel this overriding loyalty to their nation required more than merely good laws.

---

18 Ibid., Bk. II, Ch. 8, Masters, op. cit., 70.
20 Rousseau, Social Contract, Bk. I, Ch. 8 (“On the Civil State”).
21 Ibid., Bk. II, Ch. 10.
22 Ibid., Bk. II, Ch. 9 (“On the People”), Masters, op. cit., 71.
23 Rousseau, Considerations . . . de Pologne, Political Writings, II, 442.
The best conceivable institutions devised by the best conceivable legislator could not ensure such loyalty. A nation's constitution was alive only if it was lived (vécue), if it was fully experienced, if it was "engraved not on marble or bronze, but in the hearts of the citizens." This intense consciousness of national belonging was not, however, ultimately the work of law or of any formal constitution. In the final analysis, habits, customs, and, above all, a truly public opinion mattered most. Rousseau lamented that political theorists hitherto had sadly neglected "public opinion"; they had failed to acknowledge the importance that was due to it, for opinion public in source and content was, for Rousseau, the surest hope for national unity. And the surest test of its existence lay in whether or not individuals asked themselves continuously if what they did was advantageous to their state and nation.

This degree of national consciousness could not, however, be purchased by piecemeal concessions. Instead, the individual had to abandon completely any self-centered previous mode of thinking. Nothing short of total alienation of individual "natural" rights would do. There could be no question of securing individual guarantees against the nation-state—as distinct from the dynastic state—for this would mean that individuals still thought of themselves as something distinct from the whole, that their interests and the interests of their nation were not one and the same.

Rousseau knew very well that persons in society do not necessarily think or feel that way. Citizenship, esprit de corps, public opinion, a disposition to identify with the general will: these were not matters one could take for granted. They did not spontaneously emerge once the legislator had done his work. A political culture intended to sustain so stringent a consensus as Rousseau envisaged needed a good deal more than laws, however just these were in themselves or however in tune with a nation's pre-political character. And this "more" consisted for Rousseau in education, religion, and an almost constant involvement in public activities of one sort or another. Education, however, had to be subjected to the strictest public control and censorship. It could not be left to professional teachers, just as religion could not be entrusted to an independent clergy, for neither education nor religion were ends in themselves. Both existed for, and were designed to serve, the purpose of national unity; they were to instil in each citizen an abiding devotion to the fatherland. Public

24 Rousseau, Social Contract, Bk. II, Ch. 12 ("Classification of Laws"), Masters, op. cit., 77. Rousseau's insistence on "daily renewal" foreshadows rather strikingly Ernest Renan's idea (over a century later) of a "daily plebiscite."
25 Ibid., Bk. IV, Ch. 1 ("That the General Will is Indestructible").
26 Ibid., Bk. I, Ch. 8 ("On the Civil State"), and Bk. II, Ch. 7.
27 Ibid., Bk. I, Ch. 7 ("On the Sovereign").
games, festivals, exacting physical fitness exercises, and a citizen army were to do the rest. By these means, Rousseau argued, citizens would have little time or inclination to indulge in brooding introspection or to engage in factional activities.\footnote{Ibid., Bk. IV, Chs. 7 and 8 ("On Censorship" and "On Civil Religion"). For an excellent treatment of this point, see Judith N. Shklar, Men and Citizens: A Study of Rousseau's Social Theory (Cambridge, England, 1969), 160. On the more general question of Rousseau's relevance to cultural nationalism, see Anne M. Cohler, Rousseau and Nationalism, (New York, 1970), esp. 113-51; and Alfred Cobban, Rousseau and the Modern State (London, 1964), 99-125.}

Rousseau's blueprint for nation-building is not exactly what a nineteenth-century liberal would have striven for, but then, Rousseau, whatever else he was, was no nineteenth-century liberal. He saw state and society as integrated, not conflicting. He sought to merge the private and the public, the moral and the political, not to separate them. The monistic consensus that Rousseau demanded, the one nation indivisible that he envisaged, aimed as much at ethical as at political redemption. Prepolitical culture was to be succeeded by political culture, not by political force. It might be objected that this kind of political culture would be not only a very delicate plant but also an intensely manipulated artifact, the product of social engineering, not the unfolding of nature. To which Rousseau, no doubt, could have replied by saying that all culture involved some manipulation, some social engineering; but what ultimately mattered was the end it served, the extent to which it perfected or perverted the essential nature of human beings.

III. The Emergence of a Political Nation: Herder

National individuality as a paramount value, the state as a people's patrie, perfection as their nature and destiny, politics as culture: all these themes of Rousseau found a ready echo in Herder's philosophy of nationhood. But there was none of Kant's veneration for Rousseau in Herder, who had read Rousseau well but not uncritically. If there were points of contact, therefore, there were also many points of departure.

No less aware than Rousseau that not even the most perfect state was like a natural family, Herder still chose to liken the "most natural state" to an "extended family with one national character."\footnote{Rousseau, Political Economy, Masters, op. cit., 209-11; Herder, Werke, XIII, 384.} In doing so, Herder wished to assert two closely related but intrinsically different things. One was that the nation did not displace families, clans, tribes, and other historical groupings but was continuous with
them, and thus, in its way, as natural a growth as the family.\textsuperscript{30} The other was that the cultural bonds which linked members of a nation into a relational whole were not things or artifacts imposed from above but living energies (Kräft) emanating from within, shared meanings and sentiments which in time form a people’s collective soul.\textsuperscript{31} That collective soul at once gave and received nourishment from a shared heritage by virtue of which a nation and each one of its members possessed, and continued to possess, their distinctive character. It was what lent a sense of continuity and identity to a people, what aroused sentiments of solidarity not dissimilar to those felt by members of a family who remained united not out of material necessity but out of choice, out of a desire to remain a family. Rousseau, anxious to make the same point, spoke of a family by agreement.\textsuperscript{32} To be sure, “agreement” did not mean for Herder what it meant for Rousseau, namely, consensus; just as statehood for Herder, or indeed nationhood itself, did not mean quite what it did for Rousseau. The source of difference in meaning stemmed, however, not so much from a fundamentally different semantic understanding of these terms as from a fundamentally different philosophical-anthropological starting point, and from viewing the emergence and the \textit{modus vivendi} of nations from a different perspective, from a different cognitive stance.

The clue to the profound gap between Rousseau’s and Herder’s understanding of “agreement” lies in their markedly different conceptions of natural man. To this gap we may essentially trace the parting of their ways in accounting for the rise and the survival of nations. Unlike Rousseau’s solitary savage “wandering in the forests, without industry, speech, a fixed dwelling, war, or ties of any kind,”\textsuperscript{33} Herder’s primitive man is no “isolated rock” or “egotistic monad” since from his very origins he is a creature of society and as such a possessor of language.\textsuperscript{34} For Herder, as distinct from Rousseau, language is something essentially internal. Its primary function is

\begin{flushleft}
\textsuperscript{30} Nations are compared to plants, to so many diverse flowers in the garden of humanity. (The “garden” is of course the traditional symbol of man’s creative and organizing power.) For a most perceptive discussion of Herder’s humanitarian conception of nationalism, see Hans Kohn, \textit{The Idea of Nationalism} (New York, 1961), 427-51.

\textsuperscript{31} For a penetrating inquiry into Herder’s philosophy of Kraft, which most strikingly foreshadows Bergson’s concept of “life force,” see Robert T. Clark Jr., “Herder’s Conception of ‘Kraft,’” \textit{PMLA}, 57 (1942), 740f.

\textsuperscript{32} Rousseau, \textit{Social Contract}, Bk. I, Ch. 2 (“On the First Societies”).

\textsuperscript{33} Rousseau, \textit{Inequality}, Pt. I, 169.

\textsuperscript{34} Herder, \textit{Werke} (Abhandlung über den Ursprung der Sprache, 1772), V, 5. Conflicts occur frequently, Herder claims, when individuals or groups disagree over the semantic meaning of words. This is more likely to happen, however, Herder feels, among groups speaking different languages.
\end{flushleft}
internal speech, not external communication. Language expresses (by embodying) man’s innermost thoughts and feelings, their very content and meaning. Those who share a common understanding of linguistic meanings constitute the rudiments of a nation. A nation is the natural extension of the family because the family is the earliest group to share linguistic meanings. Similarly, and again unlike Rousseau, Herder sees no problem in knowing which came first, language or society. To be human is at once to have language and to live in society but not any language and any society. Human beings are creatures of a particular language and a particular society; they are what they are by being born and brought up within a distinctive matrix of language and social culture, the matrix of a people or Volk. \(^{35}\)

Herder, then, insists on both: people have language from their first existence as human beings, and as social creatures they have from their earliest origins ties with other persons. Herder rejects Rousseau’s evolutionary theory out of hand. Human beings did not evolve from animals. The difference between humans and animals is not a matter of degree, of “more or less,” but a qualitative difference; human language is quite unlike animal language, it is not native to a human being in the sense or manner in which the hoarding of honey is native to the bee. \(^{36}\) Herder expressed astonishment that a thinker of Rousseau’s acumen could “even for one moment” have placed the origin of human language in the animal world. \(^{37}\) Humanity’s perfectibility and corruptibility—propensities not shared by the animal world—are, for Herder, closely bound up with the human distinctiveness as a possessor of language. For it is through language that concepts and ideas are formed, indeed are made possible in the first place. And it is precisely the formation of concepts and ideas which, in turn, make possible the formation of standards to guide human action and social reciprocity. Human action, thus mediated, is fundamentally different from natural processes. Through the mediation of words humans have the capacity for reflective thinking and acting. Though still, like plants and animals, a part of nature, we are, by virtue of this capacity not wholly a product of the “blind determination of nature.” \(^{38}\)

The possession of language, in other words, confers upon the human world a possibility denied to the rest of nature: the possibility of culture and, with it, the possibility of development. Thought mediated by language creates a certain distance between a person and nature, as well as between oneself as a subject and oneself as an object. This offers, on the one hand, an opportunity for freedom, a

---

\(^{35}\) For a more detailed treatment of language and Volk, see my Herder on Social and Political Culture (Cambridge, England, 1969), 17-32.  
\(^{36}\) Herder, Werke, V, 135; also ibid., 25, 98-99, and XIII, 116-17.  
\(^{37}\) Ibid., V, 23.  
\(^{38}\) Ibid., V, 28.
chance for the exercise of choice in a natural world governed by necessity, and, on the other, the possibility for self-reflection, for "mirroring oneself within oneself." The capacity to create, to act by choice rather than from necessity, and the capacity to reflect upon oneself and one's actions distinguish membership in a nation from membership in a herd. The moment one becomes conscious of oneself as a self, one becomes conscious also of what unites one with and differentiates one from other selves.

It appears therefore that becoming conscious of oneself as a German, a Russian, or a Frenchman is for Herder a wholly internal process of growing up, so to speak, an integral part of the dynamic of human culture or human development. No outside legislator is required, no social contract necessary, for the creation of a national consciousness. At the same time, while he dispenses with the need for a social contract or the intervention of a legislator to usher in the nation proper, he does not quite believe that modern nations are founded on the natural languages of an earlier "wild and roving life," but rather on highly sophisticated languages, "imprisoned in written symbols," with grammars systematized by university professors anxious to create uniform ways of speaking and writing. Indeed, in 1787, Herder himself drew up a plan for a "Patriotic Institute" designed to lay the foundations for an all-German national consciousness by the deliberate cultivation of a uniform German language. Similarly, Herder realized that the transformation of hereditary monarchies into self-governing democracies is not wholly the work of spontaneous growth, of ordinary folk pulling themselves up by their own bootstraps entirely unaided. Decay from above—the collapse of aristocratic rule which Herder foresaw—does not, he reluctantly admits, in itself ensure growth from below. He concedes therefore that some form of leadership is required to help facilitate the desired transition. However, the chief architects of the new political order are not outside legislators; Herder envisions them as men of the people who "emerge" by virtue of their exceptional abilities and sentiments of dedication and whose task is to fashion a public ethos that could dispense with permanent or institutionalized political leadership. He calls these leaders "aristodemocrats," and the order they are to create "nomocracy," the rule of law. Clearly, the political culture he envisions shows striking parallels not only to Rousseau's scheme of

39 Ibid., V, 29.
40 Ibid., V, 124-34. See also R. Haym, Herder, nach seinem Leben und seinen Werken (Berlin, 1880), II, 487-88.
42 Herder, Werke, XVIII, 331.
things but also (perhaps even more) to Plato’s rule by guardians. On closer examination it is evident, however, that Herder significantly departs from both. Although he shares Rousseau’s educational concerns and his veneration for law as the instrument of individual and national self-determination or autonomy, he substantively differs from Rousseau’s conception of “unity” (as we shall see presently) and, consequently, conceives of the ideal political culture in pluralistic rather than monistic terms. And while he obviously does view the aristodemocrats as guardians of a sort, he does not think of them as a permanent class. The chief goal of Herder’s “guardians” is to make themselves dispensable, the sooner the better. They are to guide only until people learn to walk by themselves; any further guidance would only stunt the growth of self-reliance, of true self-government, and democratic independence.43

The driving impulse in Herder’s political thinking is the idea that the Volk, the lowest order of society, is not simply an inarticulate mob but rather the creative source of a nation’s culture. It was essentially this idea which provided the ideological armor for those who subsequently strove to present the case for nationalism and the case for democracy as inherently one argument.

My reading of Herder differs from that of most commentators who have been so overwhelmed by Herder’s preoccupation with the discovery of national languages, folk-songs, myths, and legends that they have overlooked Herder’s political and democratic concerns. They assumed mistakenly Herder’s “cultural” thinking was wholly unpolitical or at best apolitical. What they took as the negation of politics was in fact its redescription. Despite important differences in the choice of means, Herder’s political goal was the same as Rousseau’s: the replacement of force by culture.44 Admittedly, Herder was no political theorist, and none of his works were exclusively devoted to political thought. Most frequently his references to politics were oblique or even hidden, but they were there, and in their way they were every bit as radical as Rousseau’s. Possibly also, because Herder’s political ideas were so heavily overlaid by “culture,” they proved no less influential than Rousseau’s, at any rate in Central and Eastern Europe, where it was music to the ears of an aspiring nationalist to be told that existing states were only phantoms while ethnic

43 Zbid., IV, 454; XIII, 149; XVIII, 339.
44 For a fuller discussion of Herder’s conception of “culture,” see my “Culture and Civilization in Modern Times,” Dictionary of the History of Ideas ed., Philip P. Wiener (New York, 1973), 1, 613-21. Herder’s tendency—and at times also Rousseau’s—to praise “submerged” nations precisely for their lack of political reality could not fail to find a receptive ear among nationalists struggling for the “liberation” of their peoples, even though the virtues that are praised were known to have been politically disastrous. Thus Herder praised the Slavs for their peacefulness and, at the same time, attributed to this peacefulness their political demise as nations.
cultures were the expression of true reality, merely awaiting development.

At this point it may be worthwhile to elaborate briefly the distinction between two meanings of "development." In one, development is seen as a process of unfolding or unveiling in which what is latent becomes manifest, not unlike the growth of a plant or organism. The human role lies in furthering this process, in helping it along or in awakening what still lies dormant. In the other understanding of development, the emphasis is on "making" or "fashioning" or "shaping." Here development is seen as the result of purposive action guided by some preconceived idea or plan. It views change not as the unfolding of an inner force or energy, such as growth, but as the outcome of external direction. The scientific principle of efficient cause rather than the implied teleology of nature characterizes this conception of development.

Each of these meanings yields a distinct pattern of national development. In the former the formation of a people, of a Volk or nation, is a gradual process comparable to the rhythm of nature’s unfolding. In the latter, the formation of a people is chiefly the result of human creation, the subordination of natural givens to human design. Where there is growth and decay in the former, there is building and destruction in the latter. Despite undeniable overlapping, and the equally undeniable mixing of metaphors, Herder’s understanding of development may, on the whole, be identified with the growth paradigm, and Rousseau’s with that of building and engineering.

IV. National Consciousness and Political Association

Although Herder valued unity and agreement, he had no wish to sacrifice diversity even if this meant a certain degree of tension or conflict, or some disorder and inefficiency, in the conduct of public affairs. The political order Herder envisaged for a Volk was profoundly inspired by the example of the ancient Hebrews, in particular the Mosaic constitution as he interpreted it, for he saw the Hebrews divided into various institutional or tribal groups and, at the same time, conscious of themselves as one people. Moses, by giving the Hebrew people institutions that were continuous with familial and tribal structures and traditions, created a type of nation that did not displace but rather reinforced a plurality of historically given social entities; a nation of intermediary groups rather than a nation of individual citizens. It was this model of group association which Herder undoubtedly had in mind when he spoke of the nation as an extended

45 Herder, Werke, V, 516; IX, 357-60; XIII, 340-41.
family, for he saw it as a composite where the whole was no greater than, nor itself qualitatively distinct from its constituent parts. Guided by this quasi-pluralist model, Herder denied the need for a central authority. In contrast to multinational "state-nations," to which Herder contemptuously referred as "those patched-up contraptions, appropriately called state-machines," in which various peoples were kept under one scepter, states which consisted of "one people with its national character" could dispense with a central focus of power, a permanent form of superordination. Individuals and groups ought to be given maximum scope for pursuing diverse ends and interests, and for forming a plurality of autonomous self-governing institutions to serve these ends and interests. Since Herder's conception of law was that of folk-law, laws were expected—as integral parts of a national culture—to act as integrative agents in his pluralistic scheme of things.

Herder had no particular theory of citizenship. He did not sharply set apart the social from the political; unlike Rousseau, Herder did not suggest that citizenship requires the abdication or total subordination of individual or social concerns to some overriding national concern whenever these come into conflict. As a corollary of Herder's diversitarian conception of nationhood, Rousseau's consensual idea of agreement and unity is replaced by Herder's principle of cooperation, of "acting together" (Zusammenwirken).

While both consensus and cooperation presuppose some common understanding of what should be done and not done, some acceptance of ground rules, cooperation unlike consensus does not aim at the elimination of divergences but merely at a modus vivendi under which their continuation is rendered possible without causing the disruption of the societal whole. Cooperation, thus understood, does not imply agreement in substantive content; divergences are tolerated, not homogenized.

In Rousseau's understanding of agreement and unity, differences in beliefs and values are seen as intolerable threats to national cohesion. Unity here demands consensual agreement, a monistic set of opinions and sentiments concerning the public good, coupled with the conviction that there is but one correct way of perceiving it and of pursuing it. In Herder's understanding of unity, on the other hand, divergences and even conflicts are accepted as perfectly natural in
every community and potentially salutary to its life. Much of what
Herder had to say here came later from the pen of one of his greatest
admirers, J. S. Mill.\footnote{I am referring to Herder's (little known) prize essay—crowned by the Royal
Academy of Sciences and Arts, Berlin, in 1779—"On the Reciprocal Influence of
Government and the Sciences," Werke, IX, 311-77; for an English translation, see my
Herder on Social and Political Culture, 227-52. For J. S. Mill's admiring reference to
Herder, see his On Bentham and Coleridge (London, 1950), 131.}
But it is only fair to add that underlying
Herder's plea for the toleration, if not encouragement, of diversity
with which his projected cooperative pluralism sought to come to
terms was an article of faith bound up with his organic philosophy of
development rather than a reasoned argument. That article of faith
consisted in the belief that in the nature of things there is an organic
tendency (energy or Kraft), comparable to the Aristotelian notion of
entelechy, which amidst diversity and conflict works for unity. This
belief was reinforced by a related credo: Herder's profound trust in
the cohesive power of a shared culture which, owing to the assumed
fusion of culture with nature, in part converged with the natural
entelechy.\footnote{For a fuller discussion of this point, see my "Herder's Treatment of Causality
and Continuity in History," J.H.I. 24, (1963), 197-212; further "Metaphors, Laments
and the Organic Community," Canadian Journal of Economics and Political Science, 32 (1966), 281-301; and
"Natural Growth and Purposive Development: Vico
and Herder," History and Theory 18 (1979), 16-36.}

There is, however, another, and philosophically distinct, matter
that merits attention in this connection. I have in mind a distinction
St. Thomas made between a substantive whole and an accidental
whole. A composite and at the same time coherent substance, such as
the human body, could serve to illustrate a substantive whole. An
accidental whole, on the other hand, is not a body at all, but rather an
ensemble of relations in the manner of a configuration contingent on
the parts forming the ensemble. These parts are wholes in their own
right. In any social entity men are not merely material particles form-
ing a physical mass, but are themselves discrete and individual enti-
ties. Herder's vision of a pluralistic Volk community closely corre-
sponds, I believe, to St. Thomas's accidental whole, as it also recalls
Aristotle's notion of the state as a composite. There is not the slightest
indication in Herder's philosophy of nationhood—despite its organ-
ismic imagery—that he thought of Volk as a unified body, even in
Rousseau's transferred sense of the word, with a corporate existence
of its own over and above, or separate from, the individuals and
groups composing it. A Volk or nationality is a configuration, a rela-
tional complex of events rather than a bodily substance; it is an
accidental, not a substantive, whole. Herder's rejection of national
exclusiveness also bears out his pluralistic understanding of the Volk. In his essay on the origin of language he clearly warns that too much exclusiveness can be self-destructive. A Volk which wholly turns in upon itself is liable to arrest the development of its national culture, for by "isolating itself from within" it courts the danger of stagnation.\footnote{Werke, V, 134-47.}

In the light of this Thomist distinction Herder emerges as possibly the more "political" of the two, if politics is viewed as an activity arising from conditions of diversity in which different groups press different claims and express different views concerning the common good. In this view, a consensual society conforming to Rousseau's vision has closer resemblance to a group of intimate friends or to a church congregation (at any rate during the Christmas season) than to a political community. It appears virtually analogous to the unity of a substantive whole, whose parts are necessarily what they are because of the whole to which they belong: there is nothing either accidental or contingent about them. An ensemble, on the other hand, needs constant adjusting, for its constituent parts are not necessary givens designed \textit{ab initio} as complementary and interdependent functions but are self-sustaining and distinct entities which generate unity only by coming into relation with each other within specific concatenations of time, place, and circumstance. It is this coming-into-relation which occupies politics, for it constitutes not a predictably existential (and inexorably necessary) datum but a vexing, contingent, and ever-recurrent problem. Perhaps it was Rousseau's vision of the national state in terms of a substantive whole which forced him to the conclusion that the conflict between "man" and "citizen" was irresolvable except by sacrificing man as an individual to man as a citizen.\footnote{Possibly the source of Rousseau's refusal to accept a dualist conception of man as an individual and as a citizen may be sought in the more personal or biographical sphere. Although Rousseau was no less a didactic than Herder, he saw himself in a different light. Whereas Herder liked to view himself as another Solon or Lycurgus, actively engaged in the shaping and moulding of nations, Rousseau viewed, or at least projected himself, as a mere spectator, a detached outsider. "My function is to tell the truth, not to make people believe it," Rousseau wrote. (Confessions [1782], trans. J. M. Cohen, [Harmondsworth [Penguin], 1954], 192. As a matter of fact he \textit{did} want people to believe him and suffered agonies whenever he had proof to the contrary. But this did not induce him to say things simply in order to move men to act or not to say things for fear that this might inhibit them from acting. Rousseau, unlike Herder, in short, was no ideologue, at least not a self-conscious or self-confessed one. He did not suppress the unpalatable.} All the same, it should always be borne in mind that Rousseau had no illusions about this conflict ever being resolved in actual politics or, at any rate, permanently resolved. He knew only too well that problems have a tendency to resurface, and that even in the best-designed of political orders, solutions are endemically short-lived.
In their demand for a new regenerated political culture, Herder and Rousseau have clearly much in common. At the same time, they differ sharply over the form it is to assume and the way it is to be accomplished. The paramount reason for these differences lies in their divergent understanding of the relation between nature and nationhood. Whereas Rousseau saw this relation as development from nature, Herder viewed it as development with nature.

These differences are important. In political development—as in political practice—the manner in which ends are envisaged bears directly on the way things are done. The vision of the goal, in other words, forms an integral and qualitatively decisive part of how it is attained. I have no wish to belittle, therefore, what separated Herder's ideas of nationhood from those of Rousseau. I do, however, wish to deny a widely held view according to which the differences separating them can best be characterized by identifying Herder with cultural nationalism and Rousseau with political nationalism, for I believe this contrast to be misleading and overdrawn. It was the principal objective of this essay to show that Rousseau and Herder were equally anxious to advance a doctrine of nationhood which involved the transformation of both culture and politics. Only through this twofold transformation from what is to what ought to be could they envisage a political culture that would infuse legitimacy into nationhood and statehood.

My concern here with nationalism is primarily with nationalism as a doctrine rather than with nationalism as a movement, with what constitutes its core ideas rather than with what lends appeal to these ideas at any particular juncture of time and circumstance. There can be little doubt, however, that both variants of the projected dual transformation (of culture and politics) are capable of serving national movements as legitimizing ideologies. And, in so far as they are, neither of them is immune to ideological distortion. Which of the two variants lends itself more easily to ideological perversion is, however, less relevant to my argument than it is to determine if there is such a thing as an apolitical or non-political form of nationalism. The thrust of my argument points to a negative answer. My contention is that both doctrinal variants discussed here involve not a shift from the political to the non-political but rather a re-description of the political itself and a radical reappraisal of its bases of legitimacy.

If I am correct in this, the significance of "cultural nationalism" lies not in its being apolitical or non-political but in directing attention to a profound change in the source of political legitimation. Culture now emerges as something not only potentially relevant to politics but as something indispensably necessary. A nation is no longer simply a
group of people owing political allegiance to a common sovereign but a community bound by spiritual ties and cultural traditions. Indeed, I would suggest that it is precisely the infusion of culture with political content and the infusion of the political with cultural content, which characterizes modern nationalism. Nationalism, on this view, is unthinkable without the appeal to some cultural values. But for this change to come about, for culture to be invoked in the making of political claims, culture itself must first be viewed in its political contexts. Languages, dances, folksongs, plays, legends, philosophies, religions, poems, paintings, and so on, all require political handling or "manipulation" to be politically serviceable. It is for this reason that I refer to a dual transformation: not only politics but culture too undergoes a drastic change in the propagation of nationalist doctrine. And it is this dual transformation which constitutes the change in political legitimation and marks the historical transition from the state-nation to the nation-state.

I have no wish to rehearse here all the well-known objections to the diverse nationalist claims based on cultural (linguistic, religious, or "ethnic") criteria. It is obvious enough that the "trinity" of anthropological, psychological, and ethical assumptions which underlies the idea of cultural nationality is far from self-evident, and indeed may require more than purely logical argument in order to acquire persuasive force. Clearly, it is more than arguable whether nationality is inherent in human nature, whether a person "needs" to live with those sharing his nationality, and whether states not based on a distinctive national culture fail to be rightful states. Clearly, too, it is one thing to grant the plausibility of national culture as a criterion of a state's legitimacy but quite another to decide what in a particular case constitutes a distinctive or dominant culture. In the final analysis, therefore, the questions posed by cultural nationalism seem to me to be unanswerable. The marriage between culture and politics may indeed prove a source of lasting bliss and its offspring the truly just

---

55 The most incisive critique is undoubtedly E. Kedourie's *Nationalism* (London, 1969); see also Alfred Cobban, *National Self-Determination* (Chicago, 1947) and *Rousseau and the Modern State*. A critical discussion of this point will also be found in my *Herder's Social and Political Thought*, op. cit., 57-62. The sociologist Robert Michels, writing before World War I, had few illusions about the "one language—one nation" idea of states: "Not one of these solutions is so far-reaching in its effects as the respective discoverers imagined in the days of their first enthusiasm." He thought much the same about the allegedly necessary coincidence of nationalism and democracy. *Political Parties*, trans. Eden and Cedar Paul (London, 1915), vii. For a comprehensive survey of critical arguments on this point, see Anthony D. Smith, *Theories of Nationalism* (London, 1971). Especially in extra-European contexts the languages spoken are frequently too diversified and too numerous for any one to gain predominance as the national (literate, for to be national it has to be literate, which is far from being natural) language.
society, but by the same token culturally based states may turn out to be no more just, peaceful, or harmonious than nonculturally based states. There simply is no logical, historical, or any other kind of argument necessarily governing the outcome in any particular case at any particular time.

Much the same could be said about the international order among culturally determined nation-states. Potentially, international relations can be cooperative and peaceful; but they can also be competitive and torn by conflict. Conceivably, wars, should they occur, might be less bitter but, just as conceivably, they might be far more intense than wars between state-nations since the gains or losses in cultural terms could be viewed more seriously than those involved in purely political bargaining. When the purity of a language, the sacredness of a civic religion, the survival of cherished traditions, or the very soul of a people are at stake, compromises do not easily suggest themselves.

My point in raising these questions is to demonstrate the impossibility of making wholesale judgments one way or the other. National culture, as a legitimizing principle, is subject to the same range of contingencies as any other legitimizing principle. There simply is no basis for deciding on general grounds that a state based on national culture is inherently superior to a state which does not invoke culture as its legitimizing sanction.

It follows that cultural sanctions in themselves are no more capable of serving as sufficient legitimizing warrants than the purely formal sanctions of man-made law whenever political legitimacy is in question. A doctrine that has come to be closely associated with the idea of cultural nationhood, the doctrine of national self-determination, seems therefore to have as much need to press moral (or quasi-moral) categories into service as the older (but no less complex) doctrine of Natural Law. In the form in which it is usually put, the doctrine of national self-determination derives its additional legitimizing force from making a specific type of political consciousness the essential condition of man’s moral consciousness, thus rendering political obligation indistinguishable from moral obligation. It does so by merging two highly persuasive but commonly opposed principles: the principle of traditionality and the principle of rationality. The former invokes the “logic” of history, the latter the “logic” of moral reasoning. By means of this simultaneous appeal to tradition and reason, “emergence” and “creation” converge. One’s understanding of oneself as a free moral agent is wedded to one’s self-consciousness as a member of a community that is at once a historical-cultural growth and a

56 For a sophisticated elaboration of this point, see James S. Fishkin, Tyranny and Legitimacy (Baltimore and London, 1979).
rational-ethical creation. It is this ingenious fusion which confers on
the doctrine of national self-determination its impressive ideological
comprehensiveness and vigor.

Yet the undeniably persuasive force of the doctrine is apt to con-
ceal the fact that political legitimacy generally involves at least three
levels of applicability: the who, how, and where of government. By
tending to focus on the third level of political legitimacy—the ethnic
composition of the population and its territorial boundaries—it either
disregards the first two levels (who should properly rule and in what
manner) or views them as necessary entailments of the third, thus
collapsing the three levels of political legitimacy into one. What is
more, the principle of self-determination which the doctrine invokes
is a notoriously problematic principle. In its collective application it
rests on the additionally questionable assumption of complete identity
between national ends and individual ends. At best, therefore, "na-
tional self-determination" is but a vicarious expression of Kant's (and
Rousseau's) moral principle, while, at worst, it threatens to deny
individual choice entirely. In any event, it has, as a principle of polit-
ical legitimation, little in common with a doctrine of political obliga-
tion which makes subordination to governmental rule contingent on
the consent of persons viewed as individuals and not as mere compo-
nents of national cultures.

Cultural criteria of political obligation, then, are no more self-
evidently rational or ethical than any other criteria of legitimation
taken by themselves. National culture as a contextual requirement
may conceivably enrich or indeed transform our understanding of the
political; but from this it does not follow that it necessarily renders the
legitimation of politics less problematical.

University of Western Ontario.