

# **The Social and Political Thought of Saunders Lewis**

Emyr Williams

A dissertation submitted at the School of European Studies, Cardiff University,  
in candidature for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, Cardiff University.

UMI Number: U584622

All rights reserved

INFORMATION TO ALL USERS

The quality of this reproduction is dependent upon the quality of the copy submitted.

In the unlikely event that the author did not send a complete manuscript and there are missing pages, these will be noted. Also, if material had to be removed, a note will indicate the deletion.



UMI U584622

Published by ProQuest LLC 2013. Copyright in the Dissertation held by the Author.  
Microform Edition © ProQuest LLC.

All rights reserved. This work is protected against  
unauthorized copying under Title 17, United States Code.



ProQuest LLC  
789 East Eisenhower Parkway  
P.O. Box 1346  
Ann Arbor, MI 48106-1346

## **Abstract**

Located within the embryonic discipline of Welsh political thought, this thesis seeks to identify, explore and analyse the central ideas apparent in the political thought of John Saunders Lewis. It utilises key texts authored by Saunders Lewis with which to focus upon these ideas, and these texts and their inherent ideas form the basis of the earlier chapters. The thesis operates employing a 'History of Ideas' methodology. The introduction sections seek to locate the contemporary need for a study such as this, and also provide some background and context to Saunders Lewis' political thought. Noting that political ideas are not monolithic and free-standing, ideas and thinkers that influenced Saunders Lewis are also identified and analysed before engaging with his authored texts directly. The latter chapters of this thesis seek to examine the ideas of Saunders Lewis that are relevant to the contemporary theory context. The thesis culminates with an analysis of Saunders Lewis' nationalism employing contemporary nationalism analysis paradigms. A counter-critique of these paradigms is also performed employing Saunders Lewis' nationalism.

The central ideas of Saunders Lewis are examined, namely his political thought regarding Welsh history, nationhood, language, culture, state and their associated ideas. Whilst his ideas focus upon Wales and the Welsh societal and political experience, this thesis is also intended to be of use within the context of a wider investigation into nationalism, as well as to wider political theory. Despite the simplistic labelling of Saunders Lewis as a 'radical conservative', the analysis of his thought in this thesis reveals a far more complex thinker than this description would suggest, as he sought to combine an ideology of linguistic cultural preservation with a vision of national liberation.

Contrary to Saunders Lewis' definition of nationalism, this thesis employs as its investigative methodology the premise that nationalism is a fluid concept and phenomenon that interfaces and interacts with other left-right ideologies, thus enabling a critical overview of other nationalist positions in order to highlight and aid in the understanding of Saunders Lewis' own concepts.

## Declaration

This work has not previously been accepted in substance for any degree and is not concurrently submitted in candidature for any degree.

Signed Erin Williams (candidate) Date 2/6/09

## Statement 1

This thesis is being submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of PhD.

Signed Erin Williams (candidate) Date 2/6-09

## Statement 2

This thesis is the result of my own independent work/investigation, except where otherwise stated. Other sources are acknowledged by explicit references.

Signed Erin Williams (candidate) Date 2/6-09

## Statement 3

I hereby give consent for my thesis, if accepted, to be available for photocopying and for inter-library loan, and for the title and summary to be made available to outside organisations.

Signed Erin Williams (candidate) Date 2/6-09

## Statement 4: Previously Approved Bar On Access

I hereby give consent for my thesis, if accepted, to be available for photocopying and for inter-library loans after expiry of a bar on access approved by the Graduate Development Committee.

Signed Erin Williams (candidate) Date 2/6-09



## **Acknowledgements**

Firstly I would like to thank my parents for their gift of opportunity in life, and without whom I would have been unable to undertake this thesis. I thank my father, Brian Williams, for his financing of this thesis, and my mother, Anne Williams, for her patience and support.

Secondly, I would like to thank Professor Bruce Haddock for his kind supervision. His knowledge of wider material proved invaluable.

# Contents

<b>1. Introduction Part I: Research Methodology and Theoretical Context</b>	<b>7</b>
1.1. Methodology and Focus	7
1.2. Research Questions	15
1.3. Saunders Lewis in Theoretical Context	18
1.4. Contemporary Wales	22
1.5. Minority Nationalism and the Devolution Agenda	24
1.6. Theory and the Welsh Context	26
<b>2. Introduction Part II: Saunders Lewis in Historical Context</b>	<b>32</b>
2.1. Background and Upbringing	32
2.2. Nationalist Awakening	35
2.3. Inter-War Years	38
2.4. Post WWII Years	43
<b>3. Intellectual Peers and Influences</b>	<b>47</b>
3.1. T.S. Eliot	49
3.2. F.R. Leavis	60
3.3. T.E. Hulme	64
3.4. Distributism / Guild Socialism	68
3.5. Jacques Maritain	75
3.6. Emrys ap Iwan	88
<b>4. The Central Tenets: <i>Principles of Nationalism</i></b>	<b>98</b>
4.1. Nation, Language, and Self-Government	98
4.2. A Retrospective and Appropriation of Welsh History	102
4.3. The Essential Characteristic	107
4.4. Summary	114
<b>5. The Welsh Language: <i>One Language for Wales</i></b>	<b>121</b>
5.1. Language Rights and Political Theory	122
5.2. Language and Nationhood	125
5.3. Official Monolingualism	131
5.4. Criticism	139
5.5. Language and Political Nationalism	145
<b>6. A Move Towards Individual Rights: <i>Fate of the Language</i> (1962)</b>	<b>151</b>
6.1. A Change of Approach	151
6.2. A Historical Critique	156
6.3. Official Bilingualism	165
6.4. Political Legacy	173
<b>7. A Social Vision for Wales: <i>Canlyn Arthur (In the Footsteps of Arthur)</i></b>	<b>177</b>
7.1. Political Economy	184
7.2. The Role of the State	189
7.3. The Organic Community	193
7.4. The Influence of Tomas Masaryk and the Czech example	201
7.5. Distributism, Guild Socialism and <i>Perchentyaeth</i>	205
7.6. Catholic Social Doctrine and <i>Canlyn Arthur</i>	212

<b>8. Welsh Nationhood and British Law: <i>The Caernarfon Court Speech</i></b>	<b>226</b>
8.1. The Cultural Imperative	229
8.2. The Universal Law	234
<b>9. A Neo-Medieval Europe: Aspects of Universalism and Particularity</b>	<b>241</b>
9.1. State, Nation, and Sovereignty	244
9.2. Supranational Authority	249
9.3. Medieval Europe as a Political Ideal	252
9.4. The Nation (not State), as Moral Person	257
9.5. Normative Theory and Multi-Level Plural Governance	267
<b>10. The Paradigms of Nationalism: An Analysis of Saunders Lewis' Thought</b>	<b>275</b>
10.1. Modernism	277
10.2. Primordialism	285
10.3. Perennialism	289
10.4. A Critique of the Modernist Paradigm	296
10.5. The Ethno-Symbolist Paradigm	300
<b>11. Conclusion</b>	<b>310</b>
<b>Bibliography</b>	<b>317</b>
Primary Source Material	317
Secondary Source Material	320
Wider Material	321

## **Introduction Part I: Research Methodology and Theoretical Context**

### **1.1. Methodology and Focus.**

It is the intention of this thesis that the social and political thought of John Saunders Lewis be identified, analysed and presented to a wider political theory audience in a 'history of ideas / political thought' study format. In seeking to do so, Saunders Lewis' political thought is considered in terms of a political theory terminology and conceptual framework, thus justifying its value as an original study. Several of his ideas are deemed by the author to be of continuing relevance within the sphere of Welsh governance and wider normative theory. Hitherto, the vast majority of academic work and investigation has been conducted through the medium of Welsh, and has been focused on a primarily literary or biographical study of his work. A small amount of English-language academic study material exists on Plaid Cymru, and the Welsh nationalist movement in general. Some of these studies contain sections on the ideas that flow into its policies and that have shaped its key figures and thinkers, but none have dealt specifically with Saunders Lewis, or detailed his political thought extensively.<sup>1</sup> On Saunders Lewis the individual, several excellent texts exist in the form of intellectual biographies, all of which deal with political elements, yet do not take his political thought as their sole interest.<sup>2</sup> These biographies, whilst outlining his ideas well, are yet to appear in English and do not approach the subject matter from a 'political theory' or 'history of ideas' discipline. As a consequence they fail to deal with the deep political conceptual content contained therein. Other studies deal more explicitly with the ideas of Saunders Lewis, but it is from a cultural and literary theory angle. Yet again, Saunders Lewis' expressly political thought is not the focus of these studies.<sup>3</sup> The closest

---

<sup>1</sup> Mc Allister, Laura. (2001) *Plaid Cymru: The Emergence of a Political Party*. Bridgend. Seren.  
Davies, D. Hywel. (1983) *The Welsh Nationalist Party 1925-45: A Call to Nationhood*. Cardiff. Cardiff University Press.

<sup>2</sup> Lloyd, D. Tecwyn. (1988) *John Saunders Lewis. Cyfrol 1*. Denbigh. Gwasg Gee.

Chapman, T. Robin. (2006) *Un bywyd o blith nifer: cofiant Saunders Lewis*. Llandysul. Gwasg Gomer.

<sup>3</sup> Brooks, Simon. (2004) *O Dan Lygaid y Gestapo: yr oleudigaeth a theori llenyddol yng Nghymru (Under the eyes of the Gestapo: the enlightenment and literary theory in Wales)*. Cardiff. University of Wales Press

study approaching what is attempted in this study is Richard Wyn Jones' *Rhoi Cymru'n Gyntaf: Syniadaeth Plaid Cymru. Cyfrol 1*<sup>4</sup> which appeared during the latter stages of the writing of this thesis. His excellent study investigates the ideas of several prominent figures and how these ideas have evolved during Plaid Cymru's historical development. In addition, it engages with nationalist analysis theory in order to better understand Welsh nationalism, as well as utilising the experience of Welsh nationalism in order to critically evaluate nationalism theory. Much of what is asserted in relation to both Saunders Lewis and nationalism theory is in accordance with the premise of this study. However, again due to the remit of the study, Saunders Lewis is not Jones' ultimate focus, and he does not delve deeply into the ideas influencing Saunders Lewis.

Whilst there is no established discipline of a specifically Welsh political thought<sup>5</sup>, as is commonly conceived of within other national spheres (i.e. German political thought, French political thought, etc.) it nonetheless remains the intention of this study to press on into this area. This thesis seeks to fill the void regarding Saunders Lewis in relation to the study of Welsh political thought. (It is a glaring omission that not even an encyclopaedia or glossary of Welsh political thought exists<sup>6</sup>). No precedent has been set regarding the study of Welsh political thought so it is the intention of this study to initiate it. In this respect it is also an original contribution to knowledge.

In support of there being a highly persuasive case in favour of there being a recognised or formal framework for the study of Welsh Political Thought, it is necessary that several key thinkers be examined. Saunders Lewis is a clear candidate for such an undertaking. Indeed,

---

Davies, Grahame (1999) *Sefyll yn y Bwlch: R.S. Thomas, Saunders Lewis, T.S. Eliot, a Simone Weil. Standing in the Gap: R.S. Thomas, Saunders Lewis, T.S. Eliot and Simone Weil*. Cardiff. University of Wales Press.

<sup>4</sup> Jones' title is groundbreaking, in that it deals with Welsh political thought in a political theory terminology and conceptual framework. A translation of this volume and the arrival of volume 2 are eagerly awaited.

Jones, Richard Wyn. (2007) *Rhoi Cymru'n Gyntaf. Syniadaeth Plaid Cymru. Cyfrol 1 (Putting Wales First. The Theory of Plaid Cymru. Volume 1)*. Cardiff. University of Wales Press.

<sup>5</sup> Richard Wyn Jones' title starts to fill this void.

<sup>6</sup> It is of note that only recently has an encyclopaedia of Wales come about. Although political terms are included, they are not the focus of the study, which has a wider mainstream appeal and market in mind. It is a significant achievement nonetheless.

(Eds.) Davies, John. Baines, Menna. Jenkins, Nigel & Lynch, Peredur. (2008) *The Welsh Academy Encyclopaedia of Wales*. Cardiff. University of Wales.

one could conceive of a similar study such as this with regard to several other notable 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century intellectual figures and thinkers in Wales. The assertion that there is a definable school of Welsh political thought is not original to the author, yet this study is epistemologically grounded in it. The author sincerely hopes that this study aids in the comprehension of Welsh political thought, and the specific study of it.

In spite of the Welsh historian K.O. Morgan's stating that there "is scarcely any Welsh political thought worthy of the name"<sup>7</sup>, the author seeks to assert that there is, and that within the field of Welsh political thought there are several thinkers and texts that go towards the formation of such a grouping. Indeed, many of the associated texts are in Welsh, and due to a lack of a common convention on the study of Welsh political thought, they have not been studied within this context. There is also a strong case for arguing that texts such as *The Miner's Next Step* and thinkers such as Robert Owen be included in such a grouping.<sup>8</sup> That is not to state that such texts and thinkers belong in a strictly particularist sense to Wales – ideas are universal – yet it is political thinking borne out of the societal experience in Wales.<sup>9</sup> Indeed in any future study of Welsh political thought, the author would seek to put forward the pervading 'unit-idea' of community and its importance being a key characteristic throughout.<sup>10</sup> It remains a strong contention that 'community', and its assertion as an ideal to be advocated, interplays with various socialist, liberal or more conservative strands of ideological thought, whether intersecting with the idea of Welsh national 'freedom' or as part of a British political project. (Even Welsh political thought which allies itself to a British national dynamic is borne out of the Welsh societal experience.) Much political thinking is apparent in both English and Welsh medium texts (although the latter is often overlooked due to historical processes).

---

<sup>7</sup> P.8 Morgan, K.O. (1995) *Democracy in Wales from Dawn to Deficit*. Cardiff. BBC Wales.

<sup>8</sup> Unofficial Reform Committee (1912) *The Miner's Next Step: being a suggested scheme for the reorganisation of the Federation*. London. Pluto (1973 edition).

<sup>9</sup> Robert Owen's writings were specifically centred on his experiences in Scotland and the U.S.A although this is to neglect the formative experience of his kin and childhood in Wales in contributing to his political thought. It is fitting, in this respect, that he wished to return to Newtown to die in 1858.

<sup>10</sup> This acts in contrast with that of an English political tradition that centres to a greater extent upon the individual for example.

Whilst the author seeks to assert that there is definitively a *Welsh political thought*, it certainly does not exist in the form it is presented in established or 'normalised' national groupings. Indeed this is part of the problem of seeking to define it as Welsh political thought rather than as an appendage to British political thought. (The terms 'Welsh', 'British' and 'English' are in themselves contested and heavily laden with normative value). The texts classed in the prominent schools of thought within more established areas of study, such as the treatises of Hobbes and Locke in English political thought, or the tomes of Marx and Hegel in German political thought in 'classic' key texts, form the basis of their study. Large treatises of work are rare, and it is in a plethora of pamphlets, articles and journals that Welsh political thought exists – much of it is in Welsh and more integrated into a cultural/literary/criticism sphere, thus presenting a barrier to those who may potentially be unaware of the discourse of ideas within a language community. A political idea, or the political thought of a thinker, therefore has to be built up from various texts, and ideas from other sources have to be referred to in order to effect a complete reading. It is also often the case that moral philosophical groundings of thinkers are located elsewhere, outside of their own writings. Ideas that occur throughout Welsh nationalist thought, such as the nation as a 'community of communities', political decentralism, and language revitalisation, are often defined with reference to their earlier definitions as well as to a whole host of lending from outside the Welsh nationalist mantle. A whole host of moral philosophical foundations are evident throughout. In the case of Saunders Lewis, it is identifying his moral philosophy in its Thomist grounding that enables a comprehensive understanding of his political thinking on these issues and which goes on to influence his ideology. The author is not suggesting for one moment that the ideas within Welsh political thought are somehow unique (they are in turn affected by continual contact with outside 'universal' ideas, from Europe and the wider world), rather that they aid comprehension of political society within Wales.

This study is not intended as a wider study of Plaid Cymru, of its political processes, personalities or conflicts. Whilst the political ideas of contemporaries as well as fellow Plaid Cymru members are presented here, it is in order to explain better through contrast, as well as highlight alternatives – in some cases better conceived – than Saunders Lewis'

own position. Historical context is noted and considered when evaluating his position within Welsh political thought. In seeking to explain and better understand the social processes and ideas that influence contemporary Welsh political life so that it may be engaged with and contemplated seriously, the political ideas that underpin political positions must be considered and evaluated. A study such as this therefore aids in the comprehension of contemporary Welsh political life. Indeed, all ideas developed through a process of elaboration lasting centuries can only be defined by retracing their historical development in all their varied and often contradictory complexity. (Although it is not the aim of this thesis to trace the development of these ideas – this thesis will aid those seeking to trace such ideas).

The history of ideas takes as its basic unit of analysis the ‘unit-idea’, or the individual concept.<sup>11</sup> These unit-ideas function as the building-blocks of the history of ideas. Even though they evolve little over the course of time, these unit-ideas combine in new patterns and gain expression in new forms in different historical eras.<sup>12</sup> As such, the historian of ideas has the task of identifying such unit-ideas and of describing their emergence and recession in new forms and combinations.<sup>13</sup> The task in hand with regard to this study is therefore to identify the ‘unit-ideas’ present in the political thought of Saunders Lewis.

---

<sup>11</sup> The term ‘unit-idea’ is A.O. Lovejoy’s. He is widely regarded as having pioneered the ‘History of Ideas’ methodology.

Lovejoy, Arthur O. (1933 lecture delivered. 1976 printed version) *The Great Chain of Being: A Study in the History of an Idea*. Cambridge, Massachusetts. Harvard University Press.

Lovejoy, Arthur O. (1948) *Essays in the History of Ideas*. Baltimore. John Hopkins Press.

For a deeper exploration of method within the History of Ideas see

(Ed.) King, Preston T. (1983) *History of Ideas: an introduction to method*. London. Croom Helm.

<sup>12</sup> The development of key ideas running through the development of Welsh political nationalism is the objective of Jones’ study. See

Jones, Richard Wyn. (2007) *Rhoi Cymru’n Gyntaf: Syniadaeth Plaid Cymru*. Cardiff. University of Wales Press.

<sup>13</sup> On A.O. Lovejoy, Maurice Mandelbaum writes, “in intellectual history, or in the history of philosophy specifically, the proper way to grasp the nature of any ‘-ism’ or any individual system of thought – is, in Lovejoy’s phrase – to break it up into elemental components, that is, those unit-ideas which are discriminable within it. However, if one examines much of Lovejoy’s own historiographical practice, as well as some of his most explicit methodological statements, it seems that it was in these elemental components that he found the real units, the effective working ideas in major creeds and movements, and that he took these unit-ideas to be the dynamic units of the history of thought.”

P.200 Mandelbaum, Maurice *On Lovejoy’s Historiography* in (Ed.) King, Preston T. (1983) *History of Ideas: an introduction to method*. London. Croom Helm.



Questions arising from such a focus and methodology will therefore include:

- What are the ideas put forward by Saunders Lewis that appear in his political texts?
- How does he conceive of society and political order?
- What is his political ideology and how does it intersect with his nationalism?
- How does he conceive of the state and its interrelation with society?
- What constitutes/defines a nation?
- How does he historically conceive of the nation?
- How does this fit into a wider system of nations?
- What is the ideological component of his nationalism?
- How does he conceive of a moral order i.e. is he a moral universalist or a relativist?
- Which are the most pertinent of Saunders Lewis' ideas – i.e. which are the most relevant in a contemporary context?
- How effective and/or realistic were Saunders Lewis' political solution to the problems he identified?
- How is Saunders Lewis' nationalism constructed, i.e. where should it be located within a broader understanding of nationalism?

In answering these questions it is hoped that Saunders Lewis' ideas on society and its political order will be clarified. Although it is not the explicit remit of this study to apply those ideas considered relevant to contemporary normative theory, it is nonetheless thought placing those ideas within the realm of contemporary theory is an original contribution to research. It is thought, however, that arguing these points would be a baton best passed on to a contemporary normative theorist. (Placing these ideas in a contemporary theoretical context is different to arguing their case within normative theory.)

This thesis employs a 'History of Ideas' methodology with respect to the chapters that seek to identify key ideas in Saunders Lewis' political thought. As such an approach would suggest, this entails a desk-based research comprising of a close reading of original texts, as well as a reading of secondary and wider material in order to provide a conceptual framework with which to analyse the primary texts and object of study. This follows the conventional methodological approach within the discipline. Welsh history texts have been

employed as a basis for background and contextual information. A wider reading of all Saunders Lewis' political texts, as well as a wider reading of his literary and criticism writings, enabled the author to familiarise himself with Saunders Lewis' ideas and moral philosophical grounding. In seeking to identify the component 'unit-ideas' present in Saunders Lewis' thought, it is the intention of this study to take several key texts produced by Saunders Lewis and use these as the basis of investigation and analysis by making them the focus of a chapter. Once these ideas are identified and analysed, in the latter chapters of the thesis (Chapters 9 & 10) they are explored in a much wider context of political thought and nationalism analysis. These texts have been selected to provide the basis of a progression of chapters as they encapsulate an idea or set of ideas. Of course, Saunders Lewis' ideas permeate much of his work, political or otherwise, and resurface continually to some degree. His specifically political texts are therefore employed by the author as a basis from which to identify and analyse the prominent 'unit-idea(s)' contained therein.

This study is also aware of the of the critique of the 'unit-idea' methodology that argues instead for sensitivity to the cultural context of the texts being analysed and the ideas contained therein as put forward by J.G.A Pocock and the 'Cambridge School'.<sup>14</sup> The 'Cambridge School' is credited for its attention to the 'languages' of political thought.<sup>15</sup> Quentin Skinner articulated a theory of methodology that sought to focus on the intentions of the respective author in writing classic political theory texts. One of the consequences of this theory is an emphasis on the necessity of studying less well-known political writers as a means of comprehending the classic political theory texts. A further consequence of this

---

<sup>14</sup> Pocock pioneered is credited as having pioneered 'contextualism' within the history of political thought in works such as

Pocock, J.G.A. (1957) *The Ancient Constitution and the Feudal Law: a study of English historical thought in the 17<sup>th</sup> century*. Cambridge. Cambridge University Press.

Pocock, J.G.A. (1971) *Politics, Language and Time: Essays on Political Thought and History*. New York. Atheneum.

Other 'Cambridge School' adherents, theorists and developers of the methodology include Quentin Skinner and John Dunn. See

Skinner, Quentin (1996) *Reason and Rhetoric in the Philosophy of Hobbes*. Cambridge. Cambridge University Press.

Dunn, John (1980) *Political Obligation in its Historical Context: Essays in Political Theory*. Cambridge. Cambridge University Press.

<sup>15</sup> Pagden, Anthony (Ed.) (1987) *The Languages of Political Theory in Early Modern Europe*. Cambridge. Cambridge University Press.

has been a critique of the tendency to view classical political texts as monolithic and free-standing.

A 'History of Ideas' approach entails a fine analysis of the primary texts, which is therefore employed in this study. Following the reasoning of the 'Cambridge School', as well as the lack of a specific treatise written by Saunders Lewis, it is logical to highlight and engage with those thinkers and ideas that preceded him, these acting as a basis upon which ideas are built, reformed, or adapted. An examination of these ideas, through identifying similarities and distinctions, assists in comprehending Saunders Lewis' thought, as well as providing context.

This study is grounded in the conception that nationalism is 'Beyond Ideology'.<sup>16</sup> Nationalism, rather than being a coherent ideology in itself, is in effect a phenomenon that permeates various other ideologies and positions on the traditional left/right political spectrum. What emerges, therefore, is a social phenomenon that is not easily studied solely from a single discipline such as political theory. It is simply not helpful to draw conclusions such as 'nationalism is a conservative ideology' as deeper analysis would point to the eventual realisation that it can encompass a multitude of ideologies, obviously some virulent at one extreme, right down to it being simply an alliance to a preferred unit of government, a benign, 'banal', or civic nationalism or patriotism.<sup>17</sup> Thus nationalism is a multi-faceted phenomenon that interacts and interfaces with ideology. In the work of Saunders Lewis it is possible, therefore, to see where and when his nationalism interfaces with other broader ideologies and political thought. Saunders Lewis' own early equating of nationalism being analogous to conservatism, was in turn changed to a 'radical traditionalism' in his embracing of Distributist / Guild Socialism ideas in the 1930s, and demonstrates the 'interacting' nature of nationalism. To clarify this, Saunders Lewis was almost constantly engaged intellectually with assorted liberals and socialists who shared Saunders Lewis' Welsh nationalism, yet not his political ideology.<sup>18</sup>

---

<sup>16</sup> Goodwin, Barbara. (2004 (1<sup>st</sup> ed. 1982)) *Using Political Ideas*. West Sussex. John Wiley and Sons. P.249.

<sup>17</sup> For an in-depth account of how innocuous, benign nationalism permeates contemporary states, please see Billig, Michael. (1995) *Banal Nationalism*. London. Thousand Oaks.

<sup>18</sup> Amongst the early Plaid Cymru membership were several prominent liberals, including W.J. Gruffudd, as well as socialists including Kate Roberts, Iorwerth Peate, and Arthur Price. The early party was formed

Interviews with persons who knew Saunders Lewis, while useful in building up an idea of the character and of the personal nature of individual, were deemed not to be necessary within the context of this study. Much information is already available on the personal character of Saunders Lewis. It is also already noted in several texts, of the complexity involved in agreeing upon and advocating policy within the context of Plaid Cymru, and this is recognised within the thesis. What is relevant, and indeed essential, to this thesis are the political ideas of Saunders Lewis, as distinct from the character and his deeds. Policy he advocated within the context of Plaid Cymru is considered as a means to analyse his own thought, yet the author acknowledges how the processes of practical politics necessarily involve compromise and consensus, and therefore Saunders Lewis as Plaid Cymru president does not always coincide with Saunders Lewis the political theorist. The texts chosen are therefore deemed by the author to best articulate the political ideas of Saunders Lewis specifically.

## **1.2. Research Questions.**

Part I of the Introduction of this thesis seeks to establish why a need arises for such a study as this, and what the motivations are for conducting this study. It also will consider the wider contemporary theory framework for such a study, as well as its conceptual framework and its normative assumptions. Part II will consider the historical context of Saunders Lewis' political ideas and seek to ascertain what imposing events and processes of the era bore upon his thinking. (This is intended primarily for the wider political theory audience unaware of Welsh context or Saunders Lewis' activity).

Chapter 3 of the thesis, 'Intellectual Peers and Influences' seeks to establish and analyse those ideas and moral philosophical frameworks affecting and influencing Saunders Lewis. How these ideas interact with his own, and how they relate to the Welsh experience is

---

mainly of former I.L.P. members and Liberal Nonconformists. For a discussion of the early Plaid Cymru membership and competing political ideologies within the Welsh 'national' dimension please see Davies, D. Hywel. (1983) *The Welsh Nationalist Party 1925-1945: A Call to Nationhood*. Cardiff. University of Wales Press.

examined. Where they are not identical, their difference is also examined. The solutions these ideas present to the problems conceived is also explored.

Chapter 4 onwards deals specifically with Saunders Lewis' texts, the first of which being *Principles of Nationalism*. This chapter seeks to identify and analyse those ideas which are articulated within this text and how they are central in underpinning his thought. Important aspects are examined such as how Saunders Lewis conceived of the state in relation to the nation, and how an understanding of history, or indeed a particular reading, informs this. What defines the Welsh nation in his mind, and how this justifies self-government for Wales is also analysed.

The important aspect of language in relation to Saunders Lewis' thought is explored in Chapter 5. An examination of *One Language for Wales* considers the importance placed on language by Saunders Lewis, and what role language has within the nation. How he then links this to the idea of social and national liberation is then analysed. Whether he considers language of instrumental or intrinsic value, and how it is conceived within a framework of 'rights', if any, is examined. The historical context impacting upon his thought is explored. His proposal or vision to rectify the perceived problem of language decline is analysed, as are alternatives offered by peers and contemporaries. Ultimately, Saunders Lewis' idea of language being the basis of a political nationalism is examined.

*Fate of the Language*, authored by Saunders Lewis in 1962 is the focus of chapter 6. How he had changed his approach the issue of language by the 1960s is examined, and why it was significant in contextual terms. How his argumentation had changed is analysed as its shift with regard to its 'rights' framework. These ideas lasting impact upon Welsh political thought are also considered.

Saunders Lewis' interwar social vision for Wales, as appears in *Canlyn Arthur (In the Footsteps of Arthur)*, is examined in chapter 7. This chapter seeks to examine his conception of a just society, and how such a conception of a just society in Wales should be politically and economically organised. How this has a particular relevance to Wales, and

how this socio-political vision aims to remedy the problems conceived, is examined. The historical context is examined with a view to consider the relevance of such ideas, and an analysis to their practicality is also given. The role of Saunders Lewis' moral philosophical foundation in forming his social vision is explored.

Chapter 8 aims to identify and analyse those ideas present within *The Caernarfon Court Speech*, as well as consider its historical context. How Saunders Lewis conceived of normative universalism and particularity and how he related that directly into the Welsh context is analysed. How this was informed by his moral philosophical foundation is considered. The wider significance of Saunders Lewis' ideas within the context of wider political theory are also examined

The most pertinent of Saunders Lewis' political ideas are considered in chapter 9. Why and how they are the most appealing and enduring of his ideas is examined. Why they are applicable in the contemporary context is explored.

Chapter 10 seeks to establish where Saunders Lewis' nationalism should be located within the main theories of nationalism analysis. How each school of thought would analyse his nationalism is examined. In addition, Saunders Lewis' nationalism is employed as a means to critique the respective schools of thought own theorising on nationalism.

To conclude each chapter, the author critiques the suitability, plausibility, or practicality of Saunders Lewis' political ideas within the context of their era. With regard to the ideas that remain pertinent, the author has, by including them, already noted their normative value and importance, but will nonetheless critically evaluate them in conclusion. In the chapter utilising nationalism typology and theory to evaluate Saunders Lewis' political theory, and vice versa, the author's critique will also be given.

The author is aware that for the reader already familiar with Saunders Lewis' work the first part of the thesis may not present any strikingly new material or original perspective, but maintains that they will gain insight through the latter chapters of this study with the

deeper discussion of Saunders Lewis' ideas in the wider context of political theory and nationalism analysis. Indeed, it would be inappropriate to present Saunders Lewis to a wider political theory audience without at first explaining, in detail, his ideas and their historical context. The aim of this thesis is for it to be of benefit to a wider political theory and history of ideas audience, yet nonetheless contain some original insight and perspective on the material. It is hoped that a happy medium is achieved with regards to balancing these two demands. Indeed, a large part of the task of this thesis is to engage a wider English-speaking audience with the political writings of Saunders Lewis, and with the concept of a specifically Welsh political thought.

### **1.3. Saunders Lewis in Theoretical Context.**

A plethora of academic investigation has been undertaken within the fields of social and political theory surrounding the topic of nations and nationalism. Having previously been the subject matter of narrow interest after World War II, renewed interest has arisen due in part to the end of the Cold War, and the ensuing break-up of previously large sovereign entities into smaller 'nation'-states. Not only has this occurred in what was formerly known as the Eastern Bloc, often in the form of extreme and virulent ethnic conflict as witnessed during the break-up of Yugoslavia in the 1990s, but Western European and North American well-established liberal democracies have experienced renewed calls from within from groups demanding recognition, or part-recognition, of their status as 'nations'.

Whereas classic political theory deals rather neatly with specific theorists and philosophers through whom insight to a particular ideology can be gained, it is not so straightforward with the study of nationalism. This study is situated within the methodological framework of nationalism, in effect being "Beyond Ideology"<sup>19</sup>. Nationalism is not a distinct and coherent ideology on its own, rather it is 'fluid' and is a complex social phenomenon that interacts with other ideologies. Hence there is no specific nationalist thinker to whom one may turn to epitomise 'nationalist thought' as one could turn to Marx and Owen for socialist, and Bentham and Mill for Utilitarian thought. The point being, therefore, that nationalist thought is so varied, it is at times barely recognisable between two self-

---

<sup>19</sup> Goodwin, Barbara. (2004) (1<sup>st</sup> ed. 1982) *Using Political Ideas*. West Sussex. John Wiley and Sons. P.249.

proclaimed nationalists other than the fact that they would both lay claim to being advocates of the 'nation'. It makes sense to refer instead to nationalisms in the plural, and seek to promote a study of various nationalist thinkers in their specific contexts.

The study of nations, and thus nationalism, has consequently been a topic of the utmost relevance in a world looking for normative judgements in answer to some of the more pressing questions surrounding this topic.<sup>20</sup> This particular area of study was brought firmly to greater contemporary attention in 1983 with Ernest Gellner's publication *Nations and Nationalism*, where he made his assertion that "nationalism is primarily a political principle that holds that the political and national unit should be congruent".<sup>21</sup> Since then, it has enjoyed wide coverage with the most notable scholar being Anthony D. Smith regarding 'nations and nationalism' proper.<sup>22</sup> There are, of course, a host of closely related matters including multicultural and secession theory. Much recent academic investigation, such as that by Tamir, Kymlicka, Miller, Raz, etc. has focused upon the question of whether there is in fact a liberal nationalism, and upon its critical criteria, or indeed whether this is a paradox in terms.<sup>23</sup> Chaim Gans, in his title *The Limits of Nationalism*<sup>24</sup> goes further to explore and define a theoretical conception of a liberal cultural nationalism. Even more recent and still as yet not fully explored is the closely related topic of language rights and political theory, on which relatively little material exists, except for Kymlicka's *Language Rights and Political Theory*.<sup>25</sup> Due to the recent academic enquiry as to whether

---

<sup>20</sup> Moore, Margaret. (2001) *The Ethics of Nationalism*. Oxford. Oxford University Press.

Lehning, Percy B. (1998) *Theories of Secession*. Routledge. London.

There is a large selection of titles available on this topic with these titles being amongst the most comprehensive.

<sup>21</sup> Gellner, Ernest. (1983) *Nations and Nationalism*. Oxford. Blackwell Publishing. P.1.

<sup>22</sup> Most notable titles include:

Smith, Anthony D. (1986) *The Ethnic Origins of Nations*. Oxford. Blackwell.

Smith, Anthony D. (1991) *National Identity*. London. Penguin.

Smith, Anthony D. & Hutchinson. (2000) *Nationalism: Critical Concepts in Political Science*. London. Routledge.

<sup>23</sup> Tamir, Yael (1993) *Liberal Nationalism*. Princeton, New Jersey. Princeton University Press.

Kymlicka, Will. (2001) *Politics in the Vernacular. Nationalism, Multiculturalism and Citizenship*. Oxford. Oxford University Press.

Miller, David. (1995) *On Nationality*. Oxford. Oxford University Press.

<sup>24</sup> Gans, Chaim. (2003) *The Limits of Nationalism*. Cambridge. Cambridge University Press.

<sup>25</sup> Kymlicka, Will & Patten, Alan (Eds). (2003) *Language Rights and Political Theory*. Oxford. Oxford University Press.



there is such a thing as a 'liberal nationalism', attention has been focused on particular 19<sup>th</sup> century nationalist thinkers from a 'History of Political Thought' perspective. Much attention has been focused on 19<sup>th</sup> century nationalist thought ever since Elie Kedourie's assertion that "nationalism is a doctrine invented in Europe at the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century".<sup>26</sup> The revolutions of 1848 and the 'National Liberal' ideas behind the formation of several major European states in the following period, highlight the era as one of 'liberal nationalisms'. Examples of such thought include that of Giuseppe Mazzini.<sup>27</sup> Other 'nationalist' thinkers or social thinkers regarding the enigmatic issue of culture are also of interest (for example Herder) in historical terms, and illuminate what is often a highly dogmatic contemporary normative debate.

At the heart of the debate, is what is seemingly a perennial conundrum within political theory itself: that between universalism and particularism.<sup>28</sup> Many 19<sup>th</sup> century nationalist thinkers have been the focus of studies, not only because the 'nation' and thus 'nationalism' are considered modern concepts arising from the advancement of the Modern Age, but also because they are often interpreted, as in the case of Herder, as a response to, and in some cases a reaction against, the universal values of the Enlightenment. This phenomenon, occurring in Europe in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, subsequently known as the Enlightenment, sought objectivity in its project and thus came to view its values as universal. Nationalist thinkers seem as varied on this matter as on any other. Some nationalist thinkers view it simply as the universal imposition of a particular culture rather than that of anything truly 'universal', while others view the striving for the recognition of the 'nation' as being instrumental to achieving the objectives of the 'Enlightenment' project.<sup>29</sup>

---

Arguments are diverse and follow the usual multicultural arguments with those such as Brian Barry typically calling for a difference-blind state-neutral unitary citizenship conception of (language) rights, through to the differentiated (language) rights conceptions of Kymlicka and Stephen May.

<sup>26</sup> Kedourie, Elie. (1993 (1<sup>st</sup> edition 1960)) *Nationalism*. Oxford. Blackwell. P.1.

<sup>27</sup> Relevant sections on Herder and Mazzini in:

Haddock, B.A. (2005) *A History of Political Thought 1789 to the Present*. Cambridge. Polity Press. P.61.

Clark Jnr, Robert T. (1955) *Herder: His Life and Thought*. Berkeley. University of California Press.

<sup>28</sup> Vincent, Andrew. (2002) *Nationalism and Particularity*. Cambridge. Cambridge University Press.

Mulhall, Stephen & Swift, Adam. (1992) *Liberals and Communitarians*. Oxford. Blackwell.

<sup>29</sup> Kymlicka, Will & Patten, Alan (Eds.) (2003) *Language Rights and Political Theory*. Oxford. Oxford University Press. P.11.

The preceding subject matter is thus highly relevant to the writings of John Saunders Lewis. His work as a critic and dramatist is often held in high esteem. His political writings and his cultural and linguistic conception of the nation, however, have received less academic attention. With this thought in mind, it is hoped that through the study of the social and political thought of Saunders Lewis, employing a 'History of Political Thought' approach, new and important matters will be revealed. Whilst not strictly engaging in contemporary discourse as such, it is hoped that this study will give insight and aid in the study of nationalism and language rights theory<sup>30</sup>, as well as provide interest and aid debate on Welsh national life in a wider 'non-political theory' context.

The political writings of Saunders Lewis provide an appropriate vehicle for inquiry into how and why culture, and more specifically language, informs an understanding of the world, hence producing a particular political philosophy. These are essential keys to understanding the main thrust of argument in the political writings of Saunders Lewis, with language defining his conception of 'nation' and 'national' life in the Welsh context.

Saunders Lewis' political writings will form the main basis of enquiry and primary source material upon which this study will be conducted. Where appropriate, elements of his criticism and drama works will be reflected upon in order to give insight to his wider philosophy and thought. It is through focusing on his specifically political writings that we may engage with his political thought proper. Any specifically non-political works consulted, theatrical works, personal correspondence, etc. will be used merely to support any analysis made with reference to his specifically political writings.<sup>31</sup>

---

Here is a further discussion of how the normative debates over nationalism and language rights embody the political theory debates surrounding liberalism and communitarianism and the universalism and particularism dichotomies.

<sup>30</sup> The history of Welsh nationalism presents a rich insight into minority language rights and their political recognition from the 1960s onwards. As a theoretical concept, this dates back to the 18<sup>th</sup> century, and earlier, as the Welsh language 'defined' the 'nation'. Subsequent derivatives debate whether this is the 'essence' of nationhood; a prerequisite, or at all necessary.

<sup>31</sup> Obviously the line may be blurred as to what exactly is political and criticism. However there is a select list of writings that are overtly political, and are intended as such, due to their release on Plaid Cymru's press in the interwar period.

#### 1.4. Contemporary Wales

The fact that there is now an emerging political civil society in Wales has its roots in the context of a political debate begun some 80 years ago. Debates surrounding Welsh 'autonomy' and 'home rule' far predate this period and have their roots in the mid to late 19<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>32</sup> However, it is not until the specific period of the 1920/30s that it is possible to distinguish a definitive, culturally informed political movement, in a specific Welsh national context (rather than a U.K. context), Plaid Cymru, operating with Welsh self-government as its *raison d'être*.<sup>33</sup> Of course, the context of time has changed the party, and it no longer allies itself so closely to matters cultural. One factor that has remained constant, despite a variance of technique and approach, and throughout the changing context of the modern 'nation'-state, has been an attempt to reinvigorate and re-establish a Welsh polity.

The advent of devolution in the form of the National Assembly for Wales, inaugurated in 1999, has witnessed the rapid development of a civil society in Wales. Although it had existed in administrative form pre-devolution (Welsh Office), it now 'gained teeth' and looked towards 'nation-region' status within a newly devolved U.K.<sup>34</sup> The prospect of primary law-making powers, and a host of other legislative powers, now appears not too distant for the National Assembly for Wales.<sup>35</sup> Over the past decade or so, this civil society has indeed carried out modern day 'nation-building' activities with the initiation of new

---

<sup>32</sup> The Cymru Fydd movement of the late 19<sup>th</sup> Century called for Welsh Home Rule and was led by the young David Lloyd George. It was not a distinct political party, but was rather a movement within the Liberal Party, at the time the dominant political party in Wales. This movement floundered due to a rebuking by The South Wales Liberal Federation which rejected integrating the movement on the grounds that, "There are (in Wales)... thousands of Englishmen who will never submit to the domination of Welsh ideas".

Davies, John. (1990) *A History of Wales*. Middlesex. Allen Lane Penguin Press. P.466.

<sup>33</sup> For a comprehensive history of the beginning of Plaid Cymru, please see

Davies, D. Hywel. (1983) *The Welsh Nationalist Party 1925-1945: A Call to Nationhood*. Cardiff. University of Wales Press.

For a historical overview of Plaid Cymru and its developments throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century see

McAllister, Laura. (2001) *Plaid Cymru: The Emergence of a Political Party*. Bridgend. Seren.

<sup>34</sup> For a history of Welsh devolution 1979-1999 please see relevant chapter in the updated 2007 edition of

Davies, John. (2007) *A History of Wales*. Middlesex. Allen Lane Penguin Press.

<sup>35</sup> Fuller details of and background to legislative powers of the National Assembly for Wales are discussed in *The Richard Commission Report 2004* and are outlined in legal terms in *The Government of Wales Act 2006*.

Richard Commission. (2004) *The Report of the Richard Commission: Commission on the Powers and Electoral Arrangements of the National Assembly for Wales, Spring 2004*. London. The Stationary Office.

*The Government of Wales Act 2006*. (2006) London. The Stationary Office.

institutions, public bodies, executives, a National Assembly, etc, all specifically relating to national life in Wales. As little as three decades ago with the heavy loss of the 1979 Devolution Referendum in Wales, all this appeared as if it may never come about. The reasons for this loss, and the subsequent reversal in favour of devolution in the relatively short space of two decades, is for analysis elsewhere. What concerns the contemporary context here, is that Saunders Lewis' writings (although largely written some 80 years ago) still provide valuable insights into Welsh cultural nationalism and identity, and provide a theoretical template for the nation-building process in a specific Welsh context.

It is neither 'fashionable' nor popular for individuals to describe themselves as followers of, or adherents to, the political thought of Saunders Lewis. This is due to a variety of reasons; partly because of his controversial public-style, as well as more general apprehension regarding an individual openly describing himself as a 'nationalist'. Increasingly, and more often out of necessity, Plaid Cymru, the political party that Saunders Lewis co-founded, has often shunned or sought to distance itself from any close association with Saunders Lewis precisely for these reasons. The necessity being that the party, through its evolution, needed to appeal electorally beyond Welsh-speaking Wales, and thus found it expedient to shed some of this doctrinal 'baggage'. Nevertheless, Plaid Cymru is but a part of the political expression of a Welsh national movement begun in the 1920s and 1930s. Saunders Lewis courted controversy in public life several times, leading to his being viewed with disdain by many. This included, most notably, his part in an arson attack on a Royal Air Force bombing school in North Wales in 1937<sup>36</sup> which led to his dismissal from his academic post in Swansea University, as well as his controversial comeback to public life, the *Fate of the Welsh Language* radio lecture in 1962.<sup>37</sup> This radio lecture helped initiate and radicalise a debate over the Welsh language in Welsh public life that continues in various forms to the present day. Beyond this, it remains to be said that anyone declaring themselves as a 'nationalist' in a period subsequent to World War II, when the word had become so linked in the minds of many with horrors of a particular

---

<sup>36</sup> For an indepth detailing of the events surrounding the 'Fire in Llŷn' please see

Jenkins, Dafydd. (1998) *A Nation on Trial: Penyberth 1936*. Caernarfon. Welsh Academic Press.

<sup>37</sup> Saunders Lewis, John. *Fate of the Language*. (Translation by Williams, Aled G.) In Eds. Jones, Alun R. & Thomas, Gwyn. (1973) *Presenting Saunders Lewis*. Cardiff. University of Wales Press. P.127.

vitriolic brand of nationalism associated with Nazism and Fascism, left themselves open to criticism (even if this was misplaced).

### **1.5. Minority Nationalism and the Devolution Agenda.**

As with much political thought viewed retrospectively, certain aspects of Saunders Lewis's thought will appear arcane and in some cases obscure, or even irrelevant in a contemporary context. However, it is felt that as long as there is an entity called Wales (and increasingly a specific political entity and polity called Wales), and there is a Welsh language in existence, that the political thought of Saunders Lewis will be able to make a valuable, if not controversial, contribution to discourse. Indeed, the issue of minority nationalism within the U.K. has been a political issue for much of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and before. Such minority nationalism has fuelled Irish secession from the United Kingdom, as well as serving as a subtle subtext to Scottish and Welsh Labour and Liberal history, with various members of these political movements committed to 'Home Rule'.

Welsh Liberals and the young David Lloyd George were involved with a 'Home Rule' movement called Cymru Fydd towards the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The socialists of the early Labour Representation Committee, and subsequent Labour Party, begun in the industrial areas of South Wales, "gave the impression... (they were) in favour of Home Rule for Wales, claiming (they)... were the only true nationalists"<sup>38</sup> with Keir Hardie's assertion that "the Welsh people should own the land and the resources of their own country"<sup>39</sup>, coining his slogan 'The Red Dragon and the Red Flag'. However these sentiments were soon to be drowned by a firmer commitment to 'horizontal' 'British' working-class solidarity, as well as by the U.K. integrating processes generated by two World Wars. The issue of cultural and identity politics within the U.K. has long been at the forefront of the political agenda primarily through the 'Troubles' of Northern Ireland, with its maelstrom of national, cultural and religious identity conflict and subsequent political violence. However, the minority nationalisms of the other constituent 'Home Nations' of

---

<sup>38</sup> Davies, John. (1990) *A History of Wales*. London. Allen Lane Penguin Press. P.479.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid. P.479.

the United Kingdom, of Scotland and Wales, have long been a strong undercurrent in the political history of the United Kingdom, yet being more subtle in their expression.

The political policy agenda has arguably been one of slow, but steady, devolution of power within the U.K. for over a century, with specific Welsh institutions being ceded from central government.<sup>40</sup> Arguably, these stretch back to Disestablishment, and include landmarks such as the creation of the University of Wales, the Welsh Office and the position of Secretary of State for Wales. If these early 'devolutionary' measures are more in keeping with appeasing a more 'cultural' nationalism, then the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century witnessed the move to prominence of a more overtly political nationalism. The gaining of parliamentary by Plaid Cymru in 1966, and later by the S.N.P. (Scottish National Party), initiated a process of introspection by the U.K. political establishment surrounding the issue of devolution and forced the debate on the continuing vitality of the 'Unitary State' United Kingdom. This all culminated in the Kilbrandon Commission recommending a referendum on Devolution, which, in 1979, was subsequently lost.

The Conservative government of the 1980s was perceived by many as politically anathema to the consensus in Wales and Scotland, as was the issue of Secretaries of State acting like colonial 'Governors-General' in the 1990s, and ensured political devolution was back on the policy agenda by 1997.<sup>41</sup> This time round, however, the emphasis of the debate surrounding the issue of devolution centred on 'democratic' and 'regional governmental' efficiency rather than relying on issues of cultural importance which had led up to the 1979 referendum.<sup>42</sup> Despite this change in emphasis on the importance for devolution, it would

---

<sup>40</sup> Lyon, Ann. (2003) *Constitutional History of the U.K.* London. Routledge Cavendish. P.427.

Lyon's title contains a concise yet highly informative history of Welsh devolution within a U.K. context.

<sup>41</sup> The issue of 'Governors-General' surrounding Secretaries of State for Wales, John Redwood and Williams Hague during the 1990s and their controversial policies, without the Conservative Party having a 'popular' mandate in Wales brought up the issue of 'democratic deficit' as highlighted by John Osmond in *Welsh Europeans*.

Osmond, John. (1995) *Welsh Europeans*. Bridgend. Seren.

<sup>42</sup> Morgan, Kevin & Mungham, Geoff. (2000) *Redesigning Democracy: The Making of the Welsh Assembly*. Bridgend. Seren.

This notion of rearranging the constitutional set-up of the governance of the U.K. on a 'regional' basis rather than on a 'national' one, underpins the political science work of Kevin Morgan and Kevin Mungham. This is interesting from a theoretical perspective with regards to the politics of identity as it is a policy programme agreeable to two divergent nationalist strands: British and Welsh.

appear that the political writings of Saunders Lewis are still relevant as long as there remains a '*National* Assembly' devolution project pertaining to Wales.

### **1.6. Theory and the Welsh Context.**

Away from the public policy agenda surrounding devolution during the 1960s and 1970s, academic theory began to address the issue seriously in the 1970s after the initial interest sparked by Tom Nairn's publication entitled *The Break-up of Britain*.<sup>43</sup> Nairn's neo-Marxist analysis of the breaking up of the British state into its constituent 'home nations' was steeped in the socialist view of 'national liberation' rather than the 'horizontal solidarity / adherence to the established state and centrally securing the means of production.' Meanwhile, many socialists and Marxists of the 'national liberation' school, whilst softening their ideological stance given the wider fall from prominence of Marxism, were drawn to advocating decentralised forms of government, and along with the advent of Postmodernism, the term 'post-nationalist' also arose. Nairn declared himself as such. This was based on the premise of the changing nature of governance in a necessarily interdependent world, fast becoming closer than ever through the process of globalisation. Nairn, who had envisaged *The Break-up of Britain* into separate states, now advocated a form of 'Federal Britain'.<sup>44</sup>

As a consequence of having been neglected since the 1970s, the political thought of Saunders Lewis has not been critically reviewed with these specific developments in mind. He was a committed adherent to the idea of the interdependence of nations and the 'Idea of Europe'. He advocated a political and economic European Union, and thought that Wales would be best served as part of the League of Nations rather than as part of the British Empire. The development of the European Union as well as of its inherent principle of subsidiarity and multi level governance therefore requires that Saunders Lewis' thought be re-examined.

---

Morgan, Kevin & Mungham, Geoff. (2000) *Redesigning Democracy: The Making of the Welsh Assembly*. Bridgend. Seren.

<sup>43</sup> Nairn, Tom. (1977) *The Break-Up of Britain*. London. Verso.

<sup>44</sup> Nairn, Tom. (1997) *Faces of Nationalism. Janus Revisited*. London. Verso.

The classic political theory debate between the paradigms of universalism and particularism find expression in the work of various nationalist thinkers. Herder, for example, was a vocal critic of the Enlightenment, rejecting its adherence to universalism as merely a form of French particularism enforced through imperialism. In contrast, Mazzini viewed Italian nationalism as holding a specific duty to promulgate enlightenment values through not just Italy, but also through Europe. The case of Saunders Lewis is no exception to this classic dichotomy. It is often expected that nationalist thinkers will be particularist, yet this is not always the case. To claim Saunders Lewis is an outright universalist is to neglect his obvious concern with the specific case of Wales in his work, yet his greater understanding of wider theory and criticism place him in a curious position. Whereas Herder's intellectual development led him to reject the Enlightenment as a 'grand project', Saunders Lewis appears to be highly sceptical of it, yet makes serious concessions to it.<sup>45</sup> Saunders Lewis possesses a duality, adhering to a 'Welsh' particularity, yet formulating this as being a necessary part of a wider universalism. This 'universal' aspect is trenchant in Saunders Lewis' Catholicism, with its inherent conceptions of freedom, interdependence of nations and 'universal moral law'. Thomist Catholic social doctrine is also evident in his thought.

There is no doubting that Saunders Lewis reaches many of the philosophical and artistic / critical intellectual conclusions of his contemporaries of the interwar period: a generation affected by the First World War, yet forming a distinct 'school' of thought which included T.S. Eliot and T.E. Hulme, and differing from a rising socialist 'school'. It is apparent in the work of Eliot, that his conception of culture, and 'unity and diversity', is extremely close to that of Saunders Lewis, as evidenced in works such as *Notes towards a definition of culture* and *The idea of a Christian Society*.<sup>46</sup> In relation to Hulme, Saunders Lewis is very similar in his conception of art and criticism and strikingly similar in his philosophical

---

<sup>45</sup> Herder enjoyed a somewhat fraught intellectual relationship with the 'Enlightenment' project having initially being a follower of Kant. However his subsequent rejection of the Enlightenment as a French cultural imperialism, led to the artistic movement of German Romanticism, and saw Herder chronicle the 'organic' folk traditions of Germany. Towards the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century however, Herder appears to have changed tack slightly with his *Humanität* theory of intercultural harmony, and a return to Classicism. He ended up being supportive of the French Revolution.

<sup>46</sup> Eliot, T.S. (1948) *Notes Towards a Definition of Culture*. London. Faber and Faber.  
Eliot, T.S. (1940) *The Idea of a Christian Society*. London. Faber and Faber.



approach as well as his condemnation of 'false' humanism, as evidenced in Hulme's publication, *Speculations*.<sup>47</sup> The line of political theory is blurred by the interplay of philosophy and art, cultural and critical theory, which Saunders Lewis shared with these contemporaries. They obviously hailed from the same intellectual roots, but their nationalism, combined with their ideologies, produced different outcomes. Their politics took them in a conservative direction, with Saunders Lewis being a Welsh nationalist. It is notable that Eliot discusses the 'home nations' of Britain in *Notes Towards a Definition of Culture*, yet does not reach any specific conclusions.

The topic of 'nationalism' in Wales has often aroused passions within the political arena. Although there exists much academic literature and empirical research on improving forms and institutions of government to 'remedy' Wales' position within the U.K., little analysis exists of specific nationalist thought. Indeed, if Wales is to be accorded status as a 'nation', then the varying conceptions of what constitutes this nation need to be examined. Although it is often far too easy to compartmentalise and label distinctive camps of thought, the history of modern Wales has been described by many a commentator as a divided one in a social sense. That division is seen as existing between the industrial and rural areas, between that of the 'rootless' proletariat, and the 'rooted' farmer / peasant. This division is often termed a cultural one, as the industrial areas of Wales are almost wholly English-speaking, with habitation foci in the North East and South East of Wales. This latter geographical area of Wales contained (and still does) its major population base as a consequence of its former industries (coal and steel). Existing in contrast to this has been the predominantly agricultural communities of rural North and West Wales, mainly Welsh-speaking.<sup>48</sup> The noted Welsh historian Gwyn Alf Williams summed it up thus,

---

<sup>47</sup> Hulme, T.E. (1924) *Speculations. Essays on Humanism and the Philosophy of Art*. London. Routledge and Kegan Paul Ltd.

<sup>48</sup> Balsom, Denis. *The Three-Wales Model*. In Ed. Osmond, John. (1985) *The National Question Again*. Gomer Press. Llandysul. P.1-17.

For an interesting dissection of Wales' political topography see prominent Welsh political scientist Denis Balsom's *Three-Wales Model*, in which he geographically divides Wales into three distinct socio-cultural groups, Y Fro Gymraeg, Welsh Wales, and British Wales, and makes an analysis of voting trends based upon linguistic/socio-cultural/national identity.

“Public perception of a people in Wales for a century and a half has been expressed in two archetypal myths; both were powerful abstractions derived from reality and both became increasingly unreal: the *gwerin* and the *working-class*.”<sup>49</sup>

Thus Williams’ synopsis of these archetypal myths of the Welsh define them as the *gwerin*, (Welsh-speaking peasant), and the working class (English-speaking proletariat), the first relying on notions of the organic community and the second relying on notions of class solidarity, the two of which are often cited as competing identities in Wales.

It should be stressed that these are not essentialist statements of national (or any other) identity, but efforts to highlight the tension apparent in this dynamic and sit well with Anthony Smith’s statement,

“A national identity is fundamentally multi-dimensional; it can never be reduced to a single element, even by particular factions of nationalists, nor can it be easily or swiftly induced in a population by artificial means.”<sup>50</sup>

To a certain extent these two broad distinctions occur today, yet constant population migration, the decline of heavy industry, and the advent of political devolution, have all blurred the lines in what historically and traditionally was a fairly clear distinction.<sup>51</sup> Saunders Lewis’ thought provides a snapshot of Welsh-speaking Welsh ‘national’ political identity in the interwar years, although at times it is High Art, and Catholic. The majority of his contemporary society, and fellow nationalists, were Liberal Nonconformist. It nonetheless highlights the issues raised in the early stages of a ‘national’ movement

After examination of these two somewhat differing traditions arising in modern Wales, much debate has occurred over what, and who, constitutes the ‘real’ Wales (if indeed we

---

<sup>49</sup> Williams, Gwyn, Alf. (1985) *When was Wales? A History of the Welsh*. Harmondsworth. Penguin. P.237.

<sup>50</sup> Smith, Antony. (1991) *National Identity*. Harmondsworth. Penguin. P.14.

<sup>51</sup> See Denis Balsom’s *The Three-Wales Model*. Although a highly useful study it is increasingly outdated, particularly for the reasons outlined above.

Balsom, Denis. *The Three-Wales Model*. In Ed. Osmond, John. (1985) *The National Question Again*. Llandysul. Gomer Press. P.1-17.

can pinpoint a national 'essence'), and whether indeed the Welsh language is socially important in an age that has witnessed its steady decline over the past 150 years. There therefore exist many competing 'national' or 'cultural' identities in Wales. Both English-language and Welsh-language culture exist in Wales. Also, on varying levels, there is the tension between a 'British' (although in its political conception, thinkers such as Saunders Lewis view it as an English state identity) and a 'Welsh' identity, with increasing variance in degree and plurality subject to the individual in question. As a consequence of the plurality of identity 'available' to the individual, much academic research into identity politics has come to view its progress as a discipline uniquely tied to the empirical research of the individual in a technique known as the 'Q-Methodology' in the field of Nationalism Studies. This technique consists of questioning the individual themselves, on a sliding scale of where they place themselves on a continuum where competing national or cultural identities exist in a society. For example, in Wales, the individual may be asked to describe how they view their own 'national' identity; Welsh, English, British, Welsh then British, British then Welsh, as well as a host of other possibilities, pluralities, hyphenations and combinations.<sup>52</sup>

Despite this recent move towards an empirical understanding of identity within the field of Nationalism Studies, there of course still exists a role for the examination and role of normative theories surrounding the nature of nations, their role in state formation, including its very foundation, and as to whether the concept of a nation is in fact a form of 'false consciousness'. 'Classic' Political Theory has concerned itself with the ordering of man and state, with the parameters and limits of the 'state' or a 'society' taken for granted, 'assumed' and not open for debate. Nationalism studies, whilst inevitably incorporating elements of 'Classic' political thought within its remit, also accept that the parameter or limits of the given 'society' or 'state' are contested and therefore need definition and analysis. This is often done utilising a multi-disciplinary approach, as national identity is a

---

<sup>52</sup> Haesly, Richard. *Identifying Scotland and Wales: Types of Scottish and Welsh national identities*. Nations and Nationalism Volume 11. Issue 2. (2005) P. 243–263.

"How are national identities and the 'imagined communities' (Anderson, 1991) upon which they are based linked? This article demonstrates that Q-methodology, which allows each participant to express his or her own 'personal nationalism' (Cohen, 1996) while simultaneously highlighting how these individual assessments aggregate into coherent, shared types of national identity, provides a means of empirically assessing the linkage between the micro- and macro-components of national identity."

somewhat complex arena of a number of discourses; political, artistic and academic, all of which are not merely reflections of social reality, but also serve to constitute that reality.

The contemporary context of this thesis and its investigation is therefore twofold. Firstly, there is a need for an of nationalist thought due to a deepening academic interest in nations and nationalism, both in terms of a typology of a social phenomenon and as to its normative content. This necessitates a reading of nationalist political thought, and Saunders Lewis presents as an ideal candidate. Secondly, in addition to this broader scope, there is a domestic necessity for such a study with regard to contemporary political society in Wales. Whilst the loss of the 1979 referendum seemed to have negated the need to investigate nationalist thought in Wales, the enacting of the National Assembly for Wales therefore necessitates an examination of the political thought that had been demanding a specifically Welsh political representation.

## **Introduction Part II: Saunders Lewis in Historical Context**

This chapter seeks to locate Saunders Lewis' thought within the context of its time. It will chart, albeit briefly, Saunders Lewis' upbringing within the Welsh community in Liverpool, his experience of fighting in WWI and his nationalist 'awakening', his political activity in the interwar years (when the majority of his thought was compiled), and his lack of political activity in the post WWII years up until his 1962 *Tynged Yr Iaith (Fate of the Language)* speech. It concludes with a reflection on the achievements of Saunders Lewis which, in contemporary context, are deemed factors necessitating an investigation of his political thought.

### **2.1. Background and Upbringing**

Saunders Lewis' background is an interesting one.<sup>53</sup> He was not, in fact, born in the country of his avowed nationality. Saunders Lewis was born in Wallasey<sup>54</sup>, near Liverpool in 1893, the son of a Methodist preacher at a Welsh chapel, and spent his youth there. Liverpool was a large, ever-expanding industrial port, with many immigrant communities becoming established in this period. The Welsh community in Liverpool at this time was sizeable and because the majority of this population were from rural North Wales, it was almost completely Welsh-speaking. Saunders Lewis' immediate environment would therefore have been Welsh-language, as well as culturally and religiously 'Welsh' due to his father's position as a Non-conformist preacher. He notes that,

---

<sup>53</sup> Several different biographies and analysis of different facets of Saunders Lewis' career as dramatist, poet and politician exist. The best of which being Lloyd, D. Tecwyn. (1988) *John Saunders Lewis*. Denbigh. Gwasg Gee.

<sup>54</sup> Wallasey: A desirable residential area on the Wirral.

“There was a monoglot Welsh-speaking community in Liverpool in my time, just as in a village somewhere in Anglesey. Thus it was not in English England that I was born at all, but in a completely Welsh and Welsh-speaking community”.<sup>55</sup>

However, to suggest it was completely so is to ignore his schooling at the Liscard High School for Boys in Wallasey, and the inevitable interaction with individuals and communities beyond his own.<sup>56</sup> Indeed, the fact that his life appeared to be ‘drifting’ in another direction until his ‘conversion’ to a politicised Welsh-language based nationalism after World War I would appear indicative of this. Immediately prior to World War I (1911-14) Saunders Lewis studied English at Liverpool University. As Gareth Miles also notes, whilst the secular and religious leaders in Wales itself were *petits-bourgeois*, the leaders of the Welsh community in Liverpool were “merchants, financiers, and wealthy industrialists.”<sup>57</sup> From this, Miles derives the conclusion that Saunders Lewis was one of the “most brilliant sons of this bourgeoisie – the only strong, self-conscious bourgeoisie which the Welsh nation has ever had.”<sup>58</sup>

Liverpool had existed, and to a certain extent still does, as the major industrial and urban centre for North Wales. Due to its close proximity, many North Walian were drawn there in pursuit of employment and self-advancement. The Welsh community in Liverpool at this time revolved around the chapel as the heartbeat of its religious and cultural life, the chapel being the medium through which the Welsh language was employed and thus maintained and continued. Of course little remains of it today apart from various old chapel buildings and some ‘Welsh’ street names.<sup>59</sup> This Welsh-speaking community in Liverpool, which was thriving and substantial in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century, is the

---

<sup>55</sup> (Eds.) Jones, Alun R. & Thomas, Gwyn. (1973) *Presenting Saunders Lewis*. Cardiff. University of Wales Press. P.17.

<sup>56</sup> For a detailed chronology of the life of Saunders Lewis, and biographical details, please see Eds. Jones, Alun R. & Thomas, Gwyn. (1973) *Presenting Saunders Lewis*. Cardiff. University of Wales Press. P.xi.

<sup>57</sup> Miles, Gareth. *A Personal View*. In (Eds.) Jones, Alun R. & Thomas, Gwyn. (1973) *Presenting Saunders Lewis*. Cardiff. University of Wales Press. P.17.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid*. P.17.

<sup>59</sup> For a history of the Welsh community in Liverpool please see

Ben Rees, D. (1997) *The Welsh of Merseyside (Vol. 1)* Liverpool. Modern Welsh Publications.

Ben Rees, D. (2001) *The Welsh of Merseyside in the Twentieth Century. (Vol. 2)* Liverpool. Modern Welsh Publications.

only time in history where there has effectively been a Welsh-speaking bourgeoisie, the urban nature of Liverpool creating the circumstances for its vibrancy. It is indeed highly pertinent, that Saunders Lewis was born into and raised within the aforementioned community, in effect making him a Welsh bourgeois intellectual.

Saunders Lewis was born in 1893 and lived until 1985. His lifetime spans perhaps the greatest period of distinct and rapid change within Welsh society. Although already highly industrialised in the Southeast, this period saw an acceleration of the change in societal culture, the decline of the Welsh language, which Saunders Lewis was ultimately to lament. Within his political writings, he set out to safeguard its position, and outlines his vision of a Welsh-in-language, self-governing Wales. The decline of the Welsh language occurred dramatically within the lifetime of Saunders Lewis. Having been the majority language of the Welsh population at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, by the 1970s it had gone to being the language of a significant minority.<sup>60</sup> A variety of political and social factors and causes are behind the decline in the Welsh language, both contemporary and historical, which Saunders Lewis is constantly engaged with in his political writings.<sup>61</sup> Beyond the historical and political causes such as political incorporation into England and a lack of Welsh self-government, mitigating factors in the 20<sup>th</sup> century include the highly accelerated integrative processes of British nationhood occurring with World War I and

---

<sup>60</sup> The combined totals of monoglot and bilingual Welsh speakers in the census from 1891 to 1921, and their percentage of the total Welsh population were as follows:

1891 - 898,914 (54.4 %)

1901 - 929,824 (49.9%)

1911 - 977,366 (43.5%)

1921 - 929,183 (37.2%)

Censuses of England and Wales, 1891-1921. Cited in

Davies, Hywel D. (1983) *The Welsh Nationalist Party 1925-45: A Call to Nationhood*. Cardiff. University of Wales Press.

1931 - (36.8%)

1951 - (28.9%)

1961 - (26.0%)

1971 - (20.8%)

1981 - (18.9%)

Source: Welsh language statistics

<http://vwales.co.uk/About%20Wales/lang-stats.htm>

Date entered: 14/2/2006

<sup>61</sup> For an academic analysis of the legal, social and cultural status of the Welsh language throughout history, please see

Ed. Jenkins, Geraint H. (2001) *A Social History of the Welsh Language*. Cardiff. University of Wales Press.

World War II, combined with compulsory state education being through the medium of English. This can be viewed in conjunction with the decline of the chapel, and religious life in general, which had acted as a cultural 'binding agent' for the Welsh language in Wales. Much of industrial Wales came to be English-speaking in this period, with rural North and West Wales becoming the Welsh-speaking heartlands. This is an important factor when considering Saunders Lewis' thoughts on culture, the Welsh language, and the moral value of the rural 'organic' community.

## 2.2. Nationalist Awakening.

Despite his school holidays being punctuated by frequent trips to North Wales and particularly Anglesey, there was no identifiable nationalist 'awakening' or 'stirring' within Saunders Lewis until during World War I. As D.J. Williams notes, "never a pacifist at heart"<sup>62</sup>, it was Saunders Lewis' Francophilism that "may have prompted his early enlistment in the army."<sup>63</sup> It is during the Great War that Saunders Lewis underwent a conversion to Roman Catholicism and to Welsh Nationalism which "seem to have taken place simultaneously within him".<sup>64</sup> D.J. Williams adds that both represented the "ideal and practical aspect of his being, each as it were a compliment to the other."<sup>65</sup> Saunders Lewis' attraction to France and all things French had brought about his growing interest in Catholicism and a French literary wave of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century that included Maurice Barres. The influence of Barres' *Le Culte du Moi*<sup>66</sup> had a profound effect upon Saunders Lewis, and assured him of the value of cultural 'rootedness' in life, and thus it was through Barres that Saunders Lewis "discovered Wales".<sup>67</sup> Saunders Lewis' Catholicism and Francophilism was undoubtedly to inform his view of Welsh culture being part of a broader European Christian heritage, seeking to move Wales away from its parochial

---

<sup>62</sup> Williams, D.J. (1973) *Saunders Lewis - A Man of Destiny*. In (Eds.) Jones, Alun R. & Thomas, Gwyn. *Presenting Saunders Lewis*. Cardiff. University of Wales Press. P.3.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid. P.3.

<sup>64</sup> Williams, D.J. *Saunders Lewis - A Man of Destiny*. In (Eds.) Jones, Alun R. & Thomas, Gwyn. (1973) *Presenting Saunders Lewis*. Cardiff. University of Wales Press. P.4.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid P.4.

<sup>66</sup> Barres, Maurice. (1980) *Le Cult du Moi*. Nantes. Le Temps Singulier. *Le Cultue du Moi* is a trilogy that consists of *Sous l'œil des barbares* (1888), *Un Homme libre* (1889) and *Le Jardin de Bérénice* (1891).

<sup>67</sup> Williams, D.J. *Saunders Lewis - A Man of Destiny*. In (Eds.) Jones, Alun R. & Thomas, Gwyn. (1973) *Presenting Saunders Lewis*. Cardiff. University of Wales Press. P.4.



relationship with England and Britain, and seeking to engage it both culturally and politically with the wider world. Beyond French literature, Saunders Lewis began his learning of Welsh literature, and thus his nationalist 'conversion' was furthered through reading the writings of the 19<sup>th</sup> century Welsh nationalist Emrys ap Iwan.<sup>68</sup> The influence of these two figures was to inspire him to throw himself headlong into the study of the Welsh language and its literature. Beyond this, he also sought to engage with the world politically as a consequence of the perceived need to ensure the continued existence of this (Welsh) culture. This newfound conviction and purpose were to alter the course of his life and to instil a framework of thought that he maintained henceforth.

*Le Culte du Moi*, a trilogy of novels by Maurice Barres, added weight to his already nascent understanding of nationhood and patriotism from the writers of the Irish literary revival of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, "I believe, that it was Barres, after Yeats and the Irishmen, who made me a Welsh nationalist by conviction."<sup>69</sup> Indeed upon Barres' death in 1924, Saunders Lewis felt compelled to write in a memorial tribute,

"I cannot hear of this man's death without openly acknowledging my debt to him. Discovering his work had the effect of changing the course of my life... It was through him that I discovered Wales, and the hedonism of my youth was transformed into something else."<sup>70</sup>

Indeed, D.J. Williams recalls Saunders Lewis noting the influence of Barres' literature upon himself when he stated that,

"It is by throwing himself into the life of his country and his people that a man can come to know himself and cultivate his soul fully and richly and to live as an artist to the limits of

---

<sup>68</sup> The actual book Saunders Lewis read on Emrys ap Iwan was Jones, T. Gwynn. (1912) *Emrys ap Iwan: dysgawdr, llenor, cenedlgarwr* (*Emrys ap Iwan: teacher, author, patriot.*) Caernarfon. Cwmni'r Cyhoeddwyr Cymreig.

<sup>69</sup> The interview was originally televised by the BBC, and the text later printed in *Taliesin, Vol.2* The interviewer is Aneurin Talfan Davies.

<sup>70</sup> Jones, Dafydd Glyn. *His Politics* in Eds Jones, Alun R. & Thomas, Gwyn. (1973) *Presenting Saunders Lewis*. Cardiff. University of Wales Press. P.24.

his consciousness.... He who cuts himself off from his own past, his own land, is starving his soul and frustrating his whole being.”<sup>71</sup>

Barres went on to become actively involved in a virulent form of political nationalism with Charles Maurras and the *Action Française*, and came to view Catholicism as a bar to nationalism. Saunders Lewis, however, was to reject the overt political conclusions of Barres. He maintained a need for ‘rootedness’, as explored by Barres, yet was far removed in the political sense, by rejecting extreme nationalism and statism as outlined in *Egwyddorion Cenedlaetholdeb (Principles of Nationalism, 1926.)*<sup>72</sup> He embraced an interdependent *inter*-nationalism through a Catholic ‘universal’ perspective. The literary influence of Barres upon Saunders Lewis has in part contributed to misplaced accusations of proto-fascism against him. It is unfortunate that Saunders Lewis has been tainted through name association, and confused with the active politics of figures such as Barres, even though he shares some philosophical foundation with them with regard to a lament for the ‘organic’ rural society and the need for culture and tradition in the face of the industrial ‘modern’ world.

Emrys ap Iwan, a 19<sup>th</sup> century nonconformist preacher and essayist, maintained a ‘European’ outlook, and was convinced of the role of the Welsh language being both the *sine qua non* and *raison d’être* of the Welsh nation. His writings appear to have ignited a spark in Saunders Lewis’ thinking, and both impassioned and impelled him towards a politicised Welsh cultural nationalism. Saunders Lewis later referred to Thomas Gwynn Jones’ book on Emrys ap Iwan<sup>73</sup> as being

“One of those infrequent books which change history and influence a whole generation, inspiring it and giving direction to its thought.”<sup>74</sup>

---

<sup>71</sup> Williams, D.J. *Saunders Lewis - A Man of Destiny* in (Eds.) Jones, Alun R. & Thomas, Gwyn. (1973) *Presenting Saunders Lewis*. Cardiff. University of Wales Press. P.4.

<sup>72</sup> Saunders Lewis, John. (1926) *Egwyddorion Cenedlaetholdeb (Principles of Nationalism)*. Machynlleth. Evan Jones Printers.

<sup>73</sup> Jones, T. Gwynn. (1912) *Emrys ap Iwan: dysgawdr, llenor, cenedlgarwr (Emrys ap Iwan: teacher, author, patriot.)* Caernarfon. Cwmni’r Cyhoeddwy Cymreig.

<sup>74</sup> Jones, Dafydd Glyn. *His Politics* in Eds Jones, Alun R. & Thomas, Gwyn. (1973) *Presenting Saunders Lewis*. Cardiff. University of Wales Press. P.23.

The influence of events in Ireland from 1916 onwards, and 1922 in particular, no doubt affected and influenced Saunders Lewis as they did many other Welsh nationalists. However, it would be a mistake to suggest Saunders Lewis merely sought to imitate or copy thought prevalent in the Irish Gaelic Revival of the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century, in turn followed by the Easter Rising of 1916, and the subsequent creation of the Irish Free State in 1922. Although it did provide an inspiration for the possibilities for political change, it also provided an example of paths not to follow. By the 1920s the creation of the Irish Free State meant that the events of the previous 20 years or so could be viewed in retrospect.<sup>75</sup> Undoubtedly the Irish example gave the effect of causing Welsh nationalists to examine their own ideas and thoughts with regard to the ultimate goal of their nationalism. Saunders Lewis was convinced that Welsh nationalism should seek as its goal not political 'independence', but cultural 'freedom' as outlined in *Principles of Nationalism*. He did not wish to follow the example of Ireland which turned culturally introspective after gaining statehood. The Irish example also counted in convincing several Welsh nationalists, including Saunders Lewis, that violence and armed insurrection was to be avoided and that nationalist aims were to be secured through the ballot box, despite some disagreements over whether a Welsh party should take its seats in Westminster.<sup>76</sup> Also, in contrast to Irish political nationalism, Saunders Lewis was adamant that Welsh nationalism should be concerned with cultural revitalisation, and that the continuation of the Welsh language was its ultimate aim, and that it was essential to any conception of Welsh national identity.

### **2.3. The Inter-War Years.**

During WWI, Saunders Lewis served in the Army and rose to the rank of Major. Immediately after WWI, he went on to complete his English degree and graduated with first class honours. After this he engaged his newfound passion for Welsh history and

---

<sup>75</sup> The influence of Irish nationalism upon the early Welsh nationalist movement is discussed in Davies, D. (1983) *The Welsh Nationalist Party 1925-1945: A Call to Nationhood*. Cardiff. University of Wales Press. P.126.

<sup>76</sup> For a deeper discussion of the early Welsh Nationalist Party's adoption of a Sinn Fein style policy of not taking up its seats at Westminster see McAllister, Laura. (2001) *Plaid Cymru. The Emergence of a Political Party*. Bridgend. Seren. P.26.

literature by doing postgraduate research, a paper which was entitled *A School of Welsh Augustans*, a critical Welsh literature study. In 1922 he became a Lecturer in Welsh at the University College of Wales, Swansea until his dismissal in 1936. In 1926 he became President of the newly formed Welsh Nationalist Party, which later became known as Plaid Cymru.<sup>77</sup> Other dates of note during the interwar period regarding Saunders Lewis include; his marriage in 1924 to Margaret Gilcriest, who was the daughter of Irish Wesleyans who had emigrated to Liverpool (she too became a Roman Catholic), his reception into the Roman Catholic Church in 1932, and his imprisonment in 1936 (and dismissal from University Lectureship) for his part in an arson attack on the R.A.F. bombing school at Penyberth on the Llŷn Peninsula. The 1920s and 1930s were a period of intense activity for Saunders Lewis. His vast array of interests appear to have him engaging in a variety of activities; criticism, literature, and political matters including authorship of numerous articles in various Welsh language journals such as *Y Faner (The Banner)* and *Y Traethodydd (The Essayist)*, as well as the no small matter of founding a political party. The work involved with this must surely have been arduous and although Saunders Lewis was aided by a small group of capable, enthusiastic and dedicated early Plaid Cymru supporters, the intellectual direction of the party up until WWII was primarily, if not solely, the responsibility of Saunders Lewis.

Broadly speaking, Saunders Lewis' Welsh nationalism can be divided into three distinct phases. Although there exists no major shift or seismic conversion from his approach to political thinking, subtle changes nonetheless occurred. The 1920s can be determined to be a part of the 'liberation' nationalism characteristic of the immediate aftermath of WWI. Whilst Saunders Lewis is keen to avoid strong definitions of 'materialist' statehood in *Principles of Nationalism*, his centrepiece of thought from this decade, there is no doubting that the focus of such thought is mirrored by the Wilsonian edict that 'peace is only viable when every nation is free'.<sup>78</sup> The irony of having fought for the defence of 'small nations' in WWI, and the attainment of 'freedom' by several former empire-suppressed nations was

---

<sup>77</sup> For a detailed history of the formation and early history of the Welsh Nationalist Party please see Davies, D. (1983) *The Welsh Nationalist Party 1925-1945: A Call to Nationhood*. Cardiff. University of Wales Press.

<sup>78</sup> Wilson, Woodrow. (1918) *Fourteen Points*. In Neiburg, Michael. (2006) *World War I Reader*. New York. New York University Press. P.291-292.

not lost on several nationalists, including Saunders Lewis.<sup>79</sup> The 1920s had yet to see Saunders Lewis develop the specific ideological content of his political thought. This occurred and was developed in the 1930s when Saunders Lewis espoused a form of ideology that resembled closely Distributism or Guild Socialism and was based on a retrospective of Welsh history and was termed *Perchentyaeth (Houseownership-ism)*<sup>80</sup> by Saunders Lewis, yet was enmeshed with his aim of the continuation of the Welsh language. The third phase can be seen to be his 're-entry' into public life in 1962 with *Fate of the Language*<sup>81</sup>, still focused on the revitalisation of the Welsh language in Wales, yet now acknowledging a Welsh-language-only Wales would be unachievable and arguing instead for language rights for the individual.

Retrospectively, the 1920s can be viewed as a period of optimism for the new, politicised Welsh nationalist movement, with renewed life in the form of its own specific political party, Plaid Cymru, as well as from events occurring within mainland Europe, such as the gaining of political independence by small nations from former empires. The League of Nations also inspired hope and enthusiasm as a means of maintaining just relations between nations. The 1930s, in contrast, witnessed disarray and an end to the early optimism founded in that institution. Whilst the theoretical and intellectual direction for the Welsh nationalist movement in this period fell upon Saunders Lewis, there was growing discontent within the Welsh nationalist movement itself from socialists and Marxists disenchanted with Saunders Lewis' brand of nationalism<sup>82</sup>. As McAllister notes, the diversity of its members "was the direct legacy of there having been no single political

---

<sup>79</sup> Tomas Masaryk was a personal hero of Saunders Lewis, indeed he wrote a panegyric to him in *Canlyn Arthur (In the Footsteps of Arthur)* entitled *Thomas Masaryk*. Saunders Lewis, John. *Thomas Masaryk*. In (1938)*Canlyn Arthur (In the Footsteps of Arthur)*. Aberystwyth. Gwasg Aberystwyth. P.121.

<sup>80</sup> The translation of *Perchentyaeth* as *Houseownership-ism* is Laura McAllister's. Please see McAllister, Laura. (2001) *Plaid Cymru. The Emergence of a Political Party*. Bridgend. Seren. P.26 & P.49.

<sup>81</sup> Saunders Lewis, John. (1962) *Tynged yr Iaith (Fate of the Language)*. In (Translation by Williams, G. Aled) Eds. Jones, Alun R. & Thomas, Gwyn. (1973) *Presenting Saunders Lewis*. Cardiff. University of Wales Press. P.127.

<sup>82</sup> There is greater discussion on the debate within Welsh nationalism in the 1920s regarding socialist elements in Davies, D. (1983) *The Welsh Nationalist Party 1925-45: A Call to Nationhood*. Cardiff. University of Wales Press. P.86, P. 90 & P.94.

voice for Welsh nationalism.”<sup>83</sup> In the 1930s in general, the new Welsh Nationalist Party was failing to gather momentum and garner widespread support.

Having been heavily engaged in actively trying to get a new political party up and running, it seems incredible that Saunders Lewis also had time to provide the philosophical basis of the new party, as well as seeking to redefine Welsh nationalism. He embarked upon what he termed a spiritual quest for a cultural awakening and reinvigoration in Wales, at the same time as continuing his career as a university lecturer. Whilst the period of the 1920s had been a time of optimism for the reasons already mentioned, the 1930s were less so, and culminated in perhaps the defining moment in Saunders Lewis’ public mainstream political career, his part in the 1936 arson attack on the R.A.F. bombing school at Penyberth. This act, and his subsequent defence of his actions, (as well as those of his two fellow accused Plaid Cymru members, D.J. Williams and Lewis Valentine), which came to be known as the *Caernarfon Court Speech*, acquired him both legendary status amongst nationalists, and notoriety elsewhere. The incident, and the actions of Saunders Lewis, resulted in both celebration and vilification, commendation and condemnation in Wales, with little room for indifference. Saunders Lewis, at least in terms of civil society and the public imagination, became a controversial figure. Arguably this had previously only been in his political writings, but here now was a physical act.

The subsequent jailing of Saunders Lewis at Wormwood Scrubs following a retrial at the Old Bailey after the Caernarfon jury failed to reach a verdict brought an end to Saunders Lewis’ active public political career. In contrast, the arson attack could be viewed as a measure necessarily undertaken to draw attention to the nationalist cause after a dip in fortune during the 1930s. The act also brought public shame upon Saunders Lewis as he was sacked from his post at the University College of Swansea, as a result. However, his act undoubtedly galvanised sentiment within the nationalist community and this had greatest potential within the Welsh-speaking North West of Wales.<sup>84</sup>

---

<sup>83</sup> McAllister, Laura. (2001) *Plaid Cymru. The Emergence of a Political Party*. Bridgend. Seren. P.23.

<sup>84</sup> For a further analysis of the Penyberth arson attack and its wider significance and influence, please see Jenkins, Dafydd. (1998) *A Nation on Trial*. (Translated from the Welsh *Tan yn Llyn* by Ann Corkett) Caernarfon. Welsh Academic Press.

Saunders Lewis suffered accusations of Fascism. This is simply untrue, yet finds its basis in Saunders Lewis' perhaps naive refusal to condemn the Nazis and European fascism, and instead likened it to English 'British' imperialism, in his *Cwrs Y Byd* column in *Y Faner*.<sup>85</sup> It should be noted, of course, that the British press shied away from condemning Hitler right up until 1939. In retrospect, Saunders Lewis' naivety was borne out of his attempt to create a Welsh 'worldview', independent of the British press. However, Saunders Lewis was critical of Fascism and all forms of totalitarianism, as outlined in his vigorous reply to accusations of Fascism, Papism and anti-democratic ideals in *The Party for Wales* (1942).<sup>86</sup> This is also evident in his anti-state outlook in politics and rejection of the deification of state power (state-god).<sup>87</sup> To conclude that "The Welsh Nationalist Party became more right wing as the 1930s progressed, refusing to resist Hitler and Mussolini, tolerating anti-Semitism, and supporting Franco and Salazar"<sup>88</sup> is a mistake. Although elements of the leadership did flirt with fascism, namely Ambrose Bebb, and Saunders Lewis was associated with it due to his supposed 'papism', the ideologies of both fascism and totalitarianism were anathema to Saunders Lewis, and the wider party. In the main, the party consisted of assorted liberals and socialists.<sup>89</sup>

The early post-war years saw a marked shift in mainstream Welsh nationalism away from the political thought of Saunders Lewis. At this time, Plaid Cymru began a liberal regeneration under the new leadership of the young Gwynfor Evans. Thereafter, in a move designed to distance the party, and its image, from the controversy surrounding himself (and his personal ideology), Saunders Lewis did not take up any formal role within Plaid

---

<sup>85</sup> Saunders Lewis, John. (Ed. Gwyn, Robin.) (2000) *Cwrs Y Byd – Detholiad o Ysgrifau Newyddiadurool Saunders Lewis 1939-1950. (The Way of the World – A Collection of News Articles by Saunders Lewis 1939-1950)*. Cardiff. University of Wales Press.

Saunders Lewis wrote a column entitled *Cwrs Y Byd (The Way of the World)* for *Y Faner (The Flag)* journal between 1939 and 1950. Saunders Lewis was adamant no good would come of either side's victory in World War II, and insisted that Wales should remain neutral in the conflict. His column was often censored.

<sup>86</sup> Saunders Lewis, John. (1942) *The Party for Wales*. Caernarfon. Nationalist Offices. P.3-8

<sup>87</sup> Saunders Lewis, John. (1926) *Egwyddorion Cenedlaetholdeb (Principles of Nationalism)*. Machynlleth. Evan Jones Printers.

<sup>88</sup> Denney, D. Borland, J.A. & Fevre, R. *The Social Construction of Nationalism: Racism and Conflict in Wales*. Contemporary Wales. Vol.4. (1994) P.152.

<sup>89</sup> It serves to remind the reader of the prevailing sentiment in the mainstream British Press in the 1930s in not condemning Hitler and appeasement more generally.

Cymru. From his release from prison in 1937 until 1952 he lived at a farm in Llanfarian near Aberystwyth. He did journalistic work for his *Cwrs Y Byd (World Affairs)* column in *Banner ac Amserau Cymru (The Banner and Times of Wales)*. (It is unlikely that he was a farm labourer, and was in fact, the guest of a friend). In 1952 he was appointed Lecturer in the Welsh Department at the University College of Cardiff until his retirement in 1957. After his retirement he continued to live in Penarth near Cardiff.

#### 2.4. Post WWII Years.

It has now become apparent through personal correspondence that Saunders Lewis, perhaps unsurprisingly, was critical of the new theoretical approach of Plaid Cymru, and his speech *Tynged Yr Iaith (Fate of the Language)* is seen as a thinly-veiled attack on the progress, and subsequent change in direction, of Plaid Cymru on the question of the Welsh language.<sup>90</sup> Having effectively retreated from active political engagement since the 1930s, *Tynged Yr Iaith (Fate of the Language)* 1962, was Saunders Lewis' last major political contribution to have an impact on public life in Wales. This was a period of tumultuous protest, and political unrest, in Wales. The radio-speech (subsequently an essay) highlighted the importance of the Welsh language, and sought to argue for Welsh language rights. Saunders Lewis also conceived of it as a way to criticise mainstream nationalism, embodied politically in Plaid Cymru, as well as those who sought to disassociate Welsh political nationalism from cultural nationalism and the Welsh language, in an attempt to 'grow' as a political party. He sought to re-focus Welsh nationalism, with the Welsh language as its *raison d'être*, with the political extension of this being secondary to it, rather than preceding it. The period leading up to the early 1960s was heavily affected by the flooding of the Tryweryn valley in North Wales, in order to construct a reservoir to supply water to the conurbation of Liverpool.<sup>91</sup> Passions ran high as nationalists debated the correct response to a British government seen as insensitive to both Welsh culture and 'nationhood'.

---

<sup>90</sup> Ed. Ifans, Dafydd. (1992) *Annwyl Kate, Annwyl Saunders. Gohebiaeth 1923-1983 (Dear Kate, Dear Saunders. Correspondence 1923-1983)*. Aberystwyth. National Library of Wales Press. P.193. (Letter No. 179 8/5/1963 Saunders Lewis to Kate Roberts).

<sup>91</sup> For an analysis of the social and political implications of the flooding of the Tryweryn valley and its significance in Wales see  
Davies, John. (1990) *A History of Wales*. London. Allen Lane Penguin Press. P.664.



The greatest legacy of the *Fate of the Language* address is that it inspired the founding of a new political group within the Welsh nationalist movement, completely free of Saunders Lewis' involvement, Cymdeithas Yr Iaith Gymraeg (Welsh Language Society) in 1962. The aim of this new movement, in accordance with the vision laid out in *Tynged Yr Iaith (Fate of the Language)*, was that of being a political pressure group, free of competing in electoral politics, and campaigning solely on behalf of the rights of Welsh language speakers. Cymdeithas Yr Iaith developed independently of Plaid Cymru, although this was perhaps not the exact intention of Saunders Lewis. Despite it often acting in a synergistic fashion, it billed itself as part of the global civil rights movement, and sought the recognition of the rights of Welsh speakers to communicate with government through their preferred medium. This represented, in part, a slight but distinguishable change of approach to the Welsh language, Welsh-language speakers and Welsh nationalism apparent within *Fate of The Language (Tynged Yr Iaith)*.

Saunders Lewis died in 1985, having lived to witness rapid and wide ranging change throughout Europe, yet little change with regard to the status of both Wales and the Welsh language. However, his contribution can hardly be overlooked. His legacy is such within the nationalist movement of Wales, that although policy has naturally diverged from his conservative ideology, it arguably laid the foundation from which a political party could grow. Also, if the view is taken that the political devolution (very late) 20<sup>th</sup> century and early 21<sup>st</sup> century was occasioned by the presence of a specifically Welsh party with Welsh self-government as its *raison d'être*, Plaid Cymru, then Saunders Lewis' thought is instrumental in this process. Any comprehensive study of Welsh political thought or political 'nationhood' would be poorer for not having considered the thought of Saunders Lewis.

Whilst to describe Saunders Lewis as a radical conservative (itself somewhat paradoxical) is convenient, it is not appropriate at every juncture in his thought. Although a traditionalist and a neo-medievalist, it does not always seem apt to apply the label 'conservative' to much of his ideological content, specifically *Perchentyaeth*, as it is difficult labelling

Distributism and Guild Socialism on any left-right political spectrum. He was certainly a radical in the sense that he sought to shake up accepted thinking on political matters, from a moral standpoint. He also developed a more conservative streak in his thinking throughout the 1930s with his advocacy of the organic community, and its preservation through economic autarky. The Catholic Neo-Thomist foundation to his philosophical approach, also underlines him as a traditionalist and conservative in some regards. His rebuttal of the deification of state power effectively refutes any accusations of Nazism / Fascism often levelled at him. As Dafydd Glyn Jones points out, although often taking a conservative approach, Saunders Lewis is careful not to advocate authoritarian means, and whilst critical of liberalism, is always a democrat. Dafydd Glyn Jones also notes that despite not always doing so explicitly, Saunders Lewis is forever compromising with “Freedom and Reason.”<sup>92</sup>

Saunders Lewis’ self-appraisal is far from congratulatory. He fails to recognise his own contribution to both Welsh political thought and history,

“I had a desire, not a small desire, but a very great one, to change the history of Wales. To change the whole course of Wales, and to make Welsh Wales something living, strong, powerful, belonging to the modern world. And I failed absolutely.”<sup>93</sup>

This self-synopsis was made in 1961, the year before *Fate of the Language* was delivered. *Fate of the Language* was definitively his greatest contribution to the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and arguably his ‘legacy’ to Welsh language politics. It is without doubt that he would probably have reached the same conclusion upon his death in 1985. The rejection of the 1979 referendum on Devolution and the bleak prospects for consensus on this matter

---

<sup>92</sup> Jones, Dafydd Glyn. *His Politics* in Eds Jones, Alun R. & Thomas, Gwyn. (1973) *Presenting Saunders Lewis*. Cardiff. University of Wales Press. P.61.

Jones is keen to point out the presence of the tradition of Welsh radicalism in Saunders Lewis, “Implicitly he accepted radicalism. It may be the one great unacknowledged debt of his career, but we can be sure that without it, his political programme would have been quite different from what it is... The colleagues with whom he freely chose to work, in the establishment of the Nationalist Party, were nearly all the children of radical dissent... Saunders Lewis, true enough, started out in the company of Julien Benda’s *clercs trahisants*. But, like Maritain, he betrayed them, and compromised with Freedom and Reason.”

<sup>93</sup> 1961 BBC interview. Text later printed in *Taliesin Vol.2*  
*Taliesin (Vol.2)*. 1961. Camarthen. Academia Cambrens.

must have consolidated this conclusion. Census figures also suggested that the Welsh language was to decline further in numerical terms, compounding the conclusion. However, as put forward earlier in this chapter, it has not been until the initiation of Devolution right at the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, and the increased promotion and acceptance of the Welsh language as a public good, that the political writings of Saunders Lewis take on greater significance.

### **Intellectual peers and influences.**

This chapter will investigate the social and political ideas which are deemed to be an influence upon Saunders Lewis' own ideas. Indeed, there are undoubtedly further thinkers and ideas than those examined here, but the following are the most prominent and central to his thought. Within this chapter the influential ideas of Eliot, F.R. Leavis, T.E. Hulme, Distributism / Guild Socialism, Jacques Maritain and Emrys ap Iwan are considered. Whilst the ideas of Eliot and Distributism / Guild Socialism in relation to Saunders Lewis have been noted elsewhere, it is here that they are examined in greater depth, as are the defining divergences. The wider influence of the 'anti-modern' Modernist school upon Saunders Lewis is already noted. Examination of Saunders Lewis' thought in relation to F.R. Leavis and T.E. Hulme, as well as Jacques Maritain and neo-Thomist Catholic thought, has not previously been considered in depth. It is therefore the intention of this chapter to do so. How these ideas interact with his own, how they relate to the Welsh experience, how they differ, and what solutions they present to the perceived problem will be examined.

Saunders Lewis was greatly influenced in his social thought by a wider intellectual movement of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century and interwar period. This movement included, amongst others, T.S. Eliot, T.E. Hulme, F.R. Leavis, G.K. Chesterton, Hillaire Belloc, and at a wider European level, Jacques Maritain. The ideas prevalent in this intellectual grouping formed the basis of Saunders Lewis' social thought and 'ideology' which was to interact and interface with his Welsh nationalism. Often it is difficult to demarcate the precise separation of his ideology from his Welsh nationalism, so enmeshed are they. However, it is thought that with an exploration of Saunders Lewis' contemporaries and influences, an insight will be gained into his political thought. In his writings Saunders Lewis often fails to explain his thought at length and in sufficient depth and this leads to a lack of precision regarding his intended meaning. (Indeed accusations of proto-Fascism are based on misunderstandings of, and assumptions made regarding, Saunders Lewis' talk of a 'Christian State', and of his 'Christian

nationalism' in political writings such as *The Party for Wales*, 1942).<sup>94</sup> It is therefore posited that an investigation of his acknowledged contemporary influences will give an insight into the precise meaning and content of his social thought and vision. Having never compiled a systematic treatise of his own, often what is left are pointers to other theorists and ideas. A reading of works of social thought by thinkers such as T.S. Eliot, T.E. Hulme, F.R. Leavis, G.K. Chesterton, Hilaire Belloc, as well as neo-Thomist (in particular the French school of the period) and neo-medievalist thought, all help illuminate Saunders Lewis' approach to social thought. Beyond this, it aids in understanding his wider aesthetics and criticism. As Dafydd Glyn Jones notes of this intellectual grouping,

"In the secular sphere at least, they have plenty of themes in common. In criticism and aesthetic theory we have the attack on romanticism, and the desire for rule and discipline, coupled with the acceptance of tradition. And from aesthetics to ethics it is but a small step."<sup>95</sup>

T.S. Eliot and T.E. Hulme specifically help explain Saunders Lewis' advocacy of a 'Christian society' and the 'religious point of view', and tradition. With his title *Culture and Environment*, F.R. Leavis also aids in the comprehension of Saunders Lewis' traditionalism, advocacy of the organic community, and his social vision. G. K. Chesterton and Hilaire Belloc help specifically in understanding Saunders Lewis' advocacy of a form of Guild Socialism / Distributism in his social vision for Wales. A reading of the thought of Jacques Maritain highlights the moral principles to which Saunders Lewis adheres, as well as helping to explain the content of Catholic social thought and neo-Thomism prevalent in his social and political thought. Of course, Saunders Lewis is not in complete agreement on all topics with these thinkers. However, an examination of their ideas will help define his social and political thought.

---

<sup>94</sup> Saunders Lewis, John. (1942) *The Party for Wales*. Caernarfon. Nationalist Offices.

Saunders Lewis clarifies his use of the terms 'Christian state' and 'Christian nationalism' in *Canlyn Arthur*. In this study see the chapter entitled 'A Social Vision for Wales.'

<sup>95</sup> Jones, Dafydd Glyn. *His Politics*. In Eds. Jones, Alun R. & Thomas, Gwyn. (1973) *Presenting Saunders Lewis*. Cardiff. University of Wales Press. P.46.

### 3.1. T.S. Eliot (1888-1965)

Two of Eliot's titles aid in the comprehension of Saunders Lewis' own thought by essentially 'filling in the blanks' left by Saunders Lewis' failure to explain in greater depth his usage of phrases such as 'Christian society', and his condemnation of 'paganism'.<sup>96</sup> Specifically, these titles are, *The Idea of a Christian Society* (1940) and *Notes Towards the Definition of Culture* (1948). Although these titles were published after Saunders Lewis had crystallised the main body of his own social and political thought, T.S. Eliot had formulated much of this social theory in the 1920s and 1930s, publishing articles in *The Criterion* and *The New Age*.<sup>97</sup> Eliot's titles set forth in greater depth the ideas promulgated in such articles.

As his 1948 title would suggest, *Notes Towards the Definition of Culture* outlines his thought on the matter of culture, "My aim is to help to define a word, the word *culture*."<sup>98</sup>

For Eliot, as for Saunders Lewis, 'culture' is synonymous with 'civilisation', "Its part is of course doubled by the word civilisation"<sup>99</sup> For both thinkers, 'culture' is defined as an amalgamation of language, tradition and religion. In this respect, the continuation of culture affects the thought of the two. Saunders Lewis' thought is constantly aware of the need for the continuation of Welsh culture, whilst Eliot urges the need for the conditions to be maintained for the 'transmission' of English culture. In the same way as Christianity is essential to Saunders Lewis' conception of Welsh culture<sup>100</sup>, Eliot believes that there is an "essential relation of culture to religion"<sup>101</sup> as he asserts that

---

<sup>96</sup> Saunders Lewis employs the term 'paganism' in *Principles of Nationalism* (P.3), 'Christian society' in *Canlyn Arthur* (P.15, P.43), and 'Christian state' in *Canlyn Arthur* (P.55).

Saunders Lewis, John. (1926) *Principles of Nationalism*. Machynlleth. Evan Jones Printer.

Saunders Lewis, John. (1938) *Canlyn Arthur*. Aberystwyth. Gwasg Aberystwyth.

<sup>97</sup> *The Criterion*, published between 1922 and 1939, a literary criticism journal, edited in its entirety by T.S. Eliot. *The New Age* first appeared in 1894 as a journal of Christian liberalism and socialism. A.R. Orage edited it between 1907 and 1922. Initially supportive of Fabian society politics, the editorial line strongly supported Guild Socialism under Orage.

Saunders Lewis was undoubtedly a reader of such publications and was engaged on an intellectual level with much of the social, critical and political thought as presented in the pages of these journals.

<sup>98</sup> Eliot, T.S. (1948) *Notes Towards the Definition of Culture*. London. Faber and Faber. P.13.

<sup>99</sup> *Ibid*. P.13.

<sup>100</sup> Saunders Lewis conceives of the Welsh nation as a 'Christian culture', as defined in *Principles of Nationalism* (1926). See relevant chapter in this study.

<sup>101</sup> Eliot, T.S. (1948) *Notes Towards the Definition of Culture*. London. Faber and Faber. P.15.

“no culture has appeared without a religion”.<sup>102</sup> Also, consistent with Saunders Lewis’ conception of how the individual is a part of a wider ‘national’ cultural grouping, Eliot is convinced that the culture of the individual is dependent upon the culture of a group or class, and that the culture of the group or class is “dependent upon the culture of the society to which that group or class belongs”.<sup>103</sup>

Eliot distinguishes “three important conditions for culture.”<sup>104</sup> In the first of these, much as Saunders Lewis places normative value on the organic community, Eliot views the “organic structure”<sup>105</sup> as being necessary to “foster the hereditary transmission of culture within a culture”.<sup>106</sup> Eliot asserts that this ‘hereditary transmission’ “requires the persistence of social class”<sup>107</sup>, something that Saunders Lewis indeed concurs with. Saunders Lewis also asserts that a nation should have an elite, not in order that it may enjoy special privileges, but in order to ‘shoulder the tasks’ that the ordinary man ‘cannot be expected to cope with’, in the political and cultural sense, to ‘lead a country by suffering for it and thinking for it’. As Dafydd Glyn Jones notes, “all this has evoked a good deal of virtuous disgust from the Left.”<sup>108</sup>

The second of these important conditions for culture which Eliot outlines is that a “culture should be analysable, geographically, into local cultures”.<sup>109</sup> Eliot notes that this throws up the problem of ‘regionalism’. The idea that smaller local ‘organic’ communities comprise a larger national community in a lattice fashion is mirrored in Saunders Lewis’ own conception of the nation as a ‘community of communities’.<sup>110</sup> Saunders Lewis thinks that the local community, whilst possessed of its own character and distinctiveness, is joined to the larger nation by its language. In the case of Wales,

---

<sup>102</sup> Ibid. P.15.

<sup>103</sup> Ibid. P.21.

<sup>104</sup> Ibid. P.15.

<sup>105</sup> Ibid. P.15.

<sup>106</sup> Ibid. P.15.

<sup>107</sup> Ibid. P.15.

<sup>108</sup> Jones, Dafydd Glyn. *His Politics*. In Eds. Jones, Alun R. & Thomas, Gwyn. (1973) *Presenting Saunders Lewis*. Cardiff. University of Wales Press. P.61.

<sup>109</sup> Eliot, T.S. (1948) *Notes Towards a Definition of Culture*. London. Faber and Faber. P.15.

<sup>110</sup> Saunders Lewis conceives of the nation as a ‘community of communities’ in *Labour Unions in Canlyn Arthur*.

Saunders Lewis, John. (1938) *Labour Unions*. In *Canlyn Arthur*. Aberystwyth. Gwasg Aberystwyth. P.52.

the Welsh language, and this is reflected politically by his advocacy of decentralism, whereby there is no forced uniformity, with each locality maintaining its 'character', identity, and tradition. For Eliot this throws up the problem of 'regionalism', in that some regions are so distinct that it may, as a consequence, be impossible to maintain unity. It becomes clear that Eliot is thinking specifically of the British Isles in this respect, i.e. the distinct cultures of Scotland, Ireland and Wales, in relation to English culture. Here is the exact point of divergence in Saunders Lewis' and Eliot's thought on 'national' culture. Eliot regards the 'Celtic fringe' as satellite cultures, local cultures that add up to and compose a British national culture:

"It is that the satellite (culture) exercises a considerable influence upon the stronger culture; and so plays a larger part in the world at large than it could in isolation. For Ireland, Scotland and Wales to cut themselves off completely from England would be to cut themselves off from Europe and the world..."<sup>111</sup>

This, of course, is completely at odds with Saunders Lewis' conception of Welsh culture. Saunders Lewis definitely does not see Welsh culture as a 'satellite culture' to 'English culture'. Far from it, he sees it as the distinct culture of a European nation. Also, contrary to Eliot's conception that Welsh culture would be 'in isolation', Saunders Lewis sees self-government as the means by which Wales could, and would, effectively engage with Europe and the world.<sup>112</sup>

However, Eliot is clearly at odds with the view of those such as Matthew Arnold in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, and is opposed to there being a uniformity of culture imposed 'from above', by the state, culturally homogenising the population within a state's boundaries (and consequently eradicating the Welsh language).<sup>113</sup> Eliot views that Welsh culture

---

<sup>111</sup> Eliot, T.S. (1948) *Notes Towards a Definition of Culture*. London. Faber and Faber. P.55.

<sup>112</sup> Saunders Lewis argues this point in the latter section of *Principles of Nationalism*, and more specifically in *England, Europe and Wales* in *Canlyn Arthur*.

Saunders Lewis, John. (1926) *Principles of Nationalism*. Machynlleth. Evan Jones Printers. P.8.

Saunders Lewis, John. (1938) *England, Europe and Wales*. In *Canlyn Arthur*. Aberystwyth Gwasg Aberystwyth. P.25.

<sup>113</sup> Mathew Arnold, an inspector of schools who had recommended that the Welsh language be eradicated in Wales, as it represented a barrier to social and moral progress, was the target of Saunders



should continue and should flourish as the survival of the 'satellite cultures' is of beneficial value to the 'stronger culture', of England, as it is "of great advantage for English culture to be constantly influenced from Scotland, Ireland, and Wales."<sup>114</sup> Eliot thus conceives of the continuation of Welsh culture in terms of its benefit to England. He regards these 'satellite cultures' as regions rather than as distinct nations.

Despite his absolute opposition to Welsh culture being described as a 'satellite culture', peripheral to England, Saunders Lewis would have been in agreement with Eliot's belief that for the transmission of a culture, "there is no safeguard more reliable than a language".<sup>115</sup> (It is of note that Eliot describes a culture as "a peculiar way of thinking, feeling and behaving"<sup>116</sup>, a description with which Saunders Lewis would concur). Eliot adds that to be classified as a language, it must be a literary language, not necessarily a scientific language, but certainly a poetic one. Clearly Saunders Lewis sought to highlight the value of Welsh as a rich and historical literary language, and concurred with Eliot on this matter. Despite not agreeing with Eliot's definition of Welsh culture as a 'satellite culture', Saunders Lewis defining it as a national culture, he nonetheless would be in agreement that a flourishing national culture should be a "constellation of cultures, the constituents of which benefiting each other, benefit the whole."<sup>117</sup> This was based on a conception of the national culture being comprised of multiple local cultures acting in organic fashion.

Both Eliot and Saunders Lewis conceive of the nation in similar terms. Where they diverge is on the specific status of Wales as a nation. For Saunders Lewis, Wales is possessed of a national culture and is therefore morally deserving of self-government.

---

Lewis' criticism in *Fate of the Language* (1962). Arnold's view is often seen within Welsh nationalist discourse as epitomising 19<sup>th</sup> century British 'nation-building' attempts at linguistic homogenisation. This aspect is explored in greater depth in this study in the chapter entitled 'Saunders Lewis and the Welsh language'.

<sup>114</sup> Eliot, T.S. (1948) *Notes Towards a Definition of Culture*. London. Faber and Faber. P.55.

<sup>115</sup> Ibid. P.58.

<sup>116</sup> Ibid. P.58.

<sup>117</sup> Ibid. P.58.

Saunders Lewis and Eliot are in agreement that “a nation’s political structure affects its culture, and in turn is affected by that culture”.<sup>118</sup> However, Eliot does not recognise Wales as a nation and thus deserving of its own political structure. In line with the previous maxim, the reciprocal effect of political structure and culture influences Saunders Lewis to see Welsh self-government as necessary for the continuance of Welsh culture. Eliot thinks that Welsh culture should be preserved, as should all local cultures, but without recognizing it as a nation and thus deserving of an individual political structure.

Despite differing on the recognition of Welsh culture as a national culture, the two are in agreement that no culture is wholly self-sustaining, and that it is indeed beneficial to have interaction with, and be influenced by, other cultures. This is the thought, present in both Saunders Lewis and Eliot, that cultures should be mutually beneficial, but not seek to dominate each other in any way, thus leading to a ‘unity in diversity’. Indeed, another of Eliot’s ‘important conditions for culture’ is the “balance of unity and diversity in religion”<sup>119</sup>, which he defines as “universality of doctrine with particularity of cult and devotion.”<sup>120</sup>

It is this thinking that profoundly influences his conception of the ‘unity of Europe’. Stemming from his account of ‘unity in diversity’, Eliot thinks that there is a definite European culture, reflecting Europe’s shared Christianity. However, Eliot is at odds with Saunders Lewis, with regard to any attempt at politico-economic unification, such as a European Union. Eliot believes that forces of attraction and repulsion keep cultures distinct by creating balance, and that,

“without the repulsion they could not survive as distinct cultures; one would absorb the other, or both would be fused into one culture.”<sup>121</sup>

---

<sup>118</sup> Ibid. P.118.

<sup>119</sup> Ibid. P.15.

<sup>120</sup> Ibid. P.15.

In secular terms this can be taken to be ‘universality in political ideology with particularity in institutions and forms of government’.

<sup>121</sup> Ibid. P.61.

Thus Eliot was opposed to a politico-economic European Union on the implicit grounds that only statehood could maintain a separate culture.

Eliot fears political centralisation, as this would destroy national 'distinct' cultures under a single government. Saunders Lewis is clearly opposed to any centralised unitary government, yet strongly advocated a European Union, in line with his affirmation of the political principle of subsidiarity. Eliot does not share this thought. He views any surrendering of political power to wider politico-economic associations as anathema. He does not believe in one government for several 'distinct' cultures. Of course in relation to Wales and England, Wales is but a satellite under the aegis of England and not a culture in its own right, according to Eliot. This results in Eliot effectively advocating the *status quo* in relation to the 'nation-states' of Europe. Whilst there is a demonstrable political principle commitment towards 'unity in diversity' in Saunders Lewis' advocacy of a European Union, and beyond that, common world cause in a League of Nations (or 'Society of Nations' as he terms it in *Principles of Nationalism*), Eliot merely talks of the need to foster a common world culture. He subscribes to this aim, but recognises that it is "only actual in diverse local manifestations".<sup>122</sup> Thus it is sentiment, an aspiration to a common world culture, which will "yet not diminish the particularity of the constituent parts."<sup>123</sup> Eliot therefore thinks any institutional effort at world government, would trample on the 'particularity' of its 'constituent parts'.

Eliot feared that the very existence of Western civilisation was threatened. The rise of Communism in the East of Europe, plus the rise of Fascism, confirmed Eliot's worst fears of the evils of totalitarianism. Eliot was convinced that there was only one alternative to the evils of market capitalism and totalitarian ideologies. He believed that unless a form of Christian society was recovered, then society would eventually fall into the 'paganism' of fascism and socialism. This idea was mirrored in Saunders Lewis' thought, asserting as he did the need to return to Christian values, as well as the

---

<sup>122</sup> Ibid. P.61.

<sup>123</sup> Ibid. P.61.

rejection of the moral absolutism of the state-god in *Principles of Nationalism*. Such ideas formed the basis of his social vision in *Canlyn Arthur* also, where the social 'ills' of capitalism were sought to be 'cured' whilst at the same time distrustful of state socialism, resulting in a form of Distributism.

Eliot's social writings called into question two of the pillars of Western thought, those of liberalism and democracy. He believed that liberalism was a corrosive force, for it provided people with no positive values. He was not anti-democracy, rather he viewed the democracy conceived of at the time to be corrupted by the materialism of capitalism, allowed for by liberalism. He thought that only against the background of Christian faith does Western thought have any significance and that the culture of Europe could not survive the complete disappearance of the Christian faith. Indeed, such a critique highlighted the shortcomings of liberal democratic systems as they then were. Saunders Lewis was in broad agreement with this analysis and critique. Eliot's solution was a reaffirmation of Christian 'first principles' as detailed in *The Idea of a Christian Society*. Saunders Lewis, although he never stated such in a precise manner, can be seen to also assume this view. He was also convinced of a need for a reaffirmation of Christian 'first principles' as a remedy for a variety of social 'ills'. (His conception of Christian humanism identified as its enemy, 'pagan' state socialism, and welfare state interference in the life of the family.<sup>124</sup>)

A reading of Eliot's *The Idea of a Christian Society* (1940)<sup>125</sup> is crucial in seeking to understand fully the points to which Saunders Lewis alludes in his various political writings towards the end of the 1930s. At this time, he advocated a 'Christian society', described himself as a 'Christian humanist' and his politics as 'Christian nationalism'.<sup>126</sup> *The Party for Wales* (1942) was his response to, and rebuttal of, accusations of papism and proto-fascism. It is not the aim here to seek to defend him, rather to gain further understanding of the concepts and terms which Saunders Lewis employs, but which are not explained in any great depth by him. Eliot's *The Idea of a*

---

<sup>124</sup> Saunders Lewis, John. *The Family*. In (1938) *Canlyn Arthur*. Aberystwyth. Gwasg Aberystwyth. P.43.

<sup>125</sup> Eliot, T.S. (1939) *The Idea of a Christian Society*. London. Faber and Faber.

<sup>126</sup> Saunders Lewis uses these terms at various points throughout *Canlyn Arthur*.

*Christian Society*, rather than contending that democracy be replaced by direct governance of society by the Church, seeks instead to point out the perils and inadequacies of totalitarian forms of government, as well as the failings of liberalism to address the injustices of capitalism. It is not anti-democratic, rather it is keen to reassert 'true' democracy, as it views liberalism as not having sufficient moral force to rectify the injustices of capitalism. Thus a reassertion of Christian moral principles is seen as necessary to affirm the values of democracy. Like Eliot, Saunders Lewis is certainly no liberal, but is definitely a democrat.

Interestingly, in the introduction to *The Idea of a Christian Society*, Eliot states, "I am deeply indebted to the works of J. Maritain especially his *Humanisme Intégral*."<sup>127</sup> <sup>128</sup> Indeed, the Catholic social and political thought of Jacques Maritain influenced Saunders Lewis deeply, as it did Eliot, and helps us to understand the formation of much of his social thought. (See below for the influence of Jacques Maritain on Saunders Lewis.)

Eliot acknowledges being influenced by the writings of Christian sociologists, "who criticise our economic system in the light of Christian ethics."<sup>129</sup> It is their writings and ideas that convince him of the "incompatibility of Christian principle and a great deal of our social practice"<sup>130</sup>, specifically capitalism. In *The Idea of A Christian Society*, as in *Notes Towards the Definition of Culture*, Eliot, rather than advocating any definitive change in political reality, is instead seeking to inculcate a change in people's attitudes and thinking. His "primary interest is a change in our social attitude"<sup>131</sup> and only such a change could "bring about anything worthy to be called a Christian Society."<sup>132</sup> It would appear from Saunders Lewis' assertion in *The Party for Wales*, following on from *Canlyn Arthur* that what he seeks is for any future state of Welsh self-government to reflect the Christian values of the society it represents.

---

<sup>127</sup> Eliot, T.S. (1940) *The Idea of a Christian Society*. London. Faber and Faber. P.6.

<sup>128</sup> Maritain, Jacques. (1950) *True Humanism (Humanisme Intégral)*. London. Geoffrey Bless.

<sup>129</sup> Eliot, T.S. (1940) *The Idea of a Christian Society*. London. Faber and Faber. P.10.

<sup>130</sup> *Ibid.* P.10.

<sup>131</sup> *Ibid.* P.10.

<sup>132</sup> *Ibid.* P.10.

Eliot does not suggest that the Church take over as a moral institution that governs politically, rather that it be re-established as a 'pillar of society', as one of the main institutions that aid in the moral life of society. Eliot is keen to assert that the "Christian State is not any particular political form",<sup>133</sup> but that the state should reflect a Christian society, "whatever State a particular Christian Society develops for itself"<sup>134</sup> Primarily, Eliot is articulating his fears that with the secularisation of society, there will be room for greater exploitation by materialist economic forces and the 'paganism' of totalitarian ideologies. The choice for Eliot is therefore stark, "between the formation of a new Christian culture, and the acceptance of a pagan one."<sup>135</sup> It is clear that Saunders Lewis also has affinity with this idea.

Eliot sees the Church as being a necessary institution in the reaffirmation of Christian social attitudes in society. He clearly warns against it being involved with the political task of governing, noting that the church, on a religious footing, cannot be "either conservative, or liberal, or revolutionary."<sup>136</sup> In a summation of the curious blend of strands prevalent in Eliot's thought, which also apply to Saunders Lewis', he notes that,

"Conservatism is too often conservation of the wrong things; liberalism a relaxation of discipline; revolution a denial of the permanent things."<sup>137</sup>

Rather, for Eliot, the task of the Church and Christianity is to continually answer one question: "to what purpose were we born? What is the end of Man?"<sup>138</sup> These are aspects which Eliot sees as having been lost in the 'paganism' and 'false' humanism of liberalism, capitalism and the totalitarian ideologies. This is also the thrust of Saunders Lewis' polemic entitled *Y Teulu (The Family)*, which is effectively a condemnation of

---

<sup>133</sup> Ibid. P.11.

<sup>134</sup> Ibid. P.11.

<sup>135</sup> Ibid. P.13.

<sup>136</sup> Ibid. P.97.

<sup>137</sup> Ibid. P.97.

<sup>138</sup> Ibid. P.99.

the 'false humanism' pervading the intentions of welfare state intervention.<sup>139</sup> He believes the family to be the "foundation of Christian society"<sup>140</sup>, and as a consequence the "foundation of the Christian nation"<sup>141</sup>, the result of the 'intervention' of the welfare state being to "to annihilate the idea in the young generation in Wales of the sacredness of the family and the moral authority of the family."<sup>142</sup>

For Eliot, liberalism was morally vacuous, and conservatism was simply too rigid, and therefore Christian tradition represented something that effectively countered both, without resorting to totalitarian 'pagan' political structures. In this sense, tradition was seen to be the truly democratic political standpoint as, according to Eliot, it guaranteed diverse viewpoints and a protection against tyranny. His reasoning was that without tradition, democracy could, and would, degenerate into hysteria and create constant flux, with resultant revolution, instability, and tyranny. For Eliot, this was most applicable in modern industrialised society. Revolution, instability and tyranny were a constant threat in Eliot's mind as industrialised society bred a "people detached from tradition, alienated from religion, and susceptible to mass suggestion: in other words a mob."<sup>143</sup> The same can be said for Saunders Lewis, he firmly believed tradition was an essential element of civilisation and 'good living'. He was critical of the industrialised areas of South Wales for having 'lost' their tradition, represented in their loss of the Welsh language – that signifier of Welsh tradition, and the resultant susceptibility to moral and physical ills, high instance of alcoholism, infant mortality, etc, as well as the spectre of 'pagan' state socialist ideas as 'false' cures for these 'ills'.

Eliot was critical of liberalism for being dominated by the conception of the individual without thought for the wider communal good, and for upholding political institutions that he saw as simply adhering to economic aims and influences. The solution, in Eliot's mind, was a Christian approach to political matters, although the implications

---

<sup>139</sup> This criticism of 'false humanism' and the call for a return to the 'religious point of view' is also defended by T.E. Hulme, predating T.S. Eliot and Saunders Lewis.

<sup>140</sup> Saunders Lewis, John. *The Family*. In (1938) *Canlyn Arthur*. Aberystwyth. Gwasg Aberystwyth. P.43.

<sup>141</sup> *Ibid* P.43.

<sup>142</sup> *Ibid*. P.48.

<sup>143</sup> Eliot, T.S. (1940) *The Idea of a Christian Society*. London. Faber and Faber. P.21.

are conceived of in secular format. This can also be seen to be the basis of Saunders Lewis' argument as set out in *Canlyn Arthur*, which sets out to assert the value of co-operativism within a democratic political structure.

Many of Eliot's contemporaries agreed with his diagnosis of society's ills, and were convinced of the crisis in liberalism in the interwar period, as well as certain of a more general decline of Western civilisation.<sup>144</sup> However, it is the relevance of his proposed remedy that is often doubted, and is highly contested. Most criticism of 'remedies' such as Eliot's questions whether the Church, i.e. a formal structured hierarchical Church, (although firmly separated from the state) could provide the necessary moral force to deal with and remedy society's material 'ills' in an increasingly secular society. Indeed, such criticisms call into question whether a newly resurrected Church could be free from the corrupting influences of power and the other negative aspects to which much organised religion is susceptible. The same criticisms are also true of Saunders Lewis' specific reference to a Welsh 'Christian democracy', most notably of the 'spiritual' means he asserts as being necessary to overcome material problems.<sup>145</sup> Also, in the specific case of Wales, due to the plethora of non-conformist churches, there is no 'main' Church which can be held aloft as a moral institution.

Eliot advocated a return to Christian 'first principles' and sought to achieve this with a reaffirmation of the Church as a moral institution in society, with a hierarchy and the 'community of Christians' at its head acting as a 'think-tank'. Any realistic application of this in Saunders Lewis' Wales would be unlikely, leaving open only the appeal or claim for an ethical return to Christian 'first principles'.

---

<sup>144</sup> The seminal text of the interwar period that contended the general decline of Western civilisation was Oswald Spengler's *Der Untergang des Abendlandes (The Decline of the West)*. He viewed Western civilisation to be in crisis. Arguably it encapsulated the zeitgeist and influenced a generation of thought. Spengler advocated dictatorship as a solution. Others agreed with its diagnosis, but instead sought a reassertion of Christian values as a solution (such as Eliot and Saunders Lewis).

Spengler, Oswald. (1928) *The Decline of the West*. London. Allen & Unwin.

<sup>145</sup> "To create a monoglot Welsh speaking Wales is the surest means with which to raise a country that the oppression of international capitalism cannot dwell. Of course our Socialist friends cannot understand this at all. They are so completely bound in the materialism of the past century that they cannot comprehend that it is spiritual forces that will succeed in overcoming economic oppression."

Saunders Lewis, John. *One Language for Wales*. In (1938) *Canlyn Arthur*. Aberystwyth. Gwasg Aberystwyth. P.61.



### 3.2. F.R. Leavis (1895-1978).

F. R. Leavis, the English critic and scholar, was an influential figure upon the thought of Saunders Lewis in the interwar period. Saunders Lewis was a self-acknowledged admirer of F.R. Leavis' critical work.<sup>146</sup> Many of the ideas promulgated in F.R. Leavis' work, in particular *Culture and Environment* (1933), were developed into political ideals by Saunders Lewis. Like Eliot, Leavis' central focus is that of England and English culture, whilst Saunders Lewis is concerned with Wales. All three thinkers form part of the wider intellectual movement of the interwar period that advocated and placed normative value on the organic community and emphasised the role of tradition in society. As a consequence of this, they were highly critical of *laissez-faire* capitalism.

As Ronald Hayman notes, Leavis' primary concern is with finding a way to save cultural continuity. Leavis sees culture, synonymous with tradition, as a "continuous collaborative renewal"<sup>147</sup> which keeps the

"heritage of perception, judgement, responsibility and spiritual awareness alive, responsive to change, and to authoritative guidance"<sup>148</sup>

Leavis is keen to reaffirm the value of cultural continuity in the face of accelerating technological and industrial revolution, which he sees as alienating man from himself. In *Nor Shall My Sword* (1972) Leavis relates how lost professions, prevalent in the organic community, have resulted in this 'alienation' of men who have no basic connection with their work and locality. For Leavis, a trade or profession, when it was a craft, embodied a way of life where cultural continuity and tradition were the mainstay of life. For Leavis, such mainstays were evident in the 'wheelwright's business' as it

---

<sup>146</sup> Saunders Lewis refers to Leavis' *Culture and Environment* in *One Language for Wales*, noting that *Culture and Environment* is "a book that argues throughout for the deletion of the English language in Wales."

Saunders Lewis, John. *One Language for Wales*. In (1938) *Canlyn Arthur*. Aberystwyth. Gwasg Aberystwyth. P.60.

<sup>147</sup> Hayman, Ronald. (1976) *Leavis*. London. Heinemann. P.23.

<sup>148</sup> *Ibid*. P.23.

“didn’t merely provide him with a satisfying craft that entailed the use of a diversity of skills”<sup>149</sup>, rather it contained “a full meaning in itself - it kept a human significance always present”<sup>150</sup>. Ultimately for Leavis, the craftsman fully integrated life and work, as he was able to see the products of his craft in use,

“serving their functions in the life and purpose of a community that really was a community, a human microcosm, and couldn’t help feeling itself one.”<sup>151</sup>

The organic community, exemplified by the ‘wheelwright’s’ local community is therefore of great normative value to F.R. Leavis.<sup>152</sup> As Hayman notes, Leavis essentially questions the relevance of the “great tradition to the problems of a rapidly changing society?”<sup>153</sup> Leavis asserts that it does have relevance in seeking to address the problems of modern society. Hayman argues that Leavis is also attempting to ask and provide the answer to, “What do men live by?”<sup>154</sup> Leavis aims for a ‘religious’ and ‘spiritual’ depth of thought and feeling. However, Leavis notes that his own use of the word ‘spiritual’ is determined by the

“contemplation of a world in which the technologico-Benthamite ethos has triumphed at the expense of human spirit – that is, of human life.”<sup>155</sup>

Leavis is also keen to argue that without language, there could be no human world. As with Saunders Lewis, Leavis, in his linking of the aesthetic to the value of tradition, views the creativity of the artist (or the craftsman in the case of the ‘wheelwright’) as something that is continuous with general human creativity. The nature of ‘livingness’ in human life is manifest in language. Literary creation is therefore seen as an extension

---

<sup>149</sup> Leavis, F.R. (1972) *Nor Shall My Sword*. London. Chatto & Windus. P.23.

<sup>150</sup> Leavis, F.R. (1972) *Nor Shall My Sword*. London. Chatto & Windus. P.23.

<sup>151</sup> Leavis, F.R. (1972) *Nor Shall My Sword*. London. Chatto & Windus. P.23.

<sup>152</sup> Leavis, in his capacity as a critic, continued to stress the importance of tradition and the ‘old’ organic community and the ‘craftsman’s way of life’, long after the interwar period, as evidenced in *Nor Shall My Sword* (1972), and long after many of his contemporaries. Leavis was asserting the critical value of such thought rather than seeking to assert a political ideal.

<sup>153</sup> Hayman, Ronald. (1976) *Leavis*. London. Heinemann. P.116.

<sup>154</sup> *Ibid.* P.116.

<sup>155</sup> *Ibid.* P.116.

of this 'livingness' of language. Saunders Lewis obviously concurs with Leavis on such matters, regarding, language as more than mere communication: embodying a tradition and being the 'fruit of society'.<sup>156</sup> This idea is extended, with aesthetic value placed on literature as the embodiment of this tradition, and 'work', as produced by craftsmen, also reflecting this aesthetic value.

For Leavis, as Saunders Lewis would concur, language is more than a means of expression. For Leavis it is the "heuristic conquest won out of representative experience"<sup>157</sup> and embodies "immemorial human living"<sup>158</sup>. As a consequence, heavy normative value is placed on language. Ultimately, for both thinkers, language exemplifies

"the truth that life is growth and growth change, and the condition of these is (cultural) continuity."<sup>159</sup>

Despite Saunders Lewis' assurance that Leavis' title *Culture & Environment* "argues throughout for the deletion of the English language in Wales"<sup>160</sup>, it does not do so explicitly. Its point of reference is England, and, as Leavis states in the introduction, it is not intended for political purposes, rather as a stimulus to cultural criticism and thought. Despite the deletion of the English language in Wales not being the explicit aim, nor intention, of the book, it is not difficult to see how Saunders Lewis derives these conclusions from it, as it argues that cultural continuity is a prerequisite of continuing and flourishing 'human' society. Leavis is convinced that "what we have lost is the organic community with the living culture it embodied."<sup>161</sup> For him, folk-songs, folk-dances, 'Cotswold cottages' and handicraft products are representative of

---

<sup>156</sup> "Language is the fruit of society, is essential to civilisation, and is the treasury of all the experiences and memories of a nation."

Saunders Lewis, John. *Y Faner*. Sept. 1923.

<sup>157</sup> Hayman, Ronald. (1976) *Leavis*. London. Heinemann. P.117.

<sup>158</sup> *Ibid.* P.117.

<sup>159</sup> *Ibid.* P.117.

<sup>160</sup> Saunders Lewis, John. *One Language for Wales*. In (1938) *Canlyn Arthur*. Aberystwyth. Gwasg Aberystwyth. P.60.

<sup>161</sup> Hayman, Ronald, (1976) *Leavis*, London. Heinemann. P.22.

something far more profound. They represent an art in life, a fully integrated society, at peace with itself and the natural environment, growing out of immemorial experience. For Leavis, this way of life has been destroyed by “the machine”.<sup>162</sup>

It is clear that this is the starting point for Saunders Lewis with regard to his political vision for Wales, and is closely related to his thought regarding the Welsh language, and the need for its continuance. Yet, whereas Saunders Lewis thinks that what is being lost can be recovered or continued by political means, Leavis asserts that it is literature that must perform the role of maintaining continuity.

A reading of *Culture & Environment* is essential to understanding Saunders Lewis' thought regarding language, tradition, the organic community, market capitalism, and the 'idea of progress'. Of course, these are thoughts prevalent in Saunders Lewis' mind in the interwar period, yet a reading of *Culture & Environment* helps frame and explain his social vision for Wales as set forth in *Canlyn Arthur*. Leavis' thought on these matters provides a cultural and social ideological base for the ideas that Saunders Lewis goes on to assert politically. As noted in the relevant chapter on Saunders Lewis' social vision for Wales, as laid out in *Canlyn Arthur*, whilst not overly enthusiastic about industrial advance, he does become reconciled to its advantages, and seeks to blend this with the normative value of the organic community, resulting in an idealised 'techno-Arcadian' societal vision for Wales. This is in contrast to Leavis, who is negative with regard to industrial advance, yet, as stated, is not attempting to evolve his 'critical' ideas into political ideas as Saunders Lewis did.

Therefore there are obvious affinities between Saunders Lewis and F.R. Leavis surrounding social theory. They shared the importance of the values of tradition, language, and placed moral value on the organic community. Both rejected what they termed the dehumanising effect of heavy materialist industrialisation and its 'unnatural' social formations, its tendency to crush the 'spirit' of the individual through 'alienation', and the society it thus produced. Beyond these shared social values, which

---

<sup>162</sup> Ibid. P.22.

in turn stem from a deep 'appreciation' of culture, language and thus literature, Saunders Lewis stated in a letter to Kate Roberts in 1949 in reference to F.R. Leavis that, "for at least 15 years I have thought that he (F.R. Leavis) is currently the best literary critic in England."<sup>163</sup> As is evident, Saunders Lewis was influenced by Leavis to a much greater degree in his political thinking than just by an admiration for his literary criticism.

### 3.3. T.E. Hulme (1883-1917).

"No theory that is not fully moved by the conception of justice asserting the equality of men, and which cannot offer something to all men, deserves or is likely to have any future"<sup>164</sup>

This is the conclusion that T.E. Hulme makes in seeking to diagnose society's ills in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. T.E. Hulme, like his successor T.S. Eliot, sought to uncover the moral basis which upheld the contemporary institutions of society and he concluded that several features of society flatly contradicted the morality professed by many. He observed that great inequalities of wealth and opportunity were officially condoned. He thought that such problems could be rectified, but that "would not result in any great and irreversible change in human nature"<sup>165</sup> Thus for T.E. Hulme, socialism, understood as Marxist state socialism, could not be sanctioned as an answer to society's injustices. This approach was mirrored in Saunders Lewis' condemnation of 'materialist socialism'.

In *Speculations* (1924), in addition to calling for a return to classicism in aesthetics, T.E. Hulme writes of the need to cultivate the 'religious attitude'<sup>166</sup> and to promote it as the only alternative to the human 'untruths' of state socialism and liberalism. He

---

<sup>163</sup> Saunders Lewis, John. In (Ed.) Ifans, Dafydd. (1992) *Annwyl Kate, Annwyl Saunders. (Dear Kate, Dear Saunders). Correspondence 1923-1983.* Aberystwyth. National Library Wales Press. Letter No. 129. 21<sup>st</sup> February. 1949. P.147.

<sup>164</sup> Hulme, T.E. (1924) *Speculations: Essays on Humanism and The Philosophy of Art.* London. Routledge & Kegan Paul Ltd. P.259.

<sup>165</sup> Roberts, Michael. (1982). *T.E. Hulme.* Manchester. Carcanet New Press. P.183. (1<sup>st</sup> edition: (1938) London. Faber and Faber.)

<sup>166</sup> Hulme, T.E. (1924) *Speculations: Essays on Humanism and The Philosophy of Art.* London. Routledge & Kegan Paul Ltd.

See chapter entitled *Humanism and the Religious Attitude.*

believed that for society to be genuinely improved for the better, then the type of authority that people recognised and accepted had to be altered. If one was serious about the 'religious attitude' then the principles of Christian sociology had to be taken seriously and acted upon. T.E. Hulme did not believe that society or man was ultimately perfectible, reflecting his Christian view of human nature, but that a little moral progress was possible. He believed that liberal democrats had got it wrong in assuming that perfectibility was possible for humans, "and did not need the backing of religious belief"<sup>167</sup> Thus for T.E. Hulme a good system of governance, a 'just' system of governance, must not be based on the inevitable rightness of the average man, but neither must it discourage him from using his intelligence, honesty and courage. T.E. Hulme is committed to freedom and democracy. He sees that liberalism, the moral basis underpinning the institutions of society, was anti-democratic in reality as it was "tainted with the utopian doctrine of *laissez-faire*, and has often failed to fulfill these conditions"<sup>168</sup> and that essentially, liberalism was 'sick', and that it was "based on ideas about history and about human personality that are inadequate or false".<sup>169</sup> Hulme's thought pre-dates that of Saunders Lewis. Hulme was killed in action during the Great War. His thought went on to influence the cluster that included Eliot, and others such as Chesterton. There is therefore a strong link between the thought of Saunders Lewis and that of Hulme with regard to the assertion of classicism in relation to aesthetics, and there is a clear indication of the 'religious attitude' in Saunders Lewis' approach to social and political thought. Saunders Lewis was drawn to, and subsequently espoused, Catholic neo-Thomist social and political thought (which is explored below), whilst Hulme was an Anglican.

Hulme criticised liberalism as utopian in that it put blind faith in the peaceful evolution of society and man towards greater tolerance and understanding, and that economic activity would naturally work towards the 'salvation' of man in a democratic state, with its abandonment of Christian 'first principles'. In this sense, liberalism and socialism

---

<sup>167</sup> Roberts, Michael. (1982) *T.E. Hulme*. Manchester. Carcanet New Press. P.184. (1<sup>st</sup> edition: (1938) London. Faber and Faber.)

<sup>168</sup> *Ibid.* P.186.

<sup>169</sup> *Ibid.* P.187.

have no real moral force, and as such, are lacking in any moral credibility to attack conditions they disapprove of. They are therefore revealed as groups of interest fighting one against the other.<sup>170</sup>

T.E. Hulme believes that liberal democracy is weak because its exponents have believed it is not something that has to be justified and worked for, but as something that is self-evident and inevitable. In conjunction with this, he believes that it is not only totalitarian political systems whose economic arrangements can be in harmony with their moral claims: democratic political systems can also be in harmony with their economic arrangements if they adhere to Christian 'first principles'. For this to occur, the 'religious attitude' must be propagated and the Christian polity strengthened, according to T.E. Hulme. The belief that liberal democracy was weak was reinforced in the minds of many critics in the interwar period, and increasingly so in the 1930s. In line with Hulme's thinking on the matter, Saunders Lewis is part of a group of intellectual thought that was perturbed by liberalism's advocacy of *laissez-faire* capitalism. Nonetheless, Saunders Lewis was also perturbed by totalitarian political structures which he deemed equally abhorrent.

T.E. Hulme thought that politics could not simply be divided into progressives and conservatives in a 'conventional' sense. To conceive of the political spectrum simply in a left-right continuum is to ignore the other polity, that of a Christian polity. He thought this could be established "not through a cult of violence, but by strengthening some existing features of society."<sup>171</sup> Eliot's mode of thought clearly echoed this.

Much of Hulme's argument against 'progress' should be viewed in light of his seeking to avoid the power of the state (inherent in totalitarian ideologies). The individual has primacy over the state according to Hulme, as

---

<sup>170</sup> Ibid. P.191.

<sup>171</sup> Ibid. P.193.

“The value of the individual is measured by absolute standards, not by his service to the State; and in the same way the truth of a scientific doctrine, the beauty of a work of art, and the virtue of a good action, are all judged by standards that are not merely standards of public expediency, whether expediency means the greatest happiness of the greatest number, or the military power of the nation.”<sup>172</sup>

In place of the state being the ‘unifying’ authority, Hulme, in Christian phraseology, does not think that the primary unifying authority can be the personality of a leader or a king, as to set up a living person in the place of that authority is to set him up in the place of God. It is from this qualified foundation that he believes “a Christian democracy is possible”.<sup>173</sup> The value of the individual person is testified to in the thought of Saunders Lewis. Indeed, the multiple associations that go into forming the ‘community of communities’ act as the ‘buffer’ between the individual and the potentially coercive political power of government or the state. Eliot developed T.E. Hulme’s idea of a ‘Christian democracy’ with his *Idea of a Christian Society*. Such ideas are prevalent also in the thought of Saunders Lewis, keen as he was to criticise utilitarian social calculations, the ‘state-god’ mentality, and assert Christian ‘democratic’ values.

Essentially, Hulme is a proponent of tradition. He believes that democratic liberalism, when rid of its illusions about human perfectability, and its inclination towards blaming the ‘system’ rather than the errors of the individual, is, in fact, highly consistent with a Christian morality. What he decries in ‘totalitarianism’ is its potential to absolve the individual of his responsibility, by making the state the source of all moral responsibility. From his Christian ‘viewpoint’, this is to confuse the human (state) with the divine (morality). This is essentially what is occurring in the thought of Saunders Lewis with his rejection and criticism of statism, with its potential to elevate the state to the point of moral absolutism, when he criticizes the ‘state-god’ in *Principles of Nationalism*. This is in conjunction with Saunders Lewis’ advocacy of ‘true’

---

<sup>172</sup> Ibid. P.193.

<sup>173</sup> Ibid. P.195.



democracy rather than the corrupt form attested to by liberalism which essentially supported unjust *laissez-faire* capitalism.

Effectively Hulme calls this the 'religious point of view', an idea which Eliot sought to expand in *The Idea of a Christian Society*, a principle which can loosely be termed Christian democracy, with ideals which propelled much of Europe's 'Christian Democratic' political parties in the aftermath of WWII.<sup>174</sup> The dehumanising aspects of capitalism are contradictory to Christian principles.

It is interesting, and of note, that T.E. Hulme came to exert an intellectual influence over many of his intellectual peers, including A.R. Orage and A.J. Penty, who both in turn played their part in formulating the ideas behind the Distributist ideal which was prevalent in the 1920s.<sup>175</sup> Distributism, highly similar to Guild Socialism due to its assertion of the medieval guild system principle, presented itself as a viable alternative basis for contemporary economic life.

### **3.4. Distributism / Guild Socialism.**

Distributism can be seen to have constituted a revolutionary response to the conformity of the modern industrial age by its critique of a collectivist-plutocratic state, and was the political expression of the neo-Thomist revival in Catholic intellectual circles prevalent in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. Distributism, which can be seen as forming a political ideology and political policies around the implications of neo-Thomist thought, also greatly influenced Saunders Lewis.

---

<sup>174</sup> For further discussion of this point see Gehler, Michael & Kaiser, Wolfram (Eds.) (2004) *Christian Democracy in Europe since 1945*. London. Routledge.

<sup>175</sup> Penty, A.J. (1906) *The Restoration of the Gild System*. London. Swan Sonnenschein.

Penty, A.J. (1919) *Guilds and the Social Crisis*. London. George Allen & Unwin.

Penty, A.J. (1920) *A Guildsman's Interpretation of History*. London. Allen & Unwin.

Penty, A.J. (1923) *Towards a Christian Sociology*. London. George Allen & Unwin.

Orage, A.R. (1914) *National Guilds: An inquiry into the wage system and the way out*. London. G. Bell & Sons.

Orage, A.R. (1917) *An alphabet of economics*. London. T. Fisher Unwin.

Between 1908 and 1910, *The New Age*, a journal edited by A.J. Orage, rejected Fabianism for the culturally conservative “neo-classicism” articulated by T. E. Hulme. *The New Age* fused cultural conservatism with progressive politics in a philosophy it called Guild Socialism, which opposed the centralised model of Fabian socialism with a model in which control over production rested in the hands of the workers and the trade unions, which would function like medieval guilds. The origins of Guild Socialism are to be found in the 19<sup>th</sup> century reaction to industrialisation, particularly as articulated by Ruskin and Morris.<sup>176</sup> A small but subtle difference between Guild Socialism and Distributism belies the fact that the terms are often used synonymously and that the broad sweep of ideas underlining each are identical. These ideas, as well as Guild Socialism and Distributism themselves, clearly influenced Saunders Lewis. Distributism forms the basis of his social vision for Wales as set out in *Canlyn Arthur*, and obviously resonates deeply with his culturally conservative, neo-Thomist Catholic ethos. All of these ideals were then developed into his own brand of Welsh nationalism. As set out in *Principles of Nationalism*, a neo-classicism, the organic community, the rejection of political centralism, and a political idealising of the social systems of the Middle Ages were all elements which Saunders Lewis valued. Indeed, if it is to be understood that nationalism is a fluid concept that necessarily intersects and interfaces with other social and political ideologies, then Saunders Lewis’ Welsh nationalism effectively interfaces with neo-Thomist and Distributist political thought.

An analysis of early 20<sup>th</sup> century ‘Distributism’ or ‘Guild Socialism’ is thus highly appropriate in seeking to describe and analyse Saunders Lewis’ own social and political thought, the parallels being too obvious to ignore. Saunders Lewis’ employment of Catholic social doctrine in his vision of Welsh society (as articulated in *Canlyn Arthur*) is paralleled by that of Chesterton and Belloc. Distributism was a composite of several

---

<sup>176</sup> Ruskin, John. (1872) *Munera Pulveris: Essays on Political Economy*. Elder Smith Press.  
Ruskin, John. (1985) *Unto This Last (and Other Writings)*. London. Penguin Press.  
Henderson, Willie. (2000) *John Ruskin’s Political Economy*. London. Routledge.  
Morris, William. (1973) *Political Writings of William Morris*. London. Lawrence & Wishart.  
Morris, William. (1993) *News from Nowhere (and Other Writings)*. London. Penguin Press. (Original edition: 1890)

social and moral theories first articulated by Gilbert Keith Chesterton (1874-1936) and Hilaire Belloc (1870-1953) in *The New Age*, edited by A.R. Orage.

Distributism was developed as a social and political idea by Chesterton and Belloc and devised as a rationale for the equitable distribution of property and the restoration of worker control in commerce, agriculture, and industry. Distributism was essentially based on a retrospection of European history, and expressed Chesterton's and Belloc's concerns about contemporary, as well as future, mass industrial society. The ideas behind Distributism were not especially new, innovative, or revolutionary, but were based upon what was believed to have 'worked in the past'. Distributism called for a return to the Christian social conscience in conjunction with ideas propounded by intellectual peers such as Hulme, Eliot, etc. As a result of this, it was highly critical of the trend towards the dehumanising centralised state control of society. As an antidote to this trend, Distributism extolled the efficacy of the self-contained organic community. The inherent value of the organic community is, of course, what is promoted in *Canlyn Arthur* by Saunders Lewis, and also crucial to this is the necessity for political decentralism.

Distributism sought the restoration of society to a 'human' organic scale, and that this was to be achieved through a return to a social system based on the medieval guilds. Economic life would run through a multiplicity of small units organised according to natural economic classes and productive functions. The idea behind this was to create a balanced or mixed economy of independent farmers and small industries owned and operated by the workers themselves, thus creating a sort of peasant-worker society<sup>177</sup>. This was developed in Saunders Lewis' work and described as 'co-operative nationalism'. For Chesterton and Belloc, the Roman Catholic Church was to provide whatever federal and international control might be needed.<sup>178</sup> This is not evident in

---

<sup>177</sup> It is of note that eradicating the concentration of heavy industry is apparent also in Plank 9 of the Communist Manifesto. In contrast to Saunders Lewis, Marx envisaged that this be made possible through state planning.

"9. Combination of agriculture with manufacturing industries; gradual abolition of the distinction between town and country, by a more equable distribution of the population over the country". Marx, Karl. & Engels, Friedrich. (2002) *The Communist Manifesto*. London. Penguin Classics. P.243.

<sup>178</sup> Belloc, Hilaire. (1931) *Essays of a Catholic Layman in England*. London. Sheed & Ward.

Saunders Lewis' thought. In contrast, he advocates the League of Nations as the arbiter of supranational authority.<sup>179</sup> Independent, small farming was to be the backbone of this society based on decentralised control, self-sufficiency, and rural reconstruction. This was developed in a more Welsh nationalist vein by Saunders Lewis, who insisted that the economic self-sufficiency of the organic community would sustain Wales' political and cultural self-sufficiency as a nation, and spare it from the political and economic encroachment of England.

Chesterton and Belloc's vision of society, this new 'old' society, was definitely *not* imperialist. This is also true of Saunders Lewis' vision. He viewed imperialism as the logical extension of the statism which he condemned as the principle of state sovereignty in *Principles of Nationalism*. Political and social decisions were to be made by the people in small groups, negotiated by personal interaction. In this regard it has affinities with anarchism's tenet of 'no coercion'. The Distributist societal ideal bears resemblance to that described by Kropotkin.<sup>180</sup> Distributism was anti-utopian and did not offer a rationalist blueprint for society as had other leftist intellectual movements of the same era, such as the Fabian Society.<sup>181</sup> Subscribing to this belief, Belloc and Chesterton refused to be tied down to specific policies, believing instead that any social outcome needed to come from individual human desire and conditions, rather than from central planning imposed from above. A socialist centrally-planned economy was therefore to be rejected. In parallel with this, 'localism' was therefore also key to Saunders Lewis' social and political thought. If a nation was deemed to be made up of smaller communities, as Saunders Lewis believed it was, then this was vital. These were the 'local' communities in which Welsh culture 'lived'.

---

<sup>179</sup> Saunders Lewis, John. (1926) *Principles of Nationalism*. Machynlleth. Evan Jones Printers. P.8.

<sup>180</sup> Peter Kropotkin, along with Mikhail Bakunin, was one of the foremost proponents of anarchism, often noted as a 'libertarian communist'. He differs with Saunders Lewis' thought regarding the matter of collectivism and private property. Kropotkin's thought is outlined in works such as: Kropotkin, Peter. (1906) *The Conquest of Bread*. Chapman and Hall.

<sup>181</sup> The Fabian Society, an intellectual socialist movement founded in 1884. It advocated reformist and gradualist measures rather than revolutionary ones. Several Guild socialists including those mentioned above became disillusioned with the movement which, on the whole, sanctioned the role of the state in social and economic life. The Fabian Society effectively laid the intellectual and ideological foundation of the British Labour Party. For an academic analysis of the history of Fabian socialism in the context of wider British socialism see

Beer, Max. (2002) *A History of British Socialism*. London. Routledge. P.274.

Those who propounded Distributism claimed it to be much more than a political theory: it was a philosophy or way of life firmly founded on religious principles. Belloc was a life-long Roman Catholic, Chesterton converted in 1922. Chesterton was particularly concerned with retrieving the 'sanctity' of human relationships through articulating a form of Thomism that sought to reintegrate the individual into a corporate state. The key to this reintegration of the individual was the family and private property, but of course, not too much property. Saunders Lewis also underwent the same conversion in 1932, his attraction to Catholic social thought predating his actual conversion to the Catholic faith. *Canlyn Arthur* also seeks to reintegrate the individual person in this respect, with Saunders Lewis also extolling the virtue of the family and private property, but of course, again not too much property. He outlines his thought in the chapter entitled '*The Small Capitalist*' where the economy is to be regulated in such a manner that market 'conflict' competition is effectively nullified.

Distributism criticised both socialism and capitalism. Capitalism was deemed to be dehumanising as it entailed a denial of property to the vast majority of individuals and had no concept of its own limits. Communism, or socialism, was seen to be the 'unnatural child' or spawn of capitalism, and was subsequently criticised for its reduction of the individual to a role subservient to the state. This obviously mirrors Saunders Lewis' thought on the matter.

It should be noted that Distributism, in its widest possible connotations, covers a vast array of thinkers and ideas spanning the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. Their ideas were often anti-imperial, anti-elite, anti-utopian, and, for some (but not all), anti-machine. Distributists were in favour of societal balance; in the distribution of property (which they viewed to be the basis of economic wealth), in family life, and in the human scale of organisations.<sup>182</sup> Saunders Lewis was certainly anti-imperialist, but there is a certain ambiguity in his attitude towards elitism. His nationalism sees him conceive of the nation in terms of vertical solidarity as opposed to the horizontal

---

<sup>182</sup> Distributism was not particularly compatible with the women's suffrage movement of the time, perhaps because it failed to explore adequately the role of women in the much-lauded family unit. Chesterton attempted in his works to give credit and honour to women's domestic labour, but obviously that did not solve the financial problems of poor families already 'divorced' from the land.

solidarity of socialism.<sup>183</sup> His elitism is of the democratic and meritocratic variety, rather than the elitism manifested in terms of hereditary acquisition of political power. (As demonstrated in the chapter on his 'social vision for Wales', Saunders Lewis cannot be described as an anti-technology Distributist.)

Distributist theory contributed heavily to Orage's advocacy of Guild Socialism in *The New Age* during the 1910s. Belloc's titles, *The Servile State* (1912), as well as his later *An Essay on the Restoration of Property* (1936), were instrumental in forging this intellectual subscription to Distributism and Guild Socialism. Guild Socialism, varied only slightly from Distributism, in that it defined itself more as a synthesis of political socialism and industrial syndicalism. Distributism itself (and Guild Socialism as an indirect result) drew upon a range of attitudes and ideas, including Chartism, Burkean organicism, French Revolutionary thought, socialism, anarchism, populism, and liberalism. The Distributist social philosophy of Chesterton and Belloc therefore, "was a peculiar hybrid of both radical and conservative ideas".<sup>184</sup> This analysis is also apt in describing Saunders Lewis' overall social and political thought regarding a vision where Welsh society was re-established and revitalised by a move 'back-to-the-land'.<sup>185</sup> Indeed, the thrust of Saunders Lewis's own 'Ten Points of Policy' in *Canlyn Arthur* can be viewed in terms of a 'back-to-the-land' ideal.

In 1926, the Distributist League was founded. The Distributist League had two objectives; "the preservation of property, in order that the liberty of the individual and family could be independent of oppressive systems"<sup>186</sup>, and to seek a better distribution

---

<sup>183</sup> Saunders Lewis sees the need for a political elite to 'shoulder the burdens' which the 'ordinary man cannot be expected to shoulder' to "lead a country by suffering for it and thinking for it". Jones, Dafydd Glyn. *His Politics*. In Eds. Jones, Alun R. & Thomas, Gwyn. (1973) *Presenting Saunders Lewis*. Cardiff. University of Wales Press. P.61.

<sup>184</sup> Corrin, Jay P. (1991) *G.K. Chesterton & Hilaire Belloc: The Battle Against Modernity*. Athens & London. Ohio University Press. P.208.

<sup>185</sup> In this study, see the chapter 'A Social Vision for Wales: *Canlyn Arthur*' for deeper discussion of this.

<sup>186</sup> Corrin, Jay P. (1991) *G.K. Chesterton & Hilaire Belloc: The Battle Against Modernity*. Athens & London. Ohio University Press. P.108-9.

of capital by individual ownership of the “means and instruments of production”<sup>187</sup>, which was deemed the only way to preserve private property. Saunders Lewis can therefore rightly be termed the interpreter and espouser of Distributist social and political thought of the 1920s in Wales. At its zenith, the Distributist League had over 2,000 members, and then faded into obscurity in the 1940s. Its slide into obscurity and eventual disbandment was due to the drift rightwards along the political spectrum, both by its main proponents, and also in Distributist League literature. Distributism looked to the past for a model of a simpler, kinder, gentler world, and those who expounded it began to focus upon the contemporary abuses of international finance in causing wars, famine, and disruption in social relations. For some Distributists who coveted European cultural and religious attitudes, it was not a large leap to believing in a conspiracy of international Jewish finance being responsible for the social chaos caused by both capitalism and socialism. It should be noted that Saunders Lewis did not fall into this trap. The Distributist League journal, *The Weekly Review*, eventually began to drift rightwards, in response to what it saw as the threat of worldwide communism. The complete reversal of its earlier original political thought came when the *Weekly Review*, by then edited by Belloc, advocated British Imperialism in the late 1930s. In contrast, Saunders Lewis’ Welsh nationalism kept him from advocating imperialism, and he maintained a political stance that was steadfastly against totalitarianism.<sup>188</sup>

Distributism’s failure to regenerate after WWII can be seen as a direct result of this drift rightwards, as well as reflective of the 20<sup>th</sup> century’s irreversible advance towards large organisations and ‘mass’ societies. Society’s wider advance towards large

---

<sup>187</sup> Ibid. P.108-9.

<sup>188</sup> Saunders Lewis, however, failed to condemn Hitler. In retrospect, this can be seen as a naive attempt to maintain a Welsh ‘neutral’ stance in WWII, an attempt at a separate worldview for Wales, distinct from the British Press. This failure to condemn Hitler is often criticised in retrospect, yet fails to acknowledge his inability to see into the future! Several British institutional figures also failed to condemn Hitler in the late 1930s. Saunders Lewis was critical of Nazism, evident in his drama, *Gymerwch Chi Sigaret? (Will You Have a Cigarette?)* Saunders Lewis, John. (1983) *Gymerwch Chi Sigaret? (Will You Have a Cigarette?)* Swansea. Christopher Davies.

organisations and 'mass' societies also meant that Saunders Lewis' own formulation of a Welsh Distributism meant his thought as articulated in *Canlyn Arthur* held less resonance, and post-war Welsh nationalism moved in a markedly liberal direction under Gwynfor Evans. However, due to the size of Wales and the prevalence of its agricultural society, many of the tenets advocated by Saunders Lewis held fast, minus the neo-Thomist foundation. Co-operativism remained an ideal within mainstream Welsh political nationalism, employing the Scandinavian model as a workable structure for Wales.

### 3.5. Jacques Maritain (1882-1973).

Jacques Maritain, whose central body of work was compiled after WWII, can nonetheless be seen as the main exponent of the neo-Thomism which strongly influenced Saunders Lewis. This neo-Thomism was an important influence upon the early 20<sup>th</sup> century wave of European intellectuals who were drawn to Catholicism and Catholic social thought. An explanation of Maritain's neo-Thomism, which is founded upon Catholic theories of natural law, is crucial in order to understand the philosophical and ethical underpinnings of Saunders Lewis' social and political thought.

Jacques Maritain's political theory is fundamentally derived from his conception of 'natural law' ethics.<sup>189</sup> He believed ethical norms to be 'rooted' in human nature. For Maritain this 'natural law' is known not through philosophical argument and demonstration, but instead through 'connaturality'.<sup>190</sup> In essence, the natural law is known through direct acquaintance with it in human experience. Crucial to this, and deriving from this conception of the natural law, is the concept of natural rights. Natural rights are therefore 'rooted' in the 'natural law'. Such a Thomistic conception of natural rights and natural law, whilst not professed outright by Saunders Lewis, is clearly evident in the reasoning of concepts such as a 'universal moral law' which he

---

<sup>189</sup> Maritain, Jacques. (1943) *The Rights of Man and Natural Law*. New York. Gordian Press.

<sup>190</sup> Maritain, Jacques. *On Knowledge Through Connaturality*. In (1952) *The Range of Reason*. New York. Scribner. P.27.



refers to in the *Caernarfon Court Speech*, as well as the broader appeal of Catholic social thought and philosophy.<sup>191</sup>

Maritain advocated what he described as ‘Integral Humanism’<sup>192</sup> (The title of his 1936 publication). The essence of his argument was that secular forms of humanism were inevitably anti-human in that they refused to recognise the whole person in their considerations. Maritain believed that once the spiritual dimension of human nature is rejected, as it inevitably is in secular forms of humanism, there is no longer an ‘integral’ humanism. Instead, there is merely a partial humanism in the secular form, as it has rejected a fundamental aspect of the human person, according to Maritain. In *Integral Humanism*, Maritain asserts a “philosophical pluralism”.<sup>193</sup> Central to this assertion was a seeking to uncover ways in which Christianity could inform political discourse and policy in a pluralistic age. Maritain developed a theory of cooperation, in essence, reconciling people of different intellectual positions and worldviews, and illustrating how it is possible, nonetheless, to cooperate in order to achieve common practical aims. Maritain’s political theory has been noted for its highly influential status in being a major source of inspiration for the Christian Democratic movement in Europe.<sup>194</sup>

Jacques Maritain was a neo-Thomist philosopher and political theorist. ‘Thomism’, and its derivative ‘neo-Thomism’, is a collective term for theories of society and politics based on the social ethics set out by St. Thomas Aquinas. The text by St. Thomas Aquinas most cited by Thomists is *Summa theologiae*.<sup>195</sup> St. Thomas Aquinas was, in turn greatly influenced by the classical Greek philosopher, Aristotle, and his works, *Nicomachean Ethics* and *Politics*.<sup>196</sup> Political neo-Thomism developed within

---

<sup>191</sup> Saunders Lewis, John. *Caernarfon Court Speech*. In Eds. Jones, Alun R. & Thomas, Gwyn. (1983) *Presenting Saunders Lewis*. Cardiff. University of Wales Press. P.115.

<sup>192</sup> Maritain, Jacques. (1968) *Integral Humanism; Temporal and Spiritual Problems of a New Christendom*. New York. Scribner.

<sup>193</sup> McCool, Gerald A. (1989) *From Unity to Pluralism: The Internal Evolution of Thomism*. New York. Fordham University Press. P.114.

<sup>194</sup> Indeed, if Saunders Lewis had not been a Welsh nationalist, which required him to help bring about political self-government for Wales, it is possible to locate him on the centre-right of the political spectrum in the ‘Christian Democrat’ mould.

<sup>195</sup> Thomas Aquinas. (1964) *Summa Theologiae (Latin text and English translation)*. London. Blackwell.

<sup>196</sup> Aristotle. (2000) *Nicomachean Ethics*. Cambridge. Cambridge University Press.

Roman Catholic thought in the 19<sup>th</sup> century as an attempt to respond to the political and social problems of an industrial society, based on the papal encyclicals, *Rerum Novarum* (1891) and *Quadragesimo Anno* (1931).<sup>197</sup>

Neo-Thomist political thought essentially takes the Thomist view of human nature and employs this as the basis of its doctrine of the state and its social ethics. Crucial to this is the belief that man is created in the image of God. Following on from this, it is thought as appropriate and 'right' that man should live in an organised society striving for ethical and intellectual perfection. This 'perfection' is deemed the goal or *telos* of men, and is the equivalent of the 'good life'. This is St. Thomas Aquinas' Christianisation of Aristotle's doctrine that human beings are essentially striving for happiness, or *eudaimonia*. According to St. Thomas Aquinas, and subsequent Thomist thought, this striving for *eudaimonia* takes place within three facets of human nature; the striving for the preservation of the self, the species, and for life according to reason. For St. Thomas Aquinas, the 'striving for reason' entailed desiring to know the truth about God, and critically, living a life in society in pursuance of both the individual and the common good. These fundamentals form the core of natural law for Thomist thought. Civil law, i.e. the law of the state, is not inspired directly by natural law, and therefore loses its binding character and its 'moral' superiority if it violates the basic tenets of natural law.<sup>198</sup> Thomist thought therefore concludes that the purpose of civil law is to relate the demands of natural law to the specific society concerned. Saunders Lewis' neo-classicism reflects this belief in ethical and intellectual perfection. Saunders Lewis effectively employs the Thomistic distinction between civil law and the natural law in the *Caernarvon Court Speech*. He articulates a Thomist claim that the civil law of the English state is in violation of the natural law in its seeking to build a bombing school in a place of cultural and historical significance.

---

Aristotle. (1998) *Politics*. Oxford. Oxford University Press.

<sup>197</sup> Pope Leo XIII. (1940) *Rerum Novarum: The Papal Encyclical of Pope Leo XIII on the Conditions of Labour*. New York. The Paulist Press.

Pope Pius XI. (1939) *Quadragesimo Anno. (Reconstructing the Social Order)*. New York. The Paulist Press.

<sup>198</sup> For a full description and distinction of Thomist natural law and civil law see

Miller, David. (1987). *Blackwell Encyclopaedia of Political Thought*. Oxford. Blackwell Publishing. P.515.

Political neo-Thomist thought views the function of civil law and the power of the state as being to guarantee political order, thus making society possible. Also, its purpose is viewed as being to distribute to each 'what is truly his'. This is viewed by neo-Thomist political thought as ensuring stability and also ensuring peace, thereby making it possible to strive for the 'common good'. The 'common good' is seen as being the responsibility of all in the society, and especially of those who legitimately hold political power and govern ethical interests.<sup>199</sup> Laws should be made by the whole community or an institution acting as the community's legal representation according to neo-Thomist political thought, in line with the 'common good'. The 'common good' is seen as including not only God, the highest goal of man, but also the vital aspects of a society's culture, and the necessary material and economic conditions required to enable members of a society to strive for the 'good life'.<sup>200</sup> Therefore, for Saunders Lewis, the civil law of the English state, in the context of the *Caernarfon Court Speech*, was in opposition to the natural law as it was not aimed at the 'common good' in the wider sense of Wales' culture, rather, it was to its detriment.

For Neo-Thomist political thought, all institutions, both state and social, as well as all political activity, both national and international, are viewed as being of instrumental value, and not of intrinsic value. The 'end' that they serve is man as a person, and his striving for the good life. This is essential in understanding Saunders Lewis' rejection of statism, as he treats institutions as means to serve man rather than dominate him. This is crucial to an understanding of Saunders Lewis' belief that political activity is instrumental in that it acts as a means for culture: culture itself being an extension of the human person, rather than being valued as an end in itself. The idea that institutions and political activity should be of instrumental value is often referred to as the 'person principle' within neo-Thomistic political thought.

---

<sup>199</sup> Miller, David. (1987). *Blackwell Encyclopaedia of Political Thought*. Oxford. Blackwell Publishing. P.515

<sup>200</sup> Kempshall, M.S. (1999) *The Common Good in Late Medieval Political Thought*. Oxford. Oxford University Press. P.18.

Along with the 'person principle', two other principles are endorsed within neo-Thomist political thought that are seen as maintaining human dignity, equality and freedom. These are the 'subsidiarity principle', and the 'solidarity principle'<sup>201</sup>. The 'subsidiarity principle' holds that governments, states, or political authorities should only perform matters that exceed the capacity of individuals or private groups acting independently. This is based on the belief in the autonomy and dignity of the individual human. Underpinning the 'subsidiarity principle' is the assumption that human individuals are, by their nature, social beings. It emphasises the importance of small and intermediate sized communities or associations, such as the family, the 'local' community. Also included are the Church and voluntary associations and trade or professional associations which act as mediating structures to enable individual action, and also to link the individual and society. Also deriving from this is the idea of 'positive subsidiarity', the idea that there is an ethical imperative for governmental and societal action to create the social condition whereby the individual may fully participate in society and fulfil his/her potential. In practical terms, the neo-Thomist is compelled to be committed to such matters as the right to work, decent housing, minimum living standards (welfare benefits, etc.) and health care. In terms of political structure, following on from the principle that the individual's human dignity, equality and freedom should be maintained, the 'subsidiarity principle' entails a commitment to the idea that matters should be handled by the smallest competent authority. Following on from this is the idea that a central authority should have a 'subsidiary' function, only performing those tasks which cannot effectively be done at a more immediate or lower level. Within the conceptual framework of government this often entails a commitment to federalism, as well as to decentralised forms of government. The 'subsidiarity principle' is evident in the social and political thought of Saunders Lewis, and is reflected in his defence of the moral value of the necessary functioning at the 'human' level of the 'local' organic community, the sum of which is the nation, a 'community of communities'. It is reflected in his seeking to re-establish medieval guild systems and

---

<sup>201</sup> For a description of the relevant neo-Thomist 'Principles' please see Miller, David. (1987). *Blackwell Encyclopaedia of Political Thought*. Oxford. Blackwell Publishing. P.515.

cooperative modes of association. This is also combined with his belief in political decentralism, in contrast to political decisions being made in a centralised-state manner. He advocated political decisions being made at a human level first, progressing to family, community and up along the chain beyond the nation. Saunders Lewis' rejection of statism, and his advocacy of political decentralism, is pivotal and is further reflected in his espousal of interdependence at both sub-national and supranational level. This consequently leads him to advocate a European Union and 'Society of Nations' whereby governments have renounced the principle of state sovereignty<sup>202</sup>. Saunders Lewis therefore subscribes to the political principle of subsidiarity with his advocacy of European federalism.

The 'solidarity principle' asserts that political activity should revolve around the idea that the 'good life' necessitates co-operation on a mutual basis between both the individual and society. A consequence of this is that private property, and especially highly productive property, should benefit the common good, not only the individual owner. This is not a marked commitment to collectivism, or a challenge to the essential idea of private property. However, neo-Thomist political thought, in practical terms, can readily justify state intervention into the distribution of private property, as a means to ensure human dignity, equality and freedom in the face of excessive market forces. This is evident in Saunders Lewis' thought in *Canlyn Arthur*, most notably in the chapter entitled '*Y Cyfalafwyr Bychan (The Small Capitalists)*'<sup>203</sup> where he advocates the possession of private property as a means of ensuring the widest possible distribution of political power. Saunders Lewis' commitment to co-operativism is also reflected in this 'solidarity principle', as well as his insistence upon intervention to ensure that vast amounts of private property are not concentrated in the hands of a few.

---

<sup>202</sup> Saunders Lewis criticises the governments of Europe for not having renounced the principle of sovereignty in *Lloegr ac Ewrop a Chymru (England, Europe and Wales)* in *Canlyn Arthur*. Saunders Lewis, John. *England and Europe and Wales*. In (1938) *Canlyn Arthur*. Aberystwyth. Gwasg Aberystwyth. P.25.

<sup>203</sup> Saunders Lewis, John. *The Small Capitalists*. In (1938) *Canlyn Arthur*. Aberystwyth. Gwasg Aberystwyth. P.63.

Maritain's essay, *The End of Machiavellianism*,<sup>204</sup> was published in 1942, against the background of the totalitarian systems of World War II. He considered 'Machiavellianism', rooted in western thought, to be the central intellectual cause of WWII. He was concerned that democracies had in fact embraced many of its central tenets and principles. *The End of Machiavellianism* is thus a piece of political thought that seeks to challenge claims that all successful political action must adhere to 'Machiavelli's' principles<sup>205</sup>, as outlined in Machiavelli's *The Prince*.<sup>206</sup>

Maritain takes careful aim at the political idea of sovereignty, and seeks to explain why, given its historical context, it is demonstrably not a good idea. This leads Maritain to conclude that the concept of sovereignty "is intrinsically wrong and is bound to mislead us if we keep on using it".<sup>207</sup> Maritain criticises political theories in which the people surrender their political power to 'the sovereign', 'the sovereign' ruling over them, transcending the political whole. According to Maritain, this is something that should never happen because political authority arises from the people, the body politic, and does not descend from above.<sup>208</sup> This is crucial in seeking to understand Saunders Lewis' thought regarding the concept of sovereignty which he roundly criticises in *Principles of Nationalism*.

In *Man and State*, Maritain criticises the concept of sovereignty further. He seeks to trace its roots, and contrast it with concepts central to medieval theory. According to Maritain, within medieval theory, the ruler always exercises his authority as a 'vicar of the people'. This signifies that political authority is derived from the people and what they are, as individual persons. Maritain is keen to highlight how medieval theory is never absolutist. He places this in contrast with early modern political theory that adopted the idea and concept of sovereignty. Maritain notes how, in early modern

---

<sup>204</sup> Maritain, Jacques. *The End of Machiavellianism*. In (1953) *The Range of Reason*. London. Geoffrey Bless.

<sup>205</sup> Schall, James V. (1998) *Jacques Maritain: The Philosopher in Society*. Oxford. Rowman and Littlefield Publishers Inc. P.2.

<sup>206</sup> Machiavelli, Niccolo. (2005) *The Prince*. Oxford. Oxford University Press.

<sup>207</sup> Maritain, Jacques. (1951) *Man and State*. Chicago. University of Chicago Press. P.29.

<sup>208</sup> Schall, James V. (1998) *Jacques Maritain: The Philosopher in Society*. Oxford. Rowman and Littlefield Publishers Inc. P.74.

political theory, all authority is exercised in the name of the political sovereign, and that it consequently takes on a kind of being or personhood of its own. Crucially for Maritain, this authority does not derive from the people. Thus, in Maritain's historical critique of the development of the idea of the sovereignty, it came to mean "a property which is absolute and indivisible, which cannot be participated in and admits of no degrees and which belongs to the sovereign independently of the political whole, as a right of its own."<sup>209</sup> This affirmation of the Middle Ages as a political ideal is effectively the basis of the argument put forward by Saunders Lewis in *Principles of Nationalism* and forms the foundation of many of the ideas developed in Distributism and Guild Socialism.

Maritain therefore seeks to assert that men are in possession of rights, and that these rights have their foundation in the natural law:

"If it is true that the rights of men have their foundation in the natural law, which is at the same time, the source of both duties and rights – these two notions, moreover, being correlative – it appears that a declaration of rights ought normally be completed by a declaration of the duties and the responsibilities of men towards the communities of which they are part, notably toward the family society, the civil society and the international community."<sup>210</sup>

Thus, these duties circumvent, or indeed nullify, any 'absolute' duty to the sovereign, i.e. the state. This helps to explain Saunders Lewis' avowed internationalism, beyond that of any loyalty to the 'English state' and its civil law.

Maritain's theories had earlier been developed by thinkers such as Eliot, in seeking to re-establish Christian values and the Church in contemporary society, with his claim that:

---

<sup>209</sup> Maritain, Jacques. (1951) *Man and State*. Chicago. University of Chicago Press. P.38.

<sup>210</sup> Schall, James V. (1998) *Jacques Maritain: The Philosopher in Society*. Oxford. Rowman and Littlefield Publishers Inc. P.79.

“It is high time for Christians to bring themselves back to truth, reintegrating in the fullness of their original source those hopes for justice and those nostalgias for communion on which the world’s sorrow feeds and which are themselves misdirected, thus awakening a cultural and temporal force of Christian inspiration able to act on history and to be a support of man.”<sup>211</sup>

There is no doubting that Saunders Lewis’ Catholic-inspired Christian ‘nationalism’ is in agreement with Maritain’s position, and is reflected in his conceptualisation of a Welsh Christian Society in *Canlyn Arthur*.

Later in his career, Maritain developed his neo-Thomist political thought to encompass and acknowledge the fact that the world contains a multiplicity of cultures and philosophies. However, he argues that natural law can provide a common ground of discourse apart from and away from Christian ‘revelation’. Maritain went on to suggest a set of basic standards or principles that a society must settle on if it is to flourish. Diversity at the theoretical level is accepted by Maritain, yet he maintains that natural law is the best historic context for such a discourse. He also recognises the fact that theoretical discourse must take place in a situation of intellectual freedom itself, and thus find the ‘truth’ without coercion.<sup>212</sup>

Dafydd Glyn Jones notes that with the Great War, the ‘Catholic revival’ reached its developmental zenith. In the post-Great War era, it divided into two clear strands. One strand developed into Fascist leanings, deriving from the *Action Française* and turned into the Vichy government. Jacques Maritain however, was firmly located in the other strand, which,

“undertook to interpret the modern crisis in the light of Thomistic teaching. In the changed climate of the post-war period the neo-Thomism of Maritain becomes an

---

<sup>211</sup> Maritain, Jacques. (1950) *True Humanism (Humanisme Intégral)*. London. Geoffrey Bles.

<sup>212</sup> Schall, James V. (1998) *Jacques Maritain: The Philosopher in Society*. Oxford. Rowman and Littlefield Publishers Inc. P.88.



influential force not only in the sphere of religion and theology, but also of literary, aesthetic and social criticism.”<sup>213</sup>

It is in this strand that Saunders Lewis should rightly be placed.

Maritain retained much of the philosophical criticism of earlier Catholic thought regarding rationalistic materialism, but considered the questions it posed in much greater depth rather than dismissing it out of hand. In addition to this, with the issue of modernity (including democracy and science), he seeks to disengage them from these same mistakes. Saunders Lewis subscribes to Maritain’s reconciliation with democracy and science, wholly accepting and advocating them, despite his reluctance to do so within his political writings. Saunders Lewis, frustratingly from the reader’s point of view, often considers some ideas and ideals to be self-evident to the point of omitting them or neglecting to state them. As Dafydd Glyn Jones notes, Maritain criticises the modern democratic movement for having led to “collectivisation and slavery, to the deification of both the individual and the state”<sup>214</sup>. Maritain believes, however, that it can be redeemed, as its fundamental objective was sound. Thus for Maritain what is needed is a “theocentric humanism”<sup>215</sup> which the post-reformation world has tended to lose sight of, according to Maritain. On the level of metaphysics and epistemology, this involves,

“awarding to science a role in the quest for truth, while guarding against the heresy of making knowledge scientifically perceived into the whole of wisdom.”<sup>216</sup>

The political conclusion, which Maritain therefore reaches, is that the idea of individual freedom and the ordered society should be reconciled in a new pluralism, which avoids the extremes and morally corrupt practices of totalitarianism and *laissez-faire*. The network of responsibility should be distributed as widely as possible. (In effect, he

---

<sup>213</sup> Jones, Dafydd Glyn. *His Politics*. In Eds. Jones, Alun R. & Thomas, Gwyn. (1973) *Presenting Saunders Lewis*. Cardiff. University of Wales Press. P.41.

<sup>214</sup> *Ibid.* P.41.

<sup>215</sup> *Ibid.* P.41.

<sup>216</sup> *Ibid.* P.41-42.

advocates what could also be termed the 'post-war consensus' of several European democratic states, which many 'Christian Democrat' political parties advocated and subscribed to. Indeed, when Saunders Lewis' Welsh nationalism is decoupled from his political ideology, 'Christian Democrat' is an apt description of his politics.)

In his work, Maritain is keen to make a marked distinction between the two concepts of 'individual' and 'person'. His definitions of the two terms are not new and are in no way original to him. He asserts that they are classical ideals belonging to the "intellectual heritage of mankind".<sup>217</sup> According to this distinction, 'individuality' implies separation from others, and indeed confrontation with others, and is that part of man's existence that is rooted in matter. 'Personality', in contrast, is that part of man's existence that is rooted in the spiritual, and, in line with the classical ideal, is necessarily inclined towards perfection or fulfilment. According to Maritain, the implication of this is that it must be engaged by participation in a spiritual community, and consequently requires communication. A prerequisite of all of this is the self-assertion of the 'person' that is in turn necessary for him / her to enter into any community. Thus, for Saunders Lewis, this 'self-assertion' is that of the person of the Welsh nation into the community of nations, the self-assertion of the Welsh nation being the collective 'self-assertion' of its component communities, and their constituent individual 'persons'.

The 'theory of personality' that Maritain, and neo-Thomism in general, asserts, not only applies to the single human being, but also to all the natural, organic entities that are an extension of the human being. This 'theory of personality' therefore applies to entities such as the family and the nation. Thus these entities must share and participate with others in a larger 'community' if they are to justify themselves. Underlining all of this, of course, is the assumption that the entity must exist, accepting and asserting its own existence, in order to assert itself and participate in wider 'community'. The claims of the nation, and of the smaller communities which make it up, can therefore be upheld as acting in symbiotic fashion, with above them the single nation and the

---

<sup>217</sup> Ibid. P.42.

international community. In effect, from a philosophical starting point in the nature of the 'person', Maritain defends the necessary workings of interdependence at all levels of human activity. According to Maritain, it is possible to conceptualise 'a nation's mission'. However, it can never be a narrow particular interest 'mission', at the expense of the wider international community, but rather a particularising of the wider mission of the human family in its entirety. 'National rights' are defined as also entailing, crucially, obligations and duties by the same measure. These rights and duties are defined both in terms of the human person and its natural extensions, such as the organic community and are therefore grounded in natural law, which for man, according to neo-Thomist political thought, is also a moral law. Thus the Welsh nation is an extension of the individual person in Wales, and that as a cultural member, the individual has a 'duty' to assert this identity, but of course, only as part of a wider assertion of human values. Thus Saunders Lewis' 'nationalism' is internationalist by extension, seeking to acknowledge and assert the moral person of the Welsh nation, the Welsh society and its culture. The 'universal moral law' which Saunders Lewis refers to in his *Caernarfon Court Speech* is definitively the natural law on which Neo-Thomism relies.

According to Dafydd Glyn Jones, "even the most cursory glance at the pages of *Canlyn Arthur* would show the extent of Saunders Lewis' debt to the social philosophy of Maritain." The political thought of Saunders Lewis is heavily influenced by Maritain's distinction between the 'person' and the 'individual', as well as wider neo-Thomist social and political thought. It is difficult to distinguish whether Saunders Lewis' attraction to Maritain's thought was due to the social ideals Maritain espoused, or whether the ideals were the confirmation and logical implications of principles that Saunders Lewis already held. Dafydd Glyn Jones notes that it is "more probably the latter".<sup>218</sup>

Such debates that are inherent to the concepts of person, country and state were present in Welsh nationalism at a time when Maritain's social philosophy was still at an early

---

<sup>218</sup> Ibid. P.43.

stage in the 1920s. The attraction of Saunders Lewis to such thought undoubtedly had a great effect upon the development of his own, as well as wider Welsh, nationalism. It is often the implications of such social philosophy that gained the approval of more general Welsh nationalists and supporters of Welsh self-government. It was the starting principle of Catholicism that gained much disapproval, and was met in Saunders Lewis' era with widespread rejection (Welsh society being avowedly non-conformist).

Maritain's social thought was being developed in the 1920s, and it is clear that in political and social aspects, Saunders Lewis' political writing in the 1920s was in agreement with much of that put forward by Maritain. No more so is this evident than in the idealisation of the medieval political theory. Drawing direct inspiration from Maritain and the neo-Thomist dialectic, Saunders Lewis believes that if Wales is to have a future then it must repossess the virtues of its old civilisation. This is the ideal set out by Saunders Lewis in *Principles of Nationalism*, namely that the purpose of his Welsh nationalism is to "return to the (political) principle of the Middle Ages".<sup>219</sup> Of course, Saunders Lewis was not suggesting a wholesale return of every aspect of life to the Middle Ages, rather that contemporary life be remodelled on the political principles and structures adhered to in the Middle Ages. This should be read in conjunction with Maritain's claim that the aim should not be to re-create a society which will correspond in every detail to the medieval model, but rather one that will be analogous to it, a society that will embody the human values which sustained society in this period of history. Suffice to say, this looked to the past yet reconciled itself fully with human advancements, including democracy and technology.

The identifiable break with the past that Saunders Lewis views as being at fault for the malaise he perceives in Wales in modern times is the Tudor revolution in the 16<sup>th</sup> century which he outlines in *Principles of Nationalism*. Many early 20<sup>th</sup> century critics, of the same intellectual ilk as Saunders Lewis (such as those detailed above) were keen to highlight the loss of the organic community, and the disassociated way of life and alienation of man in modern life. In other critics, we see other markers set down as to

---

<sup>219</sup> Saunders Lewis, John. (1926) *Principles of Nationalism*. Machynlleth. Evan Jones Printers. P.3.

when the idealised past was fractured and these are incidences and processes that are seen as ushering in the modern age; the Industrial Revolution, the French Revolution, the Renaissance, and the Reformation are such examples. All these critics are united, however, in their quest to reassert the moral value of the organic community as well as in their condemnation of the introduction of 'scientific' utilitarian values. They berate the fact that values cease to be personal and instead become attached to the usefulness or destructiveness of social systems, and to 'materialist' values.<sup>220</sup>

### 3.6. Emrys ap Iwan (1851-1906).

The 19<sup>th</sup> century preacher and essayist Emrys ap Iwan was a self-acknowledged influence upon Saunders Lewis. Emrys ap Iwan's linguistic patriotism and cultural nationalism informed Saunders Lewis' thought with regard to the status of the Welsh language, and of its pivotal role as the essential element of Welsh culture. Saunders Lewis derived from Emrys ap Iwan the conception of culture as a political issue, and of the necessity for Welsh-self-government in order to revitalise the Welsh language.

Emrys ap Iwan was a cultural and political nationalist, and is often described as the most important forerunner to modern Welsh nationalism. He is credited with having inspired several generations of Welsh nationalists to take the matter up as a cultural and political cause.<sup>221</sup> He was also a literary critic, and a writer on a variety of topics including politics and religion. He did not compile any great systematic treatise, instead writing a vast number of lengthy newspaper and journal articles.<sup>222</sup>

---

<sup>220</sup> Jones, Dafydd Glyn. *His Politics*. In Eds. Jones, Alun R. & Thomas, Gwyn. (1973) *Presenting Saunders Lewis*. Cardiff. University of Wales Press. P.47.

Dafydd Glyn Jones highlights Spender, Stephen. *The Struggle of the Modern*, as a useful title in exploring these wider issues within early 20<sup>th</sup> century critics. Spender notes how despite the sophisticated criticism of modernity by critics, there is the possibility that "the sophistication hides a nostalgia just as heavily romanticised as those of Thomas Carlyle for monastic life in the 11<sup>th</sup> century, or William Morris for *Merrie England*. Eliot looks back to the Elizabethan age as a period when the intellect was immediately at the tips of the senses. Sensation became word and word sensation." In Saunders Lewis' case, it is the Welsh 'civilisation' of the 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> century.

<sup>221</sup> "Emrys ap Iwan wrote more than fifty substantial articles which gave expression to his belief in the dignity of the Welsh language and which became a manifesto for the nationalists of the succeeding generation."

Davies, John. (1990) *A History of Wales*. London. Penguin Press. P.455.

<sup>222</sup> The collection of Emrys ap Iwan's works are in three volumes:

Like Saunders Lewis after him, ap Iwan was a Francophile and more general admirer of wider European culture borne out of his experiences teaching in Switzerland and then Germany in his early years. Upon returning to Wales he became a non-conformist minister but was initially refused permission to be ordained by the Calvinistic Methodist Church due to his opposition to the policy of building English-language chapels in Welsh-speaking areas of Wales.<sup>223</sup> Again, like Saunders Lewis after him, ap Iwan's approach to political thinking is firmly from an aesthetic grounding. He conceives of cultures first, and this goes on to influence his political thinking. Emrys ap Iwan ridiculed his fellow Welshmen for their lack of concern towards the language and for their imitation of English culture, manners and morals. He criticised the imitation of the English language in the writings and preachings of his day. He sought to counter this by encouraging writers and thinkers to use a more natural and plain Welsh-language style. As D. Myrddin Lloyd notes, ap Iwan was unique in the Wales of his time, "not only as a Welsh thinker and patriot"<sup>224</sup>, but also for the "extent of contemporary and older European influences on his outlook and style."<sup>225</sup> Ap Iwan approached political thought from a solidly cultural angle. His 'route' into political thinking came firmly from his understanding of the Welsh language forming a distinct culture and literature, and that this was the basis for nationhood.

Ap Iwan took up the task, as he saw it, of renewing Welsh national pride in its language and identity, as this sprang from his own interest in the neglected Welsh prose classics of the 16<sup>th</sup>, 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries. He saw this Welsh literary heritage as forming, and being the very essence of, Welsh national identity, and that the nation, as it then stood, was being deprived of its heritage. He thought that Welsh national unity, and thus

---

ap Iwan, Emrys. (1937-1940) *A Collection of Articles and Books by Emrys ap Iwan. Vol. 1. Patriotic, Social and Historic writings.* Aberystwyth. Clwb Llyfrau Cymraeg (Welsh Book Club).

ap Iwan, Emrys. (1937-1940) *A Collection of Articles and Books by Emrys ap Iwan. Vol. 2 Literature and Language.* Aberystwyth. Clwb Llyfrau Cymraeg (Welsh Book Club).

ap Iwan, Emrys. (1937-1940) *A Collection of Articles and Books by Emrys ap Iwan. Vol. 3 Religion.* Aberystwyth. Clwb Llyfrau Cymraeg (Welsh Book Club).

<sup>223</sup> See Davies, John. (1990) *A History of Wales.* London. Penguin Press. P.422.

<sup>224</sup> Myrddin Lloyd, D. (1979) *Emrys ap Iwan.* Cardiff. University of Wales Press. P.1.

<sup>225</sup> Ibid. P.1.

identity, was being damaged by much interdenominational rivalry. He was concerned that sect meant more than nation in Wales, but as a Methodist minister, thought that the Calvinistic Methodist Church had the potential to become the national church in Wales.

Emrys ap Iwan's self-acknowledged influences were the Frenchmen Paul-Louis Courier and Blaise Pascal, and as Myrddin Lloyd notes, "his European outlook and experience enabled him to make a very fresh and valuable contribution to thought and attitudes in Wales".<sup>226</sup> Emrys ap Iwan had noted how both Frenchmen had utilised the pamphlet as a literary form and how they had employed it as an instrument in seeking to change public opinion. Emrys ap Iwan also sought to do this, and his body of work consists of such pamphlets and letters, which he sent to the weekly Welsh Liberal newspaper, *Y Faner (The Flag)*. As Myrddin Lloyd notes, "unlike the snippets in present-day newspapers, these letters could be essays running to a thousand or two thousand words, enabling a point of view to be expressed in detail."<sup>227</sup> This means that his body of work is substantial and coherent, although no great systematic treatise of his thought was ever produced.<sup>228</sup>

Emrys ap Iwan's conception of language is clearly highly influential upon Saunders Lewis. Indeed Saunders Lewis' definition often appears as a direct restating of points made by Emrys ap Iwan some four decades earlier. Emrys ap Iwan conceived of language as the "mind's tool simply because it is its foundation."<sup>229</sup> Further to this he noted that "the word which is the product of the mind works back on the mind itself, and thus on the whole life."<sup>230</sup> Central to this is the concept that "good speech fosters civilisation."<sup>231</sup>

He also notes that:

---

<sup>226</sup> Ibid. P.8.

<sup>227</sup> Ibid. P.10.

<sup>228</sup> Indeed it is a viable contention that 'The Social and Political Thought of Emrys ap Iwan' warrants a study of its own!

<sup>229</sup> Myrddin Lloyd, D. (1979) *Emrys ap Iwan*. Cardiff. University of Wales Press. P.20.

<sup>230</sup> Ibid. P.20.

<sup>231</sup> Ibid. P.20.

“Seemly language is not a loosely fitting garment around the thought, but a body that has been conceived with it - a pellucid spiritual body serving only to give form to the man within, and not to hide or to embellish him.”<sup>232</sup>

Indeed, this fierce linguistic patriotism marks Emrys ap Iwan as the earliest exponent of Welsh nationalism. He foresaw, before many, that the Welsh language would decrease in usage and that it had to be defended in a political sense. The main spur of his often highly satirical pieces were instances of injustice, as he saw it, where Welsh people had been humiliated because they spoke Welsh. His anger was directed at those who had displayed their arrogance, as well as at his fellow-Welshmen, for their passive, or indeed non-existent, reaction.

Emrys ap Iwan was amongst the first modern writers to reason that the Welsh language was a political question, a view that was to be inherited by Saunders Lewis. Emrys ap Iwan saw the teaching of Welsh in homes and schools as a political question. Writing as he was in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, at a time when it was commonly felt that the Welsh language could be safely looked after in the private sphere, the home, chapel and Sunday school, ap Iwan was maintaining that the future well-being of the Welsh language, and its continuance, depended upon it being treated as a political matter in the public sphere. Whilst the dominant thought on the matter was that day schools were there merely to provide skills, such as the three ‘Rs’, he was far ahead of his time in seeing that “the life of the language would depend on its place in the state schools”.<sup>233</sup> Indeed, Saunders Lewis restates the case in *Fate of the Language*, again arguing that the Welsh language is not a “matter for the hearth”, and cites Emrys ap Iwan as a figure who had ‘raised the language as a battle-standard, “seeing the language as the English Government has always seen it, as a political matter.”<sup>234</sup> Emrys ap Iwan’s response to those who forecast the death of the language and saw it as a foregone conclusion, was

---

<sup>232</sup> Ibid. P.20.

<sup>233</sup> Ibid. P.33.

<sup>234</sup> Saunders Lewis, John. *Fate of the Language (Tynged Yr Iaith)* (1962). In Eds. Jones, Alun R. & Thomas, Gwyn. (1973) *Presenting Saunders Lewis*. Cardiff. University of Wales Press. P.134.



to state “If you were treated as you have treated Welsh you would all be dead by May-day.”<sup>235</sup>

The most important point that Saunders Lewis went on to extract from Emrys ap Iwan’s political thought was how all political matters related to the language could be remedied under the nationalist goal of self-government. Whilst campaigning on individual issues was worthwhile, all could be remedied swiftly under the overall aim of Welsh self-government.<sup>236</sup> Emrys ap Iwan is often credited as having been the first to use the term ‘*Ymreolaeth*’ in a national-political sense.<sup>237</sup> For ap Iwan, like Saunders Lewis after him, the continuance of the language is of primary importance, as there is ‘no nation without language’, with ‘the political’ being of secondary importance, i.e. still of immense importance, but subservient to the primary aim. As Myrddin Lloyd is keen to note, Emrys ap Iwan stated “on more than one occasion that the Self-Rule of a Wales that had lost its language did not interest him”<sup>238</sup>. This was picked up by Saunders Lewis, and employed in his own nationalist thought. He stated that self-government for Wales based upon government for Anglo-Wales, a Wales without the Welsh language, would be materialist and, in his mind, to be rejected.<sup>239</sup> Crucially, Emrys ap Iwan’s political aim of Welsh self-government was, at the same time, careful not to seek to hermetically seal Wales in a political and cultural sense. In conjunction with a wider belief in interdependence, indeed, he defined ‘*Ymreolaeth*’ in a federalist sense, giving examples of Switzerland, the U.S.A. and others. Whilst he did believe that a nation had the right to ‘independence’, it should not be its goal. However, the bonds that Emrys ap Iwan advocates in any future federal Britain are clearly very loose. With regard to the interdependence of nations which should be manifested in principles

---

<sup>235</sup> Myrddin Lloyd, D. (1979) *Emrys ap Iwan*. Cardiff. University of Wales Press. P.37.

<sup>236</sup> ‘Individual issues’ of the late 19<sup>th</sup> century were typically Welsh cultural or economic matters on which there was seen to be a consensus in Wales, such as Disestablishment and land reform. See relevant sections in Chapter 8 of John Davies’ *A History of Wales*.

Davies, John. (1990) *A History of Wales*. London. Penguin Press. P.398.

<sup>237</sup> Myrddin Lloyd, D. (1979) *Emrys ap Iwan*. Cardiff. University of Wales Press. P.30.

*Rheolaeth* translates as ‘ruling’ or ‘government’ with the adjoining of the reflexive prefix of ‘ym’.

<sup>238</sup> *Ibid.* P.30.

<sup>239</sup> Saunders Lewis, John. (1926) *Principles of Nationalism*. Machynlleth. Evan Jones Printers. P.3.

of political governance, i.e. nations should be 'free' but not 'independent', this point is carried on by Saunders Lewis.

The logical outcome of Emrys ap Iwan's political nationalism lies in Saunders Lewis' and fellow nationalists' founding of the Welsh Nationalist Party (Plaid Cymru) in 1926. Emrys ap Iwan advised his fellow Welshmen to vote in local and parliamentary elections for candidates of whatever party, based on the candidate's readiness to further the language and to support even the slightest degree of advance in Wales' control of its own affairs, rather than on specific party policies. He did not, however, feel sufficiently compelled to enter into the party political domain and found a Welsh nationalist party. He was thus never forced into peculiar stances where political party policy and political principle clash, as invariably occurs when electoral politics is involved. Despite advocating voting for Cymro-centric candidates, Emrys ap Iwan was scornful of the Cymru Fydd movement and all Welsh endeavours within the Liberal party. With regard to the Cymru Fydd movement, he referred to "Welsh wind in the sail and an English hand on the helm."<sup>240</sup> In spite of the aforementioned advocacy of voting for stronger Cymro-centric candidates regardless of party or policy, he did in fact regard it as the primary right of every nation to have its own government.

Emrys ap Iwan believed that if this national right to self government was overridden and ignored, as in the case of Wales, then the psychological well-being of the nation would be damaged. He regarded this as being the basis of the general spiritual malaise present in Wales, that of the psychology of a dominated nation. For ap Iwan this was represented in the Welsh lack of national pride in its heritage and abilities, which led to servility and a hopelessness that always looked outside in the vain hope of help and solutions to its problems. It is this 'general spiritual malaise' that sapped people's confidence in themselves, thus impeding them in facing their problems, and in working together as a community for sufficiently radical solutions. This was a sentiment clearly echoed in Saunders Lewis' political writings, viewing that the 'national' task in Wales was to be achieved through 'spiritual' means rather than 'material'.

---

<sup>240</sup> Myrddin Lloyd, D. (1979) *Emrys ap Iwan*. Cardiff. University of Wales Press. P.42.

Emrys ap Iwan saw all other political aims as secondary to the primary aims of language and self-government. Aims such as a Land Act, disestablishment of the Church, county councils, free education, etc. were all of value, but all would be remedied if Wales was to become a self-governing nation. A psychologically confident nation could achieve these things for itself rather than looking outside for radical change. These secondary aims could be more readily achieved if self-government was achieved. Thus it was imperative that Wales kept its own language in order to make it a nation and, as a consequence cause the reciprocal effect this would have upon these secondary aims. Saunders Lewis developed this aspect of ap Iwan's thought, particularly in his approach to the reciprocal nature of language, nation, and self-government.

Ap Iwan's approach to political thinking was rationalistic, and based on argument from principle, rather than on any empirical study of man or 'human nature': identifying problems, economic or otherwise and constructing a political argument from this foundation. Saunders Lewis also does this. Indeed, it is a criticism of both that they posit "a nationalistic creed *in vacuo* rather than building on a study of the various needs of the people in their industrial and other struggles"<sup>241</sup>. Thus, criticism of its inability to address 'bread and butter' issues of economic reality is easily levelled at it. This, of course, is not how Emrys ap Iwan and Saunders Lewis conceived of politics in essence. They were concerned with economic matters, but rather saw these as symptomatic of a wider 'grander' problem which needed to be addressed: that of self-government.

There is a wider general appreciation of European culture in the thought of Emrys ap Iwan, to which Saunders Lewis is the natural heir in Welsh social and political thought. In fact, Saunders Lewis very closely followed Emrys ap Iwan's advice to his fellow Welshmen to:

---

<sup>241</sup> Ibid. P.31.

“Read German books to broaden your knowledge, French books to learn to set it in order, English books to learn how to apply it, and the older Welsh books to enable you to impart your knowledge to your fellow-countrymen in a manner that is really Welsh.”<sup>242</sup>

Indeed, this seems to form the basis, along with his specific reading of the Welsh literary and aesthetic tradition, of Saunders Lewis’ conception of Wales as a ‘European nation’, rather than as a ‘Celtic country’ or ‘region of Britain’.

Another aspect of ap Iwan’s thought that Saunders Lewis continued within his political writing was that of the need for an independent Welsh polity with its own national journalism and comment. Saunders Lewis is also the heir to ap Iwan’s anti-imperialism. Ap Iwan was critical of British imperialism in Africa and elsewhere, as well as writing frequently on the Irish Question, arguing in favour of Irish self-government, viewing the matter firmly in national terms rather than in religious terms.

Ap Iwan can also be seen as an implicit advocate of the organic community. This stems from his writings on his dislike of the city of Liverpool (the ‘urban’ centre of North Wales, although in England), essentially a critique of the values of the city and the *Gesellschaft*. Aside from his antipathy to the Englishness of the city, Ap Iwan was critical of the crassness of Victorian greed and materialism in an age of unbounded imperialism. Ap Iwan scorned this ‘age of progress’, falsely termed in his view, despite its pretensions to moral superiority and righteousness.<sup>243</sup>

Saunders Lewis and Emrys ap Iwan were both advocates of the classical ideal in aesthetics, rather than the ‘romantic’. Emrys ap Iwan was highly critical of the Catholic church, whereas Catholic social teaching is highly formative in much of Saunders Lewis’ wider social thought. Despite Emrys ap Iwan’s criticism of Catholicism and Anglo-Catholicism, (as one would expect from a non-conformist Calvinist Methodist

---

<sup>242</sup> Ibid. P.27.

<sup>243</sup> Ibid. P.5.



minister), he is also critical of non-conformism and its puritanical lack of concern for aesthetic qualities.<sup>244</sup>

With regard to Welsh self-government and the Welsh language, ap Iwan is an important figure deserving of his own study. His insights into Wales and the condition of the Welsh language laid down a precursor for the political nationalism which Saunders Lewis was to espouse. Ap Iwan's belief that Wales, Welsh identity and the Welsh language could and would be renewed, and his insights as to how it could be achieved, provided a blueprint for various 'nationalist' endeavours over much of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. He predicted that there would be a renewal of prestige in the Welsh language, and, as Myrddin Lloyd states, he foresaw the establishment of a Welsh National Museum. Remarkably, given it was the heyday of English imperial expansion, commerce, and belief in continuous progress,

“he prophesied that national and class rivalries would bring about an Armageddon with fearful bloodshed on the fields of Belgium.”<sup>245</sup>

He also predicted that England would lose its imperial standing in the world. His predictions were not always correct, however, as he also predicted the rise of 'The Welsh Covenanters' who would push for Welsh language and national rights. However, as Myrddin Lloyd also notes, Welsh was still the native language of the large majority over the greater area of the country, and that “a widespread determined effort to restore it to full use in Wales could very well have succeeded.”<sup>246</sup>

It is a persistent criticism of Saunders Lewis' political nationalism that his was essentially a 19<sup>th</sup> century nationalism trying to function in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, in the sense that it did not sufficiently recognise the bilingual, and therefore bi-cultural, content of the composite nation (Wales), and sought to idealise the rural 'organic' community without adequately addressing the social and political complexities of mass urban industrialised society.

---

<sup>244</sup> Ibid. P.22.

<sup>245</sup> Ibid. P.42.

<sup>246</sup> Ibid. P.42.

Whilst this criticism is highly valid and essential to understanding the successes and failures in the historical developments of 20<sup>th</sup> century Welsh political thought (nationalist or otherwise), it overlooks the fact that Saunders Lewis argued his points, often in polemicist fashion, from a deeply held *a priori* moral grounding – in essence his political thought is deontological.

Thus Saunders Lewis's political ideas were influenced by a variety of thinkers and concepts regarding their ideological content, as well as the national content of his thought. It is apt they be considered in relation to Saunders Lewis, as no political thought is monolithic. Indeed, thinkers such as those of the Modernist school, in conjunction with neo-Thomist Catholic social doctrine, inform Saunders Lewis' social thought and the ideology surrounding his envisioning of the ideal type of society with which to engender a politically and culturally liberated Wales (examined further in this study). The ideas regarding the moral value of language as culture espoused in the Welsh context by Emrys ap Iwan, as well as in a more general sense by Eliot (English culture being Eliot's concern) and neo-Thomist moral philosophy, crystallise in Saunders Lewis' thought the need for an overtly political Welsh cultural nationalism, which he develops.

## **The Central Tenets: *Principles of Nationalism*.**

Proviso: Where quotes are from *Principles of Nationalism*, the page reference will appear in parenthesis after the quote.

Saunders Lewis, John. (1926) *Egwyddorion Cenedlaetholdeb (Principles of Nationalism)*. Machynlleth. Evan Jones Printers.

This chapter aims to identify, investigate and examine the prominent ideas emanating from Saunders Lewis' *Egwyddorion Cenedlaetholdeb (Principles of Nationalism)*. Those ideas identified within the text are the reciprocal nature of nation, language and self-government (Saunders Lewis is cautious of the term self-determination with its suggestion of sovereignty), and how this is justified by a re-evaluation and appropriation of (Welsh) history. It also examines how Saunders Lewis' perceives language as the defining characteristic of a nation and that history, and how politics and government can play a role in securing a language and thus a nation.

### **4.1. Nation, Language and Self-Government.**

The idea of the reciprocal nature of nation, language/culture and self-government is a central theme and indeed forms the basis on which Saunders Lewis builds much of his social and political thought. In his mind, the Welsh language is the defining factor and marker of the 'nation'. (He never adequately addresses the issue of Anglo-Welsh culture and its constituency in the 'nation'). Thus Saunders Lewis' nationalism is concerned primarily with the cultural, with the political being secondary yet nonetheless integral to it. Without the political, the cultural would simply become 'provincial' and 'irrelevant', and in Saunders Lewis' mind, marks the failure of late 19<sup>th</sup> century Welsh nationalism which pursued cultural ends within the British political system. The idea of self-government therefore plays a prominent part in Saunders Lewis' vision of a Wales revitalised as to its culture and the Welsh language. Saunders Lewis' nationalism is a politically-engaged cultural nationalism which seeks to sustain the Welsh language through a national Welsh political culture, a polity or 'civic

society'. Reflecting his belief that politics and culture are reciprocal in that they form parts of an overall, 'whole', society, Saunders Lewis argues that it is imperative for the Welsh language to become the 'language of government' in Wales, and be accepted as normal within Welsh society. However, what remains much less clear in Saunders Lewis' writings is the definition of self government in empirical terms, and here one encounters some discrepancies in policy terms regarding a constitutional status for Wales. This problem centres predominantly on the concepts of 'freedom' and 'independence'. In essence, the question posed by Saunders Lewis is 'how much political independence is required in 'real' terms to ensure cultural freedom?' It is by seeking to pose this question in conjunction with an appropriation of Welsh cultural and political history that Saunders Lewis puts forward his argument in *Egwyddrion Cenedlaetholdeb (Principles of Nationalism)*.

Despite his strong assertion of culture, Saunders Lewis did not advocate its preservation to be the ultimate end of politics, and instead was adamant that nationalism is not an end in itself. Indeed he views it as in turn facilitating liberty. As Dafydd Glyn Jones points out, he does not fall,

"... into the trap of making the defence of cultural standards the ultimate aim of political endeavour. This he does not do.... He does expect political nationalism to benefit culture in Wales: he sees it as the only answer to provincialism in literature and the arts. The cultural endeavor which he advocates is in turn regarded as part of the defence of certain political freedoms."<sup>247</sup>

*Principles of Nationalism* was intended by Saunders Lewis to lay the fundamentals of a coherent political ideology for the newly formed Welsh Nationalist Party (subsequently know as Plaid Cymru.) Despite Saunders Lewis' attempt to forge its contents as the creed of the party, it is instead a distinct illustration of his own political thought. The early years of the Welsh Nationalist Party afforded much room for examining

---

<sup>247</sup> Jones, Dafydd Glyn. *His Politics*. In Eds. Jones, Alun R. & Thomas, Gwyn. (1973) *Presenting Saunders Lewis*. Cardiff. University of Wales Press. P.31.

Dafydd Glyn Jones points out that Saunders Lewis did not fall into the trap of making the defence of cultural standards the ultimate aim of political endeavour, unlike his various contemporaries such as T.S. Eliot, Ezra Pound, and Wyndham Lewis with whom he shared certain ideals. Although Saunders Lewis shares philosophical space with these contemporaries he explicitly does not share ideological space with them. Pound, of course, went on to advocate fascism, whilst Saunders Lewis did not.



ideological approaches, yet as McAllister notes, “the defining aims of it did not extend to a clear elaboration of the party’s political ideology.”<sup>248</sup> *Principles of Nationalism* nonetheless remains a central document in the study of 20<sup>th</sup> century Welsh political nationalism. It provides a deep insight into the social and political thought of Saunders Lewis, and is central to his wider thought.

*Principles of Nationalism* was delivered at a Plaid Cymru ‘summer school’ in 1926, the year after the Party had been founded (1925). Plaid Cymru ‘summer schools’ were to act as an intense period of political and social debate every year whilst the new party was in its infancy. At first, just a handful of intellectuals and activists were present, yet as membership grew, so did the attendance at the annual event. Saunders Lewis was therefore aiming this extended speech at an audience already aware of historical context and of the perceived need for a specifically Welsh political party dedicated to establishing Welsh self-government and concerned with Welsh culture, distinct from other British parties.

In *Principles of Nationalism*, Saunders Lewis laid out his vision of a tempered and restrained nationalism, cautious of extremism, violence and virulence, yet founded upon the importance of language which embodied culture. The main objective of any Welsh national political movement in Wales therefore was to ensure a revitalisation of the Welsh language. As McAllister notes, his own nationalism was “a doctrine of conservation and preservation, echoing Edmund Burke”.<sup>249</sup> ‘Self-government’ was imperative if this was to take place, as it would have a knock-on effect, as well as a reciprocal one, in relation to the vitality of the Welsh language, identity and nation. Saunders Lewis seeks to crystallize his conception of a ‘just’ nationalism and castigates the types of nationalism that he sees as being normatively abhorrent. He points out that Wales’ social and cultural malaise is itself the result of nationalism – that of the English state. He goes on to mark out how the rise of the English state in the 16<sup>th</sup> century and its drive to culturally homogenise was to the detriment of Welsh culture. In order to

---

<sup>248</sup> McAllister, Laura. (2001) *Plaid Cymru: The Emergence of a Political Party*. Bridgend. Seren. P.25.

<sup>249</sup> Ibid. P.23.

remedy this, to safeguard and revitalise Welsh culture and language, self-government would be needed for Wales as a national 'right'.

*Principles of Nationalism* is tripartite in its structure. The first section focuses on the root cause of Welsh cultural and social malaise: Saunders Lewis identifies this as being the incorporation of Wales into England in the 16<sup>th</sup> century (1536) despite it having been conquered three centuries previously. It was only now, with the break in European moral unity as embodied by the Church, the Reformation and the rise of state sovereignty, that conditions enabled the state to seek to culturally homogenise its populations. In the second part of *Principles of Nationalism*, Saunders Lewis seeks to clearly identify what characterises the Welsh nation and distinguishes it from England. He concludes that it is the Welsh language, and that this is the essence of Welsh identity. Accordingly he asserts that all social and political life in Wales be arranged so that the Welsh language may flourish and be revitalised. In the third part Saunders Lewis asserts that to enable this cultural 'freedom' to take place, Wales must be enacted with self-government in order to effect such a 'freedom', at the same time warning against the type of government that had arisen in the 16<sup>th</sup> century with a strong conception of 'independence' or state sovereignty. Also, external to Wales, Saunders Lewis seeks to recognise the interdependence of nations by recognising a supranational authority of real clout in a 'Society of Nations' (League of Nations).

It is ironic that whilst attempting to lay out his vision of a moral framework for Welsh nationalism within the *Principles of Nationalism*, Saunders Lewis also raises some of the main schisms and areas of conflict within Welsh nationalist political thought. Saunders Lewis normatively abhors the nationalism of statehood, with his condemnation of the nationalism of the English state. Asserting the importance of cultural freedom over political independence he highlights the problem of defining the

precise measure of political independence required in order to effect cultural freedom, i.e. a constitutional status.<sup>250</sup>

Before embarking upon his analysis of Welsh history, Saunders Lewis begins *Principles of Nationalism* by warning against “extremism” (P.2) and notes that “there lie large dangers in hot-headed and limitless nationalism” (P.2). That he should warn of extremism or the potential to lead to violence is surprising given the context of Wales never having had a dedicated nationalist political movement or party. He is of course mindful of the violence he depicts as having been perpetrated by the English state upon Welsh culture, to which he alludes later on. (Indeed, in the 1920s memories were still fresh from the Great War of the ‘hot-headed and limitless nationalism’ of the militarist type.) This rejection of ‘hot-headed and limitless nationalism’ can be seen in Saunders Lewis’ thought, to be rooted in an anti-domination anti-imperialism borne out of the experience of the First World War. It is apt that Saunders Lewis, when viewed in conjunction with his rejection of unfettered state power, cautions any embryonic Welsh nationalism, “Know the boundaries ... and there refrain, and not go to extremes... this is the soul of wisdom and justice.” (P.2)

#### **4.2. A Retrospective and Appropriation of Welsh History.**

Saunders Lewis immediately asserts that Wales was “once part of the Roman Empire” (P.2) and that it “inherited the Latin civilisation of Europe” (P.2). He also seeks to assert that after the fall of Rome, Wales “sought to build its life on the basis of that tradition” (P.2) Even though he does not expand upon this, it is of theoretical importance that Saunders Lewis notes this characteristic of Welsh national history. He allied himself strongly to A.W. Wade-Evans’ historical account of the early Welsh nation as outlined in *The Historical Basis of Welsh Nationalism*.<sup>251</sup> Wade-Evans sought to assert that the early Cambro-Britons, the embryonic Welsh, were “filii Romanorum,

---

<sup>250</sup> Saunders Lewis himself was to receive criticism from assorted republican nationalists regarding his advocacy of ‘Dominion Status’ as a constitutional status for Wales, as well as from socialist and liberal nationalists regarding his interpretation of history and ‘class consciousness’.

<sup>251</sup> Wade-Evans, A.W. *et al* (1950). *The Historical Basis of Welsh Nationalism*. Cardiff. Plaid Cymru Publications.

sons of the Romans”<sup>252</sup>, that “they were already Romans before they realised that they were Britons”<sup>253</sup> and were possessed of the spiritual and cultural ideal of *Romanitas* and Christianity, long before the arrival of the Anglo-Saxons, the embryonic English nation. Indeed, the detail of Wade-Evans’ historical account is highly contested, but that is a matter for an ancient history study. What is pertinent here is the employment of history by modern nationalists in order to confer dignity upon the nation. By seeking to alert a population to its rich, cultured, ‘civilised’, and dignified, history, Saunders Lewis is asserting that the Welsh nation, and its cultural and political revitalisation are worthwhile, as well as morally just, pursuits.

Saunders Lewis asserts that despite having been conquered by England in the 13<sup>th</sup> century, Wales suffered “no great harm” (P.2). Despite being conquered, Wales went on “living its own life and developing its culture, still a part of Europe” (P.2) Indeed, Saunders Lewis asserts that the 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> centuries were a ‘golden era’ of Welsh literature and prose, and that this ‘golden’ era came to an end in the 16<sup>th</sup> century when Wales was incorporated into England (1536 Act of Union), and from that point on the “civilisation of Wales wasted away and declined” (P.2). Thus the contemporary result of this incorporation was that Welsh “civilisation is in mortal peril” (P.2). It is of theoretical importance to note here that Saunders Lewis employs the word ‘civilisation’ interchangeably with culture, tradition, and nationhood.

Saunders Lewis seeks to question why Wales has suffered cultural decline after political incorporation into England in the 16<sup>th</sup> century. He dismisses accounts that seek to place the cause upon the “betrayal of the Tudors” (P.2), the “decline of the Welsh nobles” (P.2), or the “beginnings of the middle classes and the rich merchants that did not care at all for Welsh culture” (P.2). He also denies that it is the “wrong done to the Welsh language by the Anglising of education” (P.2). Instead he seeks to assert that the root cause of Welsh malaise is “nationalism” (P.2). Of course, Saunders Lewis views this to be the nationalism of the English State.

---

<sup>252</sup> Ibid. P.1.

<sup>253</sup> Ibid. P.1.

Reflective of contemporary Wilsonian sentiment and thought prevalent in the 1920s, Saunders Lewis notes that it is common to hear such proclamations that “Every nation should be free” (P.2), or that “no nation has the right to govern another nation” (P.2), and “a nation must be independent” (P.2). In refining his thought on such matters, Saunders Lewis then asks the question “What is the meaning of ‘free’, ‘govern’, ‘independence’?” (P.2) and goes on to provide an answer for his question by maintaining that in the Middle Ages ‘independence’ did not exist. Crucial to Saunders Lewis’ understanding of the word ‘independence’ is his assertion that in the Middle Ages, no government claimed “supreme and unitary authority” (P.3) within its own boundaries. He states that prior to the 16<sup>th</sup> century, all nations and rulers “recognised that there was an authority higher than state authority” (P.3). Underpinning Saunders Lewis’ argument is his assertion that before the rise of state sovereignty (what Saunders Lewis terms ‘independence’) there was a higher moral authority in Europe, “the authority of Christianity” (P.3). He notes that the Christian Church was “sovereign in Europe” (P.3) and that in this period, “Europe was one” (P.3), with every part of it “recognising its interdependence” (P.3). Relating this scenario to Wales and England, under this European unity defined by one “moral principle and law” (P.3), the culture of “every land and region” (P.3) was protected. Saunders Lewis is making the point that under Medieval Christendom, despite the conquest of one country by another, its culture was left intact and allowed to flourish. The moral framework of the age decreed that there was moral unity in cultural diversity. Saunders Lewis asserts that this idea was “one of the profoundest ideas of the Middle Ages” (P.3), and that it was an idea “inherited from the Greeks” (P.3). In Saunders Lewis’ reading, “There was one law and one civilisation throughout Europe”(P.3), yet that ‘civilisation’ took on “many forms and many colours” (P.3). The unity of religious belief in Europe meant that there was a “protection and a cradle for every regional culture and the special qualities of every part of Europe” (P.3). It is therefore of theoretical importance to Saunders Lewis’ wider conception of Welsh nationalism that Christianity is integral to any conception of Welsh nationhood, as “it was Christianity and the Church that protected Welsh civilisation” (P.3). Reflective of the prevailing moral framework of the Middle Ages

therefore, “a multiplicity of languages” (P.3) was not viewed as a problem as there was a moral law in a “common creed” (P.3), before the rise of state sovereignty. The moral unity of Europe was deemed to be broken with the Reformation, with the moral authority of the ‘Universal Church’ giving way to that of ‘particular’ states.

This revolt against the universal moral law of the European Church, is characterised in Saunders Lewis’ mind by “the age of Luther in Germany, Machiavelli in Italy, and the Tudors in Britain” (P.3). Thus, the state sovereignty that arose is equated with the morally abhorrent nationalism which Saunders Lewis warned had been the root cause of Welsh cultural denigration. In place of the moral authority of the Church, Saunders Lewis asserts that now State government was “supreme in all conscience and all morality” (P.30). He asserts that the King became the Head of the Church, in place of the Pope, and that the state thereby assumed the role of moral arbiter, in essence governing “religion, conscience, the whole of human life” (P.3). This also entailed the ability to “change creed, theology and standards of morality” (P.3). For Saunders Lewis, all this is equated with the normatively unjust principle of ‘independence’, ‘independent’ from the previously just moral law of the Middle Ages.

Saunders Lewis seeks to depict Europe after the 16<sup>th</sup> century as being in a state of chaos, in contrast with what went before. Instead of the single moral unity of Europe under the Medieval Church, several ‘independent’ moral authorities now existed. The external outcome of this state of affairs, according to Saunders Lewis, was to sow the seeds of imperialism as “every authority was a danger to its neighbour, and every government strove to grow stronger, expand, and plunder” (P.3). Within these now ‘independent’ sovereign states, Saunders Lewis notes that internal diversity became equated with weakness in regard to the external competition. Thus, at the sub-state level, uniformity was sought, resulting in “one law, one language, monotony” (P.3). As different governments became enemies, government also made an enemy of all “difference of tradition, culture, and language” (P.3) within their own territories.

Saunders Lewis notes that in contrast with the Middle Ages, whereby spiritual unity was the ideal striven for, the rise of state sovereignty in the modern era meant that now “material strength was the basis of authority” (P.4) In contrast to the modern era, Saunders Lewis describes the defining political philosophy of the Middle Ages as being one in which “all oppression was condemned, all tyranny, all laws that violated that precious thing: man’s personality” (P.4) Crucially therefore, language and culture is conceived of as the zenith of the human personality and consequently its most valuable aspect. In relation to Wales and Welsh culture under the English state, the moral principle of sovereignty meant that there was now “one government, one language, one State, one culture, one education system, one religion” (P.4). Crucially, and detrimental to Wales, was that it was the “government religion, government language, government education, government culture” (P.4). Important to Saunders Lewis’ whole conception of Welsh nationhood and political nationalism, is the loss of the moral unity of the Middle Ages and the overriding of the ‘universal moral law’ by the principle of sovereignty. This is key to understanding his social and political thought. Thus the ‘nationalism’ of the 16<sup>th</sup> century is equated in his mind with being the “triumph of materialism over spirituality, of paganism over Christianity” (P.4). It was this ‘materialist’ and ‘pagan’ nationalism, according to Saunders Lewis, that “destroyed our Wales” (P.4).

Saunders Lewis is adamant that it would be morally unjust to argue in favour of Welsh national rights on the basis of the “materialistic argument” (P.4) of the 16<sup>th</sup> century type of nationalism. In arguing in favour of Welsh national rights, he seeks to do so from “spiritual (moral) principles” (P.4) rather than “material rights” (P.4). He is certain that the “English government” (P.4) must be presented with a moral argument, as he is sure that the “day will come when once again the value of the principles of morality will be recognised” (P.4). Saunders Lewis bases this on the belief that “the day of the materialistic philosophy has come to an end” (P.4) and rests this upon the conclusion that the result of “the last war is the realisation that imperialism is something to be ashamed of” (P.4). Reflective of 16<sup>th</sup> century nationalism (which Saunders Lewis

equates with imperialism), is his assertion that ultimately “every attempt at uniformity in political life leads to war and destruction” (P.4).

Saunders Lewis ultimately seeks to define the content of a morally just nationalism, which he sees as being the only type worthy of advocating in favour of Welsh national rights. His answer is that it should be one that places at its heart a return to the moral and political principle of the Middle Ages, that denies the principle of sovereignty and ‘uniformity’, “thereby arguing in favour of the principle of unity and diversity” (P.4). Crucially, in Saunders Lewis’ mind, there is no point in “a fight for Welsh independence” (P.4) as it is morally unjust. Rather, the struggle should be for “Wales’ civilisation” (P.4), and that this necessarily entails “a claim for freedom for Wales. Not independence” (P.4).

Central to Saunders Lewis’ dismissal of a fight for ‘independence’, is his belief that the “age of empires is fast passing” (P.4), and that in the aftermath, “there will be no meaning or value in independence” (P.4). He is adamant that peace and harmony will return to Europe “when the countries recognize they are ... interdependent” (P.4). If this does not come about, Saunders Lewis asserts that Wales “for her part may be content to recognise the supremacy of England” (P.4), as it had done in the 13<sup>th</sup> to 16<sup>th</sup> centuries. This is based on the belief that it is possible to “build a Welsh civilisation without independence” (P.4). Saunders Lewis’ conception of freedom is therefore a cultural one, and he defines it as meaning responsibility, asserting that “We who are Welsh claim that we are responsible for civilisation and social ways of life in our part of Europe” (P.4).

#### **4.3. The Essential Characteristic.**

In the latter half of *Principles of Nationalism*, Saunders Lewis goes on to define Welsh ‘civilisation’ in that he seeks to assert what it is that makes the Welsh nation what it is, what makes up its traditions and culture, and what its essential characteristic is. On this he is certain: it is the Welsh language. It is of great theoretical importance that Saunders Lewis states that he believes that it is “social life in Wales through the ages” (P.5) that



“created a way of thinking, of experiencing life and of expressing the human spirit, which is especially peculiar to us” (P.5). Saunders Lewis is adamant that “Welsh civilisation is essentially different from English civilisation” (P.5) and bases this belief upon the existence of the Welsh language. Reflecting his belief that modes of social life create an understanding of the world, he seeks to assert that Welsh culture confers value upon the arts and in particular poetry and music. He seeks to demonstrate this by noting that English newspapers are filled “above all by two kinds of affairs – economical and political affairs” (P.5). In contrast, he notes how Welsh papers are filled with news on “eisteddfod competitions in poetry, prose, singing, and composition” (P.5). To underline his point, Saunders Lewis notes that the “nature of a nation” (P.5) may be recognised by its “main and most characteristic meeting” (P.5). In the case of Wales he notes that it is the Eisteddfod. For Saunders Lewis, the Eisteddfod is where Wales “shows the things she especially values” (P.5). Thus the Eisteddfod is conceived of as being a “fair symbol of the concept of Welsh civilisation” (P.5) He also seeks to note that Welsh culture and its language therefore demonstrate that “Wales exists, and exists in the face of a thousand difficulties” (P.5).

Saunders Lewis’ conception of Welsh civilisation is equated with the Welsh language, and thus the “success and furtherance of this Welsh concept (Welsh civilisation)” (P.5) is dependant on the status and vitality of the Welsh language. It is of theoretical importance that Saunders Lewis is keen to draw conclusions as to the essential characteristics of a language culture. He seeks to distinguish between English-language culture and Welsh- language culture, noting that within Wales, “wherever Welsh declines” (P.5) and the “English way of life and language replaces it” (P.5) the value of the arts is depreciated and “one finds football matches, races, billiard clubs and the cinema” (P.5).

As it is the Welsh language that essentially characterises the Welsh nation, according to Saunders Lewis, he concludes that the prime task of politics in Wales is the “safeguarding of the Welsh culture” (P.5). The pursuit of the arts and eisteddfod should be elevated and cherished through political engineering. He is adamant that “all Welsh

life should be ordered so as to ensure the priority and success of these things.” (P.6) It is of theoretical importance therefore that Saunders Lewis views the Welsh language to be an explicitly political matter. In conceiving of the Welsh language as central to an idea of Welsh civilisation, and thus nation, Saunders Lewis explicitly states that it is not a matter “for the home” (P.6), i.e. that Welsh should not be a matter for the private sphere, but rather it should be a matter for the public political sphere. He castigates those who argue that the Welsh language is a matter for the private sphere, as he believes it to be the argument of the “timorous and the craven” (P.6) of those “who learned to give the front seats in life to the English” (P.6). The consequence of their actions being that Welsh civilisation was kept “in rags like a little Cinderella by the ashes of the humble hearth” (P.6). The decline and death of the Welsh language, and consequently the Welsh nation under his reasoning, is at the forefront of Saunders Lewis’ thought. He is certain that if Welsh culture is simply retained in the private sphere, such are the social and economic pressures on it, that it will “be dead long before the end of this century” (P.6).

Saunders Lewis notes that anglicisation of Wales is in part caused by the in-migration of “outsiders” (P.6) who turn the “current of Welsh life” (P.6). It is of theoretical importance that Saunders Lewis does not propose that a future self-governing Wales places restrictions on their entry. On the contrary, Saunders Lewis adopts a strong assimilationist stance with regard to the in-migration of ‘outsiders’. Rather than Welsh civilisation being anglicised, Saunders Lewis asserts that incomers must be assimilated into Welsh culture and language.

“We must turn the outsiders – if I were a Greek, I would say barbarians – we must turn them into Welshmen, and give them the Welsh mindset, the Welsh culture, and the Welsh language.” (P.6)

Saunders Lewis is therefore not against in-migration of incomers. His social and political thought accepts their movement into Wales, yet he is adamant that only

assimilation in the Welsh culture and language will safeguard the “only civilisation that is traditional in Wales” (P.6).

Welsh culture, and in particular the Welsh language, is therefore of paramount importance in the thought of Saunders Lewis. In order to “ensure the safety of the Welsh concept of culture” (P.6), he is adamant that “political authority is therefore essential” (P.6). It is only through self-government that freedom can be “given to Welsh culture to work like a leaven through the whole of Wales” (P.6) according to Saunders Lewis. He maintains that only in this way could, and should, the Welsh education system be turned “Welsh in spirit and in language” (P.6), rather than English, as he perceived it to be. Indeed, Saunders Lewis is adamant that the whole education system through to, and including, university should be in the medium of Welsh. In doing so,

“Every child in Wales, whatever his mother-tongue, will inherit Welsh culture and the language which is the only key to that culture” (P.6).

Again this is reflective of his assimilationist stance with regard to Welsh culture and the idea of absorbing ‘outsiders’ into the Welsh nation.

In *Principles of Nationalism*, Saunders Lewis asserts that Welsh should be the only official language in Wales, yet goes on to explore this idea in greater depth in *Un Iaith I Gymru (One Language for Wales)* in *Canlyn Arthur (In the Footsteps of Arthur)*<sup>254</sup>. Enacting Welsh as the only “public medium” (P.6) in Wales would secure Saunders Lewis’ aim of a “Welsh civilisation for Wales” (P.6). He is certain that to do so is the only way that the “chain of history and culture and civilised life” (P.6) may be kept unbroken. Reflecting his belief that a self-respecting nation, knowledgeable of its history and culture, is a confident forward-looking nation, Saunders Lewis is certain that this is the only way to link Wales with its past, to give it “nobility, tradition, stability and beneficial development” (P.6).

---

<sup>254</sup> For further analysis on this aspect of Saunders Lewis’ thought please see the chapter ‘Saunders Lewis and the Welsh language’ in this study.

Saunders Lewis reflects the Aristotelian view that government is the *telos* of Man, or rather that it is the natural human expression, when he asserts that “society cannot exist at all without government” (P.6). He is certain that that “central authority” (P.6) must act mainly to “foster the best concept of the society” (P.6), giving further weight to his assertion that if Welsh society is to have a Welsh government which it deserves by virtue of her ‘civilisation’, then that government “must be Welsh in spirit and language” (P.6).

Thus for Saunders Lewis, “self-government” (P.6) is an imperative. He is certain that it must not be in the spirit of “independence” (P.6), the ‘anti-morality’ which he castigated for having been the root cause of Welsh cultural denigration. However, it must have as much “freedom as may be necessary to establish and safeguard civilisation in Wales” (P.6). Indeed, it is of theoretical importance that Saunders Lewis notes this. He has already discredited a strong conception of state sovereignty as being a precursor to imperialism, and thus defined it as morally abhorrent. However, the immediate area of contention that arises from this theoretical stance is that of the precise measure of ‘self-government’ needed to ensure the safeguarding of Welsh culture and language, whether indeed ‘self-government’ would entail statehood.

Saunders Lewis’ stance on the status of English-speaking Wales with regard to the Welsh nation is revealed when he states that it would be impossible to “claim government for an English Wales” (P.7) except on the “basis of the old materialist nationalism” (P.7) which he abhors. Indeed, such is his definition of the Welsh nation through the Welsh language, that he sees it as being pointless to argue for self-government for English Wales, as in his mind, its culture is then essentially part of England. However, that is not to say that English-speaking Wales could not be ‘re-assimilated’ into Welsh culture, as he previously set out.

Reflective of his conception that culture and politics are reciprocal, Saunders Lewis suggests making a Welsh-language Wales a reality by turning public institutions Welsh in language through ‘people power’. Once this has been achieved, as a ‘bottom-up’

change, then the “English government” (P.7) will have to “recognise the value of fact” (P.7) and therefore “recognise it with a generous measure of self-government” (P.7). Thus a multi-pronged approach is recommended by Saunders Lewis with regard to the attaining of a self-governing Welsh-speaking Wales. The attainment of the political apparatus of government will have an effect upon culture, thus safeguarding it, and the revitalisation of culture will have the effect of creating a greater sense of national self-awareness, itself leading to increased pressure for self-government.

The spectre of Welsh provincialism is also raised by Saunders Lewis. In his mind, revitalising Welsh culture will remain a difficult task while Wales remains a political part of England. Due to his conception of the reciprocal nature of culture and politics, Saunders Lewis is adamant that it will remain a struggle to re-establish Welsh culture whilst “Wales considers itself part of England, sharing in England’s political life” (P.7). For him, this means that Wales cannot go on “admitting that London and the London Parliament are the focus” (P.7) of Welsh life. In Saunders Lewis’ mind, the failure of the late 19<sup>th</sup> century Welsh Home Rule movement, *Cymru Fydd*, had been due to its being intertwined with the Liberal Party, rather than its own separate, specifically Welsh political movement. Thus, for Saunders Lewis, to argue for Welsh cultural rights, whilst at the same time failing to argue for Welsh national political rights is a self-defeating folly. He is adamant that whilst Wales remains a region of England in political terms, it is forever destined to remain peripheral and unimportant and thus further suffer denigration of its culture as, in his mind, a “political part means social part” (P.7) and thus Wales would remain a “part of English civilisation” (P.7). In a further attack on Welsh cultural nationalism that expressly disassociates itself from calls for self-government as being self-contradictory, Saunders Lewis asserts that at least “Henry VIII was consistent” (P.7) having “made Wales a part of England” (P.7) through political incorporation and “made English the only official language in Wales” (P.7). There is no room for ambiguity or duality in this regard according to Saunders Lewis, as he states that “one cannot serve both England and Wales” (P.7) This leads Saunders Lewis to the ultimate conclusion that “only the Welsh concept can save Wales, not the English material one” (P.7), such is his conception of the value of

tradition in life. (In terms of practical politics, within the embryonic Welsh Nationalist Party during the 1920s, Saunders Lewis advocated a Sinn Fein policy of not sending successful parliamentary candidates to Westminster as D. Hywel Davies notes.<sup>255</sup> The reality was that the party was a long way from being in a position of fielding a successful candidate.)

Saunders Lewis seeks to conclude *Principles of Nationalism* by asserting that it is in the new spirit of the 'post-empire' age that a future self-governing Wales must forge ahead, in a marked contrast to the strong conception of statehood and state sovereignty that had previously prevailed in international relations. Indeed, Saunders Lewis places great faith and normative value in new institutions such as the League of Nations, reflective of his conception of the interdependent nature of nations. He prefers to call it the "Society of Nations" (P.7) and suggests it presents a chance for the "argument on behalf of Wales to be heard" (P.7). The 'Welsh claim for freedom' should, in his mind, include a "seat in the Society of Nations and European society by virtue of the value of her civilisation" (P.7) Saunders Lewis suggests that such a seat would "crown the movement to build Welsh civilisation in Wales" (P.8). The outward recognition of Wales' place amongst international 'equals' is what Saunders Lewis seeks for Wales, and that "every country recognise the value and importance of that civilisation" (P.8). It is of theoretical importance that Saunders Lewis conceives of 'true' internationalism as being *inter-nationalism*, where each national culture is respected. Saunders Lewis states that he is surprised by the high level of support for the Society of Nations in Wales, "in a nation that no other nation recognises as a nation at all" (P.8). Despite placing normative value upon such institutions, Saunders Lewis remains concerned that they may yet be unfulfilled in their desired purpose, as the "Great Powers" (P.8) refuse to yield their strong conceptions of state sovereignty and "forswear the principle of independence" (P.8). A properly functioning 'Society of Nations' is therefore depicted as a re-established supranational authority in the mind of Saunders Lewis, reflecting the position previously held by the Church in the Middle Ages. (In *England, Europe, and*

---

<sup>255</sup> Hywel Davies, D. (1983) *The Welsh Nationalist Party 1925-45: Call to Nationhood*. Cardiff. University of Wales Press. P.27.

*Wales*, Saunders Lewis expressly advocates an economic and political European Union.<sup>256</sup>) He is adamant that a Society of Nations that properly operates in the spirit of interdependence should be central and go hand-in-hand with any Welsh conception of self-government. Playing a full part in its functioning would

“crown the effort that was begun not in the materialist spirit of narrow and godless nationalism, but in a generous spirit of love for civilisation and tradition and the best things of mankind.”(P.8)

#### 4.4. Summary.

*Principles of Nationalism* therefore presents many of the key themes in the social and political thought of Saunders Lewis. Central to his thought is the belief that Wales is possessed of a unique language culture that is also part of a wider European culture. This firmly identifies it as a nation. For Saunders Lewis, this culture merits self-government to match its nationhood.

Several points of theoretical importance therefore arise from *Principles of Nationalism* regarding Saunders Lewis’ social and political thought.

1. He conceives of an objective morality, based on a Christian concept of a ‘universal’ moral law.
2. He castigates the ‘particular’ principle of sovereignty that bestowed the role of supreme moral arbiter on the state and sanctioned a moral relativism.
3. The refutation of this ‘universal’ moral law in effect gave birth to ‘bad’ ‘materialist’ nationalism, which Saunders Lewis denotes as being early imperialism.
4. ‘Self-determination’ and ‘independence’ are therefore denounced as moral relativism and giving way to imperialism and, at a sub-state level, a drive for cultural and political uniformity.

---

<sup>256</sup> Saunders Lewis, John. *England and Europe and Wales*. In (1938) *Canlyn Arthur*. Aberystwyth. Gwasg Aberystwyth. P.25.

“Bringing political and economic unity to Europe is one of the first needs of our century. This is seen most clearly by the small nations of Europe.”

5. In refutation of 'materialist' nationalism he advocates the principles of political plurality and cultural-linguistic diversity.

6. Culture, language and tradition are equated with nationhood, which is to be sought after, rather than a 'materialist' nationalism for Wales.

7. Ultimately he sanctions 'self-government' as the necessary political measure with which to secure a safeguarding and revitalising of Welsh culture and language. At the same time, he is keen to recognise supranational authority, necessarily endorsing interdependence, borne out of a moral imperative characterised as the 'political principle of the Middle Ages' before the advent of 'materialist' nationalism.

However, there remain numerous points of conflict and tension within the thought of Saunders Lewis which arise from these significant conceptions. His denunciation of 'materialist' state-building nationalism leads him to sanction the principle of political plurality and cultural diversity. He has a conception of multiculturalism, yet this is far from being any contemporary conception of multiculturalism that factors multiple religious faiths, modes of life and worldviews into its considerations. Saunders Lewis' conception is that of a 'patchwork-quilt' rather than a 'mosaic' conception of multiculturalism. Furthermore, his conception is structured on a series of strong regional identities defined as language communities (nations), bound together at a 'supra' level by a unity of religious faith and moral framework (Christianity). It is conceived of as a 'unity (of religious faith) in (linguistic) diversity'. This wider moral framework (Christianity) is seen as being the background and history to wider European 'civilisation'.

There is conflict also between his conception of linguistic diversity, and his stated aim that the Welsh language should be the sole official language in Wales. Indeed, he had denounced as morally abhorrent the drive for linguistic uniformity under 'materialist' nationalism, yet this would be precisely the aim of such a drive in education to ensure Welsh was the sole official language in Wales. No doubt Saunders Lewis would depict making Welsh the sole official language in Wales in terms of a restorative justice along 'postcolonial' lines. This makes the position of English-speaking Wales, and its



constituent role in a Welsh nation, unclear. Saunders Lewis' plans to make Welsh the sole official language in Wales would therefore assimilate English-speaking Wales into a Welsh-speaking Wales. It is clear Saunders Lewis perceives the essence of the nation in linguistic terms, yet at no point does he define it ethnically or racially, indeed any individual can become Welsh if they learn the Welsh language, according to Saunders Lewis. It is clear that Saunders Lewis understands the role of an education system in 'nation-building' and his writings specifically regarding *One Language for Wales* demonstrate his contempt for 19<sup>th</sup> century British nation-building efforts through education systems. There is conflict, therefore, in his seeking to meet 'might with might', having denounced it as characteristic of 'materialist' nationalism. Saunders Lewis' moral valuation of the political principle of decentralism, conflicts with his assertion that "society cannot exist at all without government, without a central authority" (P.6).

Another area of conflict, and perhaps the most significant, present in the thought of Saunders Lewis arising from *Principles of Nationalism*, is regarding a constitutional objective. Despite denouncing the principle of 'independence' (state sovereignty) and advocating freedom, Saunders Lewis is adamant that only as much freedom be attained as is necessary to ensure the safeguarding of Welsh culture. Despite Saunders Lewis' assertion that the context of international relations was changing, a system of sovereign states was in existence. Surely if safeguarding Welsh culture is the higher goal, then fully fledged statehood should be a prerequisite, thereby allowing Wales to 'self-determine' its cultural values. By that measure 'self-government' is a vague term, and of course the problem also arises that 'Home Rule' or 'Devolution' may not be adequate in securing this ultimate aim. In Saunders Lewis' defence, he advocated 'Dominion Status' for Wales along the lines of the constitutional status of Canada and New Zealand.<sup>257</sup> For all intents and purposes, this meant Wales would be possessed of the political apparatus of statehood. With the English monarch remaining as the Head

---

<sup>257</sup> For a more detailed discussion of contention regarding the constitutional aim of 'Dominion Status', please see  
Davies, D. Hywel. (1983) *The Welsh Nationalist Party 1925-45: A Call to Nationhood*. Cardiff. University of Wales Press. P.82-85.

of State, this would reflect Saunders Lewis' depiction of the cultural harmony of the Middle Ages, where, despite being ruled by the English crown, Wales was culturally free. However, it remains unclear as to whether 'Dominion Status' was advocated out of definite moral principle or out of *realpolitik* compromise due to a lack of any other suitable wider political framework (such as a European Union, or Society of Nations, which Saunders Lewis advocated).

Despite some points of theoretical vagueness, it remains clear from *Principles of Nationalism* that the state is to be regarded with caution. In effect, it is an unnatural construction, brought about by the Protestant Reformation, as opposed to the natural structure of society in the organic community. The nation, the culmination of the organic society, is thus 'natural', whereas the state is not. Saunders Lewis combines both a particularist argument, that of Wales and the Welsh language, with, as part of a wider universalism, a Christian humanism, entailing a respect for linguistic 'cultural' diversity. His default philosophical-political position is that peace and harmony occur through non-aggression, non-domination, and mutual respect for the respective cultures of nations. This is borne out of the belief that humans naturally form into cultural groups and that this should be the basis of the nation and government, and that these cultural groups can co-exist peacefully, as long as destructive 'state sovereignty' 'materialist' nationalism is avoided. Saunders Lewis effectively endorses the interdependence of nations.

It is also possible to locate elements of Catholic social thought in Saunders Lewis' ideas regarding the Welsh nation and its social and political organisation, such as the concepts of freedom, European tradition, and Wales' place within wider European history. As McAllister notes, Saunders Lewis'

"development of the all-embracing notion of civilisation enabled him to bypass much of the conventional terminology normally associated with nationalism."<sup>258</sup>

---

<sup>258</sup> McAllister, Laura. (2001) *Plaid Cymru. The Emergence of a Political Party*. Bridgend. Seren. P.53.

This essentially provided the framework which Saunders Lewis then went on to utilise in his depiction of the (British) 'English' state as "the antithesis of the small-scale, decentralised national community"<sup>259</sup> which he deemed Wales to be.

It is also of theoretical significance that Saunders Lewis employs the Middle Ages as a 'golden age' ideal of 'natural' social and political organisation in both Wales and Europe. Indeed, the utilisation of the Middle Ages as such a 'golden age' was common amongst various social and political thinkers in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century and interwar period in Europe who were often termed neo-medievalists.

Anthony Smith, the noted nationalist theorist and analyst, suggests that, "The return to a golden age is an important, and probably essential, component of nationalism."<sup>260</sup>

Smith states that the purpose of employing a 'Golden Age' is to,

"re-establish roots and continuity, as well as authenticity and dignity, among a population that is being formed into a nation, and thereby to act as a guide and model for national destiny."<sup>261 262</sup>

This is highly pertinent when considering the social and political thought of Saunders Lewis, not only in *Principles of Nationalism*, as it goes on to permeate his wider thought. Thus for Saunders Lewis, applying Smith's analysis, the Golden Age becomes,

"a source of continual inspiration, establishing the authenticity and continuity of the community's culture and conferring dignity on nations-to-be and well-established nations alike"<sup>263</sup>.

It is of interest here that Smith states it as being characteristic of 'nations-to-be,' as well as of 'well-established nations'. This is precisely how Saunders Lewis views his 'mission' of educating Wales as to its distinct history: that of the 'nation-to-be', and as

---

<sup>259</sup> Ibid. P.53.

<sup>260</sup> Smith, Anthony. (2004) *The Antiquity of Nations*. Cambridge. Polity Press. P.229.

<sup>261</sup> Ibid. P.229.

<sup>262</sup> Smith notes that the use and evocation of a 'golden age' is also used outside the realm of nationalism, and is necessarily used by various ideological movements. The Enlightenment is such an example, holding up classical Greece as an ideal 'golden age' period of enlightened thought.

<sup>263</sup> Smith, Anthony. (2004) *The Antiquity of Nations*. Cambridge. Polity Press. P.229.

a challenge to the political and therefore cultural dominance of the 'well-established nation' of England and the English 'British' State.

Saunders Lewis therefore presents an interesting case for a student of nationalism and political theory, for he explicitly rejects a strong conception of state sovereignty (and thus state nationalism) and instead espouses a cultural nationalism that necessarily involves itself with a political nationalism. In identifying the central tenets of his thought in *Principles of Nationalism*, Saunders Lewis undoubtedly highlights some of the main tensions within his thought. The central criticisms emanating from these tensions are the methods he would use to ensure a revitalisation for the Welsh language, i.e. would he not have to employ a state nationalism, and thereby a strong conception of state sovereignty to secure such an objective? His re-evaluation / appropriation of history which he uses to justify a rejection of state sovereignty, idealises the Middle Ages, and ignores the inherent problems of the era. How could such a system be resurrected and be applicable in a Modern world? Such criticisms are levelled at Saunders Lewis' ideas primarily from a policy standpoint, i.e. the logical outcomes of such an idea. *Principles of Nationalism* is Saunders Lewis' attempt to stamp his theoretical and ideological stance on the early Plaid Cymru, indeed many of the audience at the Plaid Cymru summer school (conference) where it was delivered were opposed to its idiosyncrasies and the vagaries in terms of its policy implications.<sup>264</sup> *Principles of Nationalism* is clearly not the programme of a political party contesting for electoral votes on any serious level. Rather than being a condemnation of Saunders Lewis as a political theorist, presenting deontological arguments as he does, it is instead a criticism of Saunders Lewis as a party politician.

As is apparent in *Principles of Nationalism*, culture, and indeed civilisation, is equated with language. Language itself is equated with a distinct collective consciousness, a

---

<sup>264</sup> The political idealisation of the Middle Ages was opposed by liberals and socialists of a nationalist persuasion for obvious reasons. The necessity of securing state sovereignty as a means to cultural revitalisation, indeed as a means to securing a variety of social goods is espoused by an array of nationalists and holds as a valid criticism. (See the section in this study re: criticism of Saunders Lewis by a Welsh republican p.262)

distinct nation, and self-government is crucial in securing this goal. The central role of language in underpinning his political thinking regarding the nation is therefore the focus of the next chapter.

### **The Welsh Language: *One Language for Wales.***

Proviso: Where quotes are from *One Language for Wales*, the page reference will appear in parenthesis after the quote.

Saunders Lewis, John. *Un Iaith I Gymru (One Language for Wales)*. In (1938) *Canlyn Arthur (In the Footsteps of Arthur)*. Aberystwyth. Gwasg Aberystwyth.

This chapter highlights the crucial role of language within the thought of Saunders Lewis and how this affects his political thought regarding self-government. Saunders Lewis' vision of a politically and socially (and culturally) self-governing and self-sufficient Welsh nation, is embodied in his thought regarding the need for a future Welsh government to adopt the Welsh language as the sole official language of public life in Wales. For Saunders Lewis, any moves towards 'bilingualism' i.e. equality between the Welsh and English languages as being co-official languages in Wales, were to be rejected outright. He details and seeks to justify his position in *Un Iaith I Gymru (One Language for Wales)* which is a chapter in *Canlyn Arthur (In the Footsteps of Arthur)*. Crucially, Saunders Lewis' political thought on the matter of language is of relevance to contemporary discourse regarding the interaction of political theory and language from a normative standpoint, and wider discourse on language rights and their interaction with theories of the state. Saunders Lewis' thought is also of significance to analysis of cultural nationalism and its stressing of the high normative value of language.

As a result, this chapter considers the key arguments within contemporary thought and analysis on the interaction of political thought and language, regarding the state and recognition, with particular reference to Kymlicka. A brief examination of the linkage between language and nationhood in historical political thinking then follows, as well as an examination of the historical context of the decline of the Welsh language, in order that Saunders Lewis' thought on the matter can be placed in context and thus better understood and examined. His political prescription of official Welsh monolingualism as a response to the perceived social ill of language decline is then considered. This is followed by an

examination of criticism from a variety of sources regarding such an approach, both in theoretical and ‘practical objective’ terms. In essence, this chapter seeks to examine Saunders Lewis’ conception of the role of language within the nation, whether it is of intrinsic or instrumental value, and how it is linked to an idea of social and national liberation. In addition to this the chapter will examine how this is linked in to a political nationalism and how it is conceived in any framework of ‘rights’.

Saunders Lewis’ political thought regarding the Welsh language is indispensable to any study analysing the history of 20<sup>th</sup> century movements seeking recognition of the Welsh language as an official language within Wales. For a wider political theory audience, it provides an illustration of how language can be conceived in both social and political contexts and how, in this particular example, it is necessarily intertwined with a political nationalism. Although Saunders Lewis’ early conception of the Welsh language focused on the group right of the nation, he later modified his thought to move in the direction of language rights for the individual. Despite this change, necessitated by changing context, both *One Language for Wales (1933)* and *Tynged Yr Iaith (Fate of the Language) (1962)* sought to justify his thinking in historical and cultural terms. This historical and cultural thought was combined with an active political nationalism as a means to ensure the revitalisation and continuation of the Welsh language. As outlined in *Principles of Nationalism*, Saunders Lewis was convinced that a safeguarding and revitalising of the Welsh language went hand-in-hand with Welsh self-government, as the two acted in reciprocal fashion. Self-government would ensure the Welsh language could be safeguarded and bring about a reinvigoration of the language, thus furthering Welsh national ‘freedom’.<sup>265</sup>

### **5.1. Language Rights and Political Theory.**

Saunders Lewis’ thought regarding the political nature of language is of wider ‘Political Theory’ interest with regard to contemporary recognition of minority national

---

<sup>265</sup> ‘Freedom’ has been placed in inverted commas as Saunders Lewis himself disliked the term independence in *Principles of Nationalism*, as outlined in the previous chapter. Whether or not there is a genuine difference, or whether it is simply a semantic variation in the political thought of Saunders Lewis, is discussed in a previous chapter.

languages within larger states.<sup>266</sup> Contemporary liberal thinkers, including Kymlicka and Barry, have considered the normative aspects of such language ‘rights’ and the implications of their official recognition by states, functioning as they often had with one sole ‘official’ majority language. As Kymlicka states,

“After all, the countries that have moved in this multilingual direction are the most peaceful, prosperous, free, and democratic societies around. Yet, it is interesting to note, that not one of the recent international declarations on language rights asserts that there is a ‘right’ to official language status, or even recommends such a policy. On the contrary, there has been great reluctance to view policies of official bilingualism or multilingualism as ‘rights’ rather than pragmatic accommodations.”<sup>267</sup>

Part of the complexity in discourse regarding the official recognition of regional languages, is that they are often not simply debates over language, but are often the basis for normative claims to secession. As Kymlicka states,

“For regional language groups are almost always also ‘national’ groups: that is, they see themselves not just as having a distinct language, but also forming a distinct ‘nation’ within a larger state. They mobilise behind nationalist political parties with nationalist goals of self-government.”<sup>268</sup>

Therefore, language rights are often part of a larger programme of sub-state nationalism. This illustrates perfectly the case of the political thought of Saunders Lewis. He conceives of the Welsh language and its group of speakers as a distinct ‘nation’, namely the Welsh nation within the larger state of Britain. As a consequence, Saunders Lewis sought to mobilise this group behind a ‘nationalist political party’ (The Welsh Nationalist Party, subsequently known as Plaid Cymru) with the ‘nationalist goal of self-government’, as its chief political aim.

---

<sup>266</sup> Examples of this include the official recognition in their respective territories, of French in Quebec within the Canadian state, and Basque, Catalan, and Galician in their respective territories within the Spanish state. This is combined in the majority of cases with an extensive measure of devolved autonomous government.

<sup>267</sup> Kymlicka & Patten (Eds). (2003) *Language Rights and Political Theory*. Oxford. Oxford University Press. P.5.

Kymlicka and Patten are no doubt referring to Canada in this example, as Kymlicka so often does.

<sup>268</sup> Ibid. P.5.



Kymlicka writes in a general sense, but his evaluation and analysis aptly reflect the thought of Saunders Lewis, when he states that often, “debates over the status of a regional language are also debates over nationhood”<sup>269</sup>, and that for the minority language group, “the recognition of its language is seen as a recognition of its nationhood.”<sup>270</sup> This appears to be precisely the driving force behind Saunders Lewis’ thought regarding the Welsh language and its official recognition equated with political recognition and nationhood, thus gaining for Wales the outward signs of nationhood.

Kymlicka, in his analysis of ‘language rights’ claims and their link to minority nationalism, notes that for the minority group “official multilingualism is desired”<sup>271</sup>. In part this is because it is a “symbol of, and a step towards acceptance that it is a multination state”<sup>272</sup>, and thus official recognition that it is “a partnership of two or more nations within a single state.”<sup>273</sup> Whilst this may apply elsewhere within Welsh nationalism, this is expressly not the desired goal in the thought of Saunders Lewis as outlined in *Principles of Nationalism and One Language for Wales*. He seeks recognition of the Welsh language as an official language, yet does not seek recognition within the context of the British state, i.e. that Wales would then exist on parity with England within a ‘partnership of two or more nations within a single state’. Instead, he seeks Welsh national ‘freedom’ from the British State, or rather, as he conceived of it, the English state. ‘Official multilingualism’ is not desired by Saunders Lewis, rather it is monolingualism within the context of Welsh self-government that is the desired end.

Within the political writings of Saunders Lewis there is a strong correlation between language and the ‘nation’. Indeed, it is essential to any conception of the nation according to him. As a consequence, he places heavy normative value and emphasis on the Welsh language. He conceptualises the Welsh language to be the essence of the Welsh nation and thus national identity. Indeed, according to his thinking, the Welsh

---

<sup>269</sup> Ibid. P.5.

<sup>270</sup> Ibid. P.5.

<sup>271</sup> Ibid. P.5.

<sup>272</sup> Ibid. P.5.

<sup>273</sup> Ibid. P.5.

language is what makes the Welsh nation what it is, the language community is thus the nation.

## 5.2. Language and Nationhood.

Writing in the 1920s, Saunders Lewis clearly follows in the tradition of earlier nationalist thinkers such as Herder, and specifically Welsh thinkers including Emrys ap Iwan<sup>274</sup>. They advocated an 'organic' or 'linguistic' nationalism, where culture, and by that language, was viewed as central to the 'essence' or 'character' (*Volksgeist* for Herder) of the nation. (For Saunders Lewis the terms culture, language and civilisation were interchangeable). As Herder had questioned,

“Has a nation... anything more precious than the language of its fathers? In it dwells its entire world of tradition, history, religion, principles of existence; its whole heart and soul”<sup>275</sup>

Language is thus considered the most important distinguishing characteristic of nationhood. Indeed, if the nation is to be considered in terms of person (Saunders Lewis considers the nation to be a moral person<sup>276</sup>), then language is part of its very 'soul', 'character', or identity. The nation's language is its 'spirit', and its 'spirit' is its language. Put another way, the continuing existence of a nation was inconceivable without its own language. <sup>277</sup>Without a language, Herder argued, a *Volk* was an absurdity, a contradiction in terms. This mode of thought is clearly evident in Saunders

---

<sup>274</sup> Herder is well-known and well read in this field and highlights the position well. Please see Barnard, F.M. (1965) *Herder's Social and Political Thought: From Enlightenment to Nationalism*. Oxford. Clarendon Press.

Emrys ap Iwan, on the other hand, is less well-known even within Wales and Welsh-speaking circles. He was a 19th century Non-conformist preacher. As there were no universities in Wales at this time, preachers were regarded as the closest thing to a Welsh-speaking 'intelligentsia'.

Despite a variance in the Romanticism of Herder and the Classicalism of Saunders Lewis, they reach many of the same conclusions regarding the organic community. See the chapter entitled 'Saunders Lewis and the Herderian Tradition' in this study.

<sup>275</sup> Suphan, Bernhard (Ed.) (1877-1913) *Sammtliche Werke*. (Volume: Xvii) Berlin. Weidmann. P.58.

In Berlin, Isaiah. (1976) *Vico and Herder*. London. Hogarth Press. P.165.

<sup>276</sup> For discussion and analysis on Saunders Lewis' conception of the nation as a 'moral person' please see the chapter in this study entitled 'Saunders Lewis and the Caernarfon Court Speech'.

<sup>277</sup> Barnard, F. (1965) *Herder's Social and Political Thought: From Enlightenment to Nationalism*. Oxford. Oxford University Press. P.57.

Lewis' writings with regard to language, as he deemed language to represent the value of tradition in life, and that,

“Language is the fruit of society, is essential to civilisation, and is the treasury of all the experiences and memories of a nation. It keeps the visions and desires and dreams of a nation. It keeps the visions and desires and dreams of the nation and treasures them in literature. It holds the memory of the nation, its knowledge and beginnings, of its youth, its suffering, its problems and its victories”<sup>278</sup>

Saunders Lewis' thought regarding language and its relation to nation can be viewed in conjunction with his thought on the issue of provincialism as outlined in *Principles of Nationalism*. Thus, according to him, if the Welsh language 'keeps the experiences, memories and knowledge' of the Welsh nation, then if the Welsh language were not to exist, then the nation would not exist. Despite a territorial definition of a land called Wales and a people inhabiting it being labelled 'the Welsh': if the language did not exist, neither would the nation, in Saunders Lewis' mind.

It is apt that the decrease in Welsh-speakers be placed in historical context, noting the decreasing influence of the Chapel as a centre of Welsh cultural life, and the effect of the Depression in forcing hundreds of thousands to leave Wales during the interwar period. Such social and cultural change obviously affected Saunders Lewis' thought on the continued vitality of the Welsh language, and his fears regarding the declining number of Welsh speakers. D. Hywel Davies notes that the rural areas of Wales remained predominately Welsh-speaking. The Welsh language was also in high usage throughout the South Wales industrial valleys up until the first decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

The industrialisation of the South Wales valleys in particular during the 19<sup>th</sup> century, had saved the Welsh language from the same fate as Scots Gaelic and Irish Gaelic, but education, commerce and state institutions in the 20<sup>th</sup> century now combined to “thrust

---

<sup>278</sup> Saunders Lewis, John. *Y Faner*, 6 Sept. 1923.

the English language down Welsh throats”<sup>279</sup>. It has been demonstrated that contrary to popular belief, the industrial valleys of South Wales were predominantly Welsh-speaking up until the 20<sup>th</sup> century, due to the vast majority of the migrant workers to these industrial areas being from rural Wales. It was not until the 20<sup>th</sup> century that new workers arriving came from England and elsewhere. The migration from rural Wales to the industrial areas brought the Welsh language with it, and thus ensured its continuance, as demonstrated by Brinley Thomas.<sup>280</sup> After 1911, the numbers of people speaking Welsh had actually begun to decline. D. Hywel Davies suggests that this decline may well have been assisted by the fact that the chapels, the most powerful bodies to have given pride of place to the language, were now giving way to a Labour and trade union movement that, in common with other political groupings, was dominated by the English language.<sup>281</sup> He also notes that Welsh-speaking parents, who more often than not attended Welsh-language chapels, were now in increasing numbers failing to pass on the Welsh language to their children. D. Hywel Davies suggests reasons for this failure included not only educational pressure, but also the social pressure, exerted by the expansion of English-language newspapers, radio and films,

“none of which reflected the values and mores of Welsh society, nor gave any signs of regarding Welsh identity as more than a folklorist oddity.”<sup>282</sup>

Chapels, Welsh in medium, which in the past had provided a form of entertainment as well as spiritual teaching for their members, helped effect the decline in the Welsh language due to their unwillingness as social institutions to become involved politically in matters of economic and social hardship.<sup>283</sup>

---

<sup>279</sup> Davies, D. Hywel. (1983) *The Welsh Nationalist Party 1925-1945: A Call to Nationhood*. Cardiff. University of Wales Press. P.55.

<sup>280</sup> Thomas, Brinley. (1962) *The Welsh Economy*, University of Wales Press. Cardiff.

<sup>281</sup> Davies, D. Hywel. (1983) *The Welsh Nationalist Party 1925-1945: A Call to Nationhood*. Cardiff. University of Wales Press. P.54-55.

<sup>282</sup> Davies, D. Hywel. (1983) *The Welsh Nationalist Party 1925-1945: A Call to Nationhood*. Cardiff. University of Wales Press. P.55.

<sup>283</sup> D. Hywel Davies summarises the language situation in Wales in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century thus, “The declining influence of nonconformist leadership on the intellectual and political life of Wales thus eased the abandonment of the Liberal party, assisted the growth of the Labour Party, and added to the nationalist awareness of the Welsh language crisis. Nationalists, the large proportion of whom were

At a profound level, Saunders Lewis is seeking to reverse the process whereby he perceives the denigration of the Welsh language occurring through British state integrative 'nation-building' efforts such as a state education system. Extensions of the British state such as the education system are seen as a means through which the denigration of the Welsh language and thus nation has occurred.<sup>284</sup> For Saunders Lewis it is clear that under a British education system, it is English culture that is transmitted through an 'English' syllabus in terms of both literature and history. In his mind this was a part of the apparatus used to ensure Welsh assimilation into England. Thus, as outlined in *Principles of Nationalism*, he sought to secure the education system in Wales so that it transmitted Welsh culture, and a Welsh syllabus, thereby reversing the process of Welsh language decline.

It is through concern over the decline of the Welsh language that Saunders Lewis takes a forthright, hard-line attitude to the presence of the English language in Wales. Its presence is deemed as reflective of English cultural domination which in turn is due to English political domination. The presence of, and continued growth of the English language was thus at the expense of, and detrimental to, the Welsh nation according to Saunders Lewis. He reasoned,

“We cannot therefore aim at anything less than to annihilate the English language in Wales.” (P.59)

---

Nonconformist, were now free to consider anew the political form of the 'nationalism' that had at one time seemed so much a part of the Liberal-nonconformist ethos. Their radical conclusion reflected both the diminished role of the chapels and the increasing turmoil of the times. Effectively, the chapel ceased to be the centre of social life with its attachments to the Welsh language and Nonconformist political attachment to the Liberal Party. In its place came trade unionism, the Labour party and the English language.”

Davies, D. Hywel. (1983) *The Welsh Nationalist Party 1925-1945: A Call to Nationhood*. Cardiff. University of Wales Press. P. 55.

<sup>284</sup> The education system and its history in Wales is not a topic for in-depth investigation here. Suffice to say that it is only in the latter half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century that there has been secondary level education available in the Welsh language. During the latter half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century an official method of stamping out Welsh language use was ensured through a punishment known as the 'Welsh Not', thus actively discouraging the use of the Welsh language in the public domain of the education system.

It is from this platform that Saunders Lewis launches into what has always been the more controversial aspect of his political thought: the status of the Welsh and English languages in Wales. The controversy arises as to the methods he would employ in ensuring everyone spoke Welsh and as to how he would ensure the 'deletion' of the English language 'from the land called Wales'. The fact that a large percentage of the population of Wales is English-speaking does not appear to trouble Saunders Lewis. Rather he conceives of a future Welsh nation attaining self-government and thus enabling a Welsh language-only policy to be introduced. Preceding self-government he envisages the revival of the Welsh language, its increased usage creating a favourable environment from which to secure self-government, as he presupposes that a Welsh-language group is more open to Welsh nationhood than an English-speaking-language group. This is the symbiotic and reciprocal relationship between the Welsh language and Welsh nationhood and self-government that Saunders Lewis strives for.

Saunders Lewis is adamant, as outlined in his *Principles of Nationalism*, that Welsh language and culture, which in his terms are demonstrable markers of its 'civilisation', are the only viable moral imperatives for Welsh self-government. Thus any argument in favour of self-government that did not have this as its ultimate objective or aim was, in essence, pointless. His claim is that if one is committed to the Welsh language and culture, then one cannot simply be a cultural nationalist, not concerned with matters political. So intertwined are the social and the political in this respect, for Saunders Lewis, that if the individual cares at all for the Welsh language then one is, by implication, duty bound to support political self-government. The two are reciprocal. According to Saunders Lewis it is thus pointless to be a cultural nationalist and not a political nationalist (in favour of Welsh self-government) at the same time.

*Principles of Nationalism* set out a solid base from which Saunders Lewis went on to express his thought on various aspects of Welsh Nationalism. In it, he does not view the Welsh nation being able to continue as it is, culturally subjugated by the English language, a symptom of the political subjugation and domination of Wales by England. This political and social incorporation into England has therefore meant a threat to the

continued existence of the Welsh language, and thus Wales' position as a distinct nation. The antidote for this is therefore to make the Welsh language the sole official language in Wales (please see relevant section in preceding chapter in this study). Saunders Lewis appears wholly uncompromising in his stance, unwilling to conceive of a Welsh English-language culture, what is also termed Anglo-Welsh culture. Saunders Lewis went on to develop this mode of thought in *One Language for Wales*.

Although the policy objective of a Welsh-speaking-only Wales had been dropped by the Welsh Nationalist Party by 1930, the principle of it was set out in 1926 by Saunders Lewis in *Principles of Nationalism*. Despite pressure from assorted nationalists to 'soften' his approach and stance towards the English language in Wales, Saunders Lewis remained steadfast in his position throughout the 1930s, asserting that it must be ensured that,

“the day comes fairly soon when Welsh will not only be the ‘only official language’, but also the ‘only practical language’ of Welsh public life”<sup>285</sup>

Saunders Lewis was spurred into writing *Un Iaith I Gymru (One Language for Wales)* by his dismay at census figures revealing the decline in population in Welsh agricultural areas. He views this as being wholly bad, as these are the areas that make up the substantial core of the Welsh-speaking community (*Y Fro Gymraeg*)<sup>286</sup>. Whilst he acknowledges that Welsh bilingualism may be on the increase, he again takes a dim view of this, viewing it as a ‘slippery slope’ to English –speaking monolingualism. Saunders Lewis views the fact that “the number of Welsh-speaking Welsh monoglots has decreased substantially” (P.57), as lamentable, as these people would have been primarily from the agricultural areas where social life often existed entirely through the medium of Welsh. Monolingualism, as opposed to bilingualism, was deemed to be the

---

<sup>285</sup> *Y Ddraig Goch*. February 1930.

<sup>286</sup> *Y Fro Gymraeg* is the Welsh term denoting the Welsh-speaking heartland. It is comparable to that of the *Gaeltacht* in Ireland. The *Gaeltacht*, in contrast to *Y Fro Gymraeg*, is also a political term, as it is afforded special status by the Irish state.

normal state of affairs for a European nation by Saunders Lewis. As there was no official status for the Welsh language at this point, Saunders Lewis saw it as detrimental to the future of the Welsh language that there was a decline in monolingual Welsh-speakers. He was certain, that where bilingualism existed, the English language would eventually come to dominate.

Saunders Lewis' thought was intimately linked with the Welsh language and concerned about its decline. In the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, those fears had been expressed by Emrys ap Iwan, a self-acknowledged influence upon Saunders Lewis. In the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, fears over the decline and possible death of the Welsh language were expressed by figures such as Peter Williams, 'Pedr Hir' (Bardic name), an Eisteddfod orator and Nonconformist minister. In a speech to the 'Gorsedd of Bards' (Bardic Circle) at the Birkenhead Eisteddfod<sup>287</sup> in 1917 he asserted,

"The Welsh language *is* dying – dying on the roads in the towns and villages of Wales... The next few years will decide its future for ever. If it dies, we of this generation, more than any other generation, will be condemned by the ages to come."<sup>288</sup>

### 5.3. Official Monolingualism.

Saunders Lewis was deeply troubled by the declining numbers of Welsh-speakers and the consequent demise of a 'nation', as he defined it. He sought to highlight the problem, as well as provide a solution. In *One Language for Wales* he seeks to assert the validity of Welsh monolingualism, and is critical of bilingualism. He is critical of those who claim to be "... friends of the Welsh language" (P.57), but who suggest that it would be ideal "if it were possible to secure the unbroken continuity of the language in a bilingual Wales" (P.57).

---

<sup>287</sup> The Welsh National Eisteddfod (a musical and bardic competition) was held in the English town of Birkenhead in this year. This is reflective of the fact that a substantial number of Welsh people lived and worked as a diaspora in the Merseyside conurbation.

<sup>288</sup> Evans, Hugh. *Cadw'r Iaith yn Fyw (Keeping the Language Alive)* In Williams, Peter. (1922) *Damhegion y Maen Llog (Parables of the Centre Stone)*. Liverpool. Hugh Evans. P.139. In Davies, D. Hywel. (1983) *A Call to Nationhood. The Welsh Nationalist Party 1925-1945*. Cardiff. University of Wales Press. P.58.



A bilingual Wales, where the English and Welsh languages would exist on a basis of equality, co-official languages, is something Saunders Lewis is vehemently opposed to. In his view, this would not allow for the 'unbroken continuity' of the Welsh language as it would be the English language that would come to dominate in every instance where the two were in competition. The Welsh language could only continue in 'unbroken continuity' in real terms if it were made the sole official language by any future Welsh government. Indeed, so strong was the motivating factor of culture, language, and tradition in the thought of Saunders Lewis that the very basis of Welsh nationalism was to ensure that there were Welsh monoglots. In this respect Saunders Lewis was deeply conservative. He thought that the vast majority of the individuals of a nation being monoglot was the normal state of affairs in a European nation, as outlined in *Principles of Nationalism*. For Saunders Lewis, the *raison d'être* of Welsh nationalism is to ensure that there are Welsh monoglots, and that Welsh public life is conducted entirely through the medium of Welsh, "... having Welsh-speakers who are monoglot is exactly in keeping with the purpose and philosophy of Welsh nationalism." (P.58)

Saunders Lewis sets forth his reasoning on the need for a Welsh-language-only 'monoglot' Wales. His analysis is that economic and political factors are loaded against the Welsh language. If present trends continued, the Welsh language would cease to be a living language according to Saunders Lewis. Thus, he reasoned, it was a farce to argue for a bilingual Wales, as the only "reason for there being a bilingual Wales today is because there are Welsh-speaking monoglots" (P.58). This is reflective of the fact that those sections of the population who speak English do not need to speak Welsh, thus in every instance Welsh loses out to the dominance of English, which is 'normalised' as the public medium. Hence, "without the Welsh-speaking monoglots, there would be no bilingual Welsh" (P.58), as English would then exist as the *lingua franca* according to Saunders Lewis. This prediction that there will be no need for bilingualism as a consequence, as everyone will speak English, perturbs Saunders Lewis. He predicts that,

“very soon therefore, after the end of the Welsh monoglots, will be the end of the life of the Welsh language.” (P.58)

Saunders Lewis notes that after the ‘end of the Welsh monoglots’ there will be “talk of the spiritual value and the educational value of the Welsh language” (P.58), but that it will be meaningless unless Welsh is made the sole official language in Wales. In essence, he is asserting that Welsh (after the demise of the Welsh monoglots) would become like Latin,

a language ‘of the educated’ but moribund in the vernacular. Saunders Lewis asserts that it is of the utmost normative value and importance that Welsh remains a living language. In such a future scenario, Saunders Lewis warns that it will not be essential to be able to speak Welsh in order to live in Wales, and when it is “not essential anywhere, there surely enough it will be released to its death everywhere” (P.58). Concluding his critique of bilingualism, he is adamant that to ignore this ‘fact’ would be to “to imagine otherwise” (P.58). It is therefore of theoretical importance that Saunders Lewis asserts that a language must be ‘official’ in order to institutionalise it in the workings of government, making it the public medium and therefore ‘default’ language in order for it to continue as the vernacular.

His solution was that of Welsh self-government, with Welsh being made the sole official and public medium in order to ensure a monolingual Welsh-speaking Wales. Thus the goal was one and the same in the thought of Saunders Lewis. Indeed it formed the basis of his Welsh political nationalism, and that a fight for the Welsh language, in his mind, meant, and necessarily entailed, a fight for the continuance of the Welsh monoglots,

“to fight at all for the Welsh language, we have to fight seriously over the continuance of the Welsh-speaking monoglots.” (P.58)

He was adamant in this respect, and absolutely convinced of the need to make Welsh the sole official language of Wales, as this was the “only one way” (P.58) of safeguarding the Welsh-speaking monoglots, and that “Nothing else is practical” (P.58).

Making the Welsh language the sole official language of Wales was also consistent with another of Saunders Lewis' aims, to ensure the Welsh nation is 'free' of English domination, not only in governmental terms but in cultural and societal terms also. According to Saunders Lewis, by making Welsh the sole official language, the English language would cease to be of importance and thus pass out of usage in Wales. This would be justified in the thought of Saunders Lewis, as the English language is perceived to be the very essence of English culture, as the "most English thing that is the possession of the English is the English language" (P.59). Thus making Welsh the sole official language ensures that English culture does not continue to dominate, itself a consequence of English political domination. In Saunders Lewis' mind therefore, "we are freeing Wales from the hold of the English" (P.59), and that in making Welsh the sole official language in Wales, "we are going to de-anglicise Wales" (P.59).

Saunders Lewis is resolute in his determination to release Wales from the grip of English cultural and political dominance, and is adamant that eradicating the English language, as a result of making Welsh the sole official language in Wales, is key to this. He is adamant that a monolingual Wales is the only route as "we cannot by that, aim at anything less than exterminating the English language in Wales" (P.59), i.e. bilingualism for him would be to remain under English cultural, and therefore political, dominance. He asserts that it should be one of the "main tasks of the education policies of the Welsh government" (P.59), to ensure that Wales was Welsh-speaking and that no English was spoken. There is no doubt as to his evaluation of the normative value of the English language in Wales,

"Bad, and bad only is it that English is a spoken language in Wales. We must delete it from the land called Wales: *delenda est Carthago.*" (P.59)

'Exterminate' and 'delete' are extreme words, and used in this context it is easy to see how critics of Saunders Lewis have interpreted this as evidence of some sort of 'proto-fascism'. Admittedly, the language used by Saunders Lewis is extreme. However, if it

is read in conjunction with the passages on language contained within *Principles of Nationalism*, it is justified on the grounds of a 'post-colonial' restorative justice. What is clear is that through nation-building efforts, such as a Welsh-language education system, the English language would pass out of common usage in public and private spheres of life. Saunders Lewis is certainly not suggesting that individuals whose language is English be 'exterminated' or 'deleted'.

What Saunders Lewis is doing is echoing a 19<sup>th</sup> century idea of nation-building. Many 19<sup>th</sup> century nation-building projects sought to ensure that the population within the territorial confines of a state spoke and received education in the 'official' majority language of the state. In the case of Wales, the language of the state (Britain) was English, thus in the drive for educational uniformity, education was conducted through the medium of English. This was often accompanied by a placing of normative value on the majority language as the language of 'progress' and the minority language as one of 'backwardness' and moral and physical poverty.

Whilst Saunders Lewis' vision of ensuring Welsh is the sole official language in Wales does appear extreme, justifying it means presenting it as a seeking to reverse the British nation-building project of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>289</sup> Saunders Lewis' approach is therefore a mirror-image of the 'Blue Books' policy objective of Matthew Arnold, who sought to ensure English became the sole language of Wales, but reversed in favour of the Welsh language, and seeking to eradicate the English language. Thus, as English had been the sole language under the British state, the Welsh language should be the sole language of all government institutions and extensions (most importantly education) and all public life under a Welsh Government, according to Saunders Lewis.

Closely linked, in Saunders Lewis' mind, are English cultural dominance and 'English' capitalism. He associates the advance of 'English' capitalism as being at fault for the

---

<sup>289</sup> The efforts towards eradication of the Welsh language through British state 'nation-building' efforts are better noted by Saunders Lewis in *Fate of the Language* (1962), yet it is clear that such historical matters factor in his thought in *One Language for Wales*.

encroachment and domination of English-language culture.<sup>290</sup> The result of this is that Saunders Lewis advocates the organic community, the rural 'ideal', which is seen as sustaining Welsh monoglot life, as a counter-balance to English capitalism which is perceived to sustain and enforce English-language culture. Saunders Lewis' thought on this matter is derived from the English critic and scholar, F.R. Leavis,<sup>291</sup> as he quotes him as stating "English is the best language in the world to advertise in" (P.59), reflective of the encroachment of 'English' capitalism. Saunders Lewis thus seeks to essentialise English-language culture as materialist in this regard as it is a "shame" (P.59) and is the "disgrace of the English language" (P.59).

Echoing his argument put forward in *Principles of Nationalism* regarding the rise of the moral absolutism of the state and its subsequent competition with other states creating a drive for economic might, Saunders Lewis depicts 'English'-style capitalism as a by-product of this. 'English' capitalism is therefore perceived to be the anglicising force in Wales, resulting in the industrial areas of Wales being English-speaking. Thus it is English capitalism that has had a detrimental effect upon Welsh culture and consequent nationhood. In Saunders Lewis' analysis, "wherever English civilisation reaches" (P.59), it is seen to "destroy local crafts and traditions, regional independence, any difference in character" (P.59). Accordingly, the result of this is that "people are being shaped in the most informal way, characterless and without tradition" (P.59) in order that "advertising can secure increasing markets for poor quality 'mass production' products" (P.59). The aim of securing these markets is to therefore "proleteriatise humanity and to keep it a slave to machines and capital" (P.59) in order to maintain the

---

<sup>290</sup> The relation of Saunders Lewis' Welsh nationalism to capitalism is outlined in *Nationalism and Capital* in *Canlyn Arthur*. Saunders Lewis' thought surrounding capitalism is discussed in this study in the chapter entitled 'A Social Vision for Wales: *Canlyn Arthur*'.

<sup>291</sup> F.R. Leavis, the English critic and scholar, was a critic of dehumanising capitalism as well as of state socialism. He lamented the passing of the 'organic community' and its ideal position in sustaining cultural life. His ideas are outlined comprehensively in *Culture and Environment*. His influence upon Saunders Lewis is explored in this study in the chapter entitled 'Intellectual peers and influences'. Leavis, F.R. & Thompson, D. (1933) *Culture and Environment*. London. Chatto & Windus.

profit cycle. Thus individuals are perceived by Saunders Lewis to be de-humanised under the capitalist system, and culture and tradition consequently destroyed.<sup>292</sup>

By the same measure, Saunders Lewis' is critical of state socialism ('scientific' Marxist socialism), for having the same 'dehumanising' and 'proleteriatizing' effect upon society. He is critical of this type of socialism that favours the centralisation of political power, and its tendency to further alienate and drive for uniformity. He criticises the "blindness of our Socialists in Wales" (P.60) for their stance "against capitalism"(P.60) whilst they at the same time, "in the name of internationalism, ridicule our attempt to save the Welsh language" (P.60) Saunders Lewis asserts that such is the "bounding of their minds to the system which they fight against" (P.60) that they in fact "extend the victory of capitalism" (P.60) in "killing the Welsh language" (P.60). He maintains that they are blind to the fact that "effective means" (P.60) exist "with which to fight against the oppression of big business" (P.60), i.e. the Welsh language and the culture and tradition it embodies.<sup>293</sup>

For Saunders Lewis, the solution to the destructive effects of capitalism is therefore to create a Welsh-speaking Wales. The Welsh language, of instrumental value in this context, is seen as securing the freedom of the individual Welshman, as it ensures a Wales where the "oppression of international capitalism cannot dwell" (P.60). Saunders Lewis is thus convinced of the 'value of tradition' – in this case the Welsh language, as being the 'spiritual' cultural element necessary to fight and defeat the 'materialist' capitalism. He is critical of socialists who cannot understand this, and suggests that they are "so completely bound in the materialism of the past century" (P.60) that they cannot comprehend that it is "spiritual forces" (P.60) i.e. the Welsh language and culture, "that will succeed in overcoming economic oppression" (P.60).

---

<sup>292</sup> It is from this basis that Saunders Lewis went on to advocate aspects of Distributist and Guild Socialism in order to safeguard Welsh culture in the face of the 'twin evils' of capitalism and State Socialism.

<sup>293</sup> Saunders Lewis' criticism of State Socialism mirrors that of Distributism and Guild Socialism and is discussed at length in this study in the chapters entitled 'A Social Vision for Wales: *Canlyn Arthur*' and 'Intellectual Peers and Influences'.

Although the topic of Welsh economic organisation was entered into elsewhere by Saunders Lewis on a more profound level, it is important here to note how the detail of his economic organisation of Wales was designed to benefit one objective: the safeguarding and revitalisation of the Welsh language.<sup>294</sup> Within *One Language For Wales*, Saunders Lewis saw it appropriate to quote the economist J.M. Keynes, and ally Keynes' argument in favour of national economic self-sufficiency to that of his own, in favour of a Welsh-speaking Wales.<sup>295</sup> Saunders Lewis sought to create a Wales that was self-sufficient, based on a solid rural ideal, which was thus enabled to effectively combat international capitalism on a social and political basis. Saunders Lewis claims that his argument effectively mirrors that of J.M. Keynes, and in stylistic fashion suggests that, "the most famous of England's economists has crossed over to our side (those in favour of a self-sustaining Wales)" (P.61). Indeed, what Keynes thought specifically of Welsh self-government remains unclear. However, Saunders Lewis seeks to employ his argument surrounding economic autarky, in favour of Welsh self-government and self-sufficiency,

"The nations of the world should pursue a policy of economic isolation if they wish to lessen the danger of international conflict. Ideas, knowledge, science, hospitality, travel – these are the things which should by their nature be international. But let goods be homespun wherever it is reasonably and conveniently possible, and, above all, let finance be primarily national." (P.61)<sup>296</sup>

Saunders Lewis suggests that the only way of ensuring Keynes' authoritative case can be realised is "...through forming the nation as a unit, in a society" (P.60). Of course, Saunders Lewis suggests that the sole essential requisite for Wales to form again as a

---

<sup>294</sup> Saunders Lewis' ideas surrounding the ideal economic organisation for Wales is discussed in this study in the chapter entitled 'A Social Vision for Wales: *Canlyn Arthur*'.

<sup>295</sup> It was not until the 1930s that economic policy was extensively developed by various nationalists in Wales. Even at this date it still remained limited. Besides Saunders Lewis, other Plaid Cymru members put forward thought on economic matters. The essential debate was as to whether Wales could afford self-government, with nationalist thinkers of course arguing that it could. See Davies, D.J. (1931) *The Economics of Welsh Self Government* Caernarfon. Welsh Nationalist Party. Davies, D.J. & Davies, Noelle. (1939) *Can Wales Afford Self-Government?* Caernarfon. Welsh Nationalist Party.

<sup>296</sup> Saunders Lewis quotes this from P.60 of the *Yale Review* of the same year (August 1933).

society is to “give to it a deep unity / identity of its traditions and knowledge of its past” (P.61). His conclusion is that only the Welsh language can give that ‘unity / identity’.

To echo the normative value he places upon the ‘organic community’, and as part of his wider idealisation of rural life, and its potential for economic self sufficiency, Saunders Lewis notes that in those rural areas where Welsh-speaking monoglots are present, one will encounter the “...closest thing to self-sustenance, and economic independence” (P.60-61). Again, this ‘organic community’, he concludes, is the nearest example to a, “traditional, unified society” (P.61). Thus Saunders Lewis seeks to prevent any decrease in the number of Welsh monoglots, and he reasons that not only is this “essential in order to safeguard the language” (P.61), but vital in the “battle against international capitalism” (P.60).

#### 5.4. Criticism.

Criticism of Saunders Lewis’ political vision of a Welsh-language-only Wales was widespread inside and outside the nationalist movement in Wales in the interwar period. R.T. Jenkins asserted that whilst the preservation of Welsh monoglotism may be tenable in theory, in practice it was “rapidly becoming irrelevant”.<sup>297</sup> Jenkins admitted that isolation had helped to preserve Welsh in the past, but saw that as being unsustainable. He suggested that whereas the rural areas that provided the necessary social environment for Welsh monolingualism to thrive (and had benefited from this isolation in terms of the language), the

“...universal teaching of English in the schools, the English daily papers on every breakfast table, a steady bombardment of Welsh ears, in the remotest recesses of the country, by English broadcast transmissions”<sup>298</sup>

had all radically altered the condition. In marked contrast to Saunders Lewis’ position, Jenkins is adamant that, “if Wales cannot be bilingual, it cannot be Welsh-speaking at all.”<sup>299</sup>

---

<sup>297</sup> Jenkins, R.T. *The Development of Nationalism in Wales*. The Sociological Review. April 1935. In Davies, D. Hywel. (1983) *The Welsh Nationalist Party 1925-1945: A Call to Nationhood*. Cardiff. University of Wales Press. P.180-1.

<sup>298</sup> Ibid. P.181.



The significance of a substantial English-speaking population in Wales proved to be a challenge to Saunders Lewis' equating of Welshness with the Welsh-language. An issue never adequately addressed by Saunders Lewis was that regarding the cultural identity of English-speakers, who (due to historical pressures), did not speak Welsh. Were they indeed to be regarded as English, or, another cultural identity entirely, that of Anglo-Welsh, 'English-speaking Welsh'? Despite Saunders Lewis equating the English language in Wales with an extension of English culture and thus the English nation, elsewhere he refers to the English-speaking Welsh as 'Welsh' in terms of nationality. He had begun teaching a class for non-Welsh-speaking unemployed persons in Swansea, and noted that throughout a course on Welsh history the "misery and wretchedness of depression and unemployment was made lighter" as they began to learn of their national past. This caused Saunders Lewis to assert that, "For they are Welsh. They cannot be any other during their brief days on this earth. And I cannot believe that I betray my country nor my language by speaking to them in English."<sup>300</sup>

However, the aim, in Saunders Lewis' mind remained to ensure that in the future, Wales be 'Welsh-speaking only' through a policy of Welsh-language education, thus reversing the historical linguistic process of Anglicisation. There was no concession that Welsh and English could have a place together in a bilingual Wales of the future.

Saunders Lewis' position also received criticism from Professor Morgan Watkin of Cardiff, who having studied linguistic legislation concerning the English and Afrikaans languages in South Africa, was one of those in disagreement with Saunders Lewis. He argued that Wales should seek similar legislation for the Welsh language, aiming for equality of status with English, in contrast to Saunders Lewis' vision of a Welsh-language-only Wales. Watkin suggested that any future Welsh Government should declare that,

---

<sup>299</sup> Ibid. P.181.

<sup>300</sup> *Y Ddraig Goch*. Feb. 1932.

“The two languages spoken in Wales should have an equal right to be used in schools, in the administrative departments of the country, in the preparation, debate and publication of every law and every rule and order formulated for the benefit of Wales.”<sup>301</sup>

He also asserted that there should be co-official status for the Welsh and English languages in the “educational institutions of Wales”<sup>302</sup>, so that “every pupil”<sup>303</sup> could receive an education “in his own natural language”.<sup>304</sup> Watkin was therefore adamant that there was a moral imperative in order that the individual may be educated in, and interact with society, through their preferred language in a fully bilingual society.

Professor Watkin was convinced that it would be impossible in reality, as well as undesirable in principle, to make the Welsh language the sole official language of Wales. If it were made the only official language in Wales, “that would be enough to split the country as Ireland was split over another matter.”<sup>305</sup> Watkin, like Saunders Lewis, recognised the vital importance of an education system in ensuring the continuance of a language, yet differed in not envisaging a Welsh-language-only Wales. Watkin was keenly aware of the Anglo-Welsh portion of society in Wales whose *lingua franca* was now English, and of the practicality, and ethics involved, in ‘forcing’ this section of Welsh society to ‘(re)learn Welsh’.

In contrast to Watkin’s position, Saunders Lewis’ argument centred on economic and political factors: the structure, history, and state-building policies of the British state as having ensured the Anglo-Welsh became English-speaking. Consequently he believed he was morally justified in seeking to reverse this process by creating an entirely Welsh-speaking Wales under Welsh self-government whereby such a section of society would be linguistically assimilated. According to Saunders Lewis, such a language

---

<sup>301</sup> Watkin, Morgan. *Polisi Ieithyddol I Gymru (A Language Policy for Wales)*. Y Geninen. May (1923). P.19.

<sup>302</sup> Ibid. P.19.

<sup>303</sup> Ibid. P.19.

<sup>304</sup> Ibid. P.19.

<sup>305</sup> Ibid. P.19.

community was culturally a part of England, and if not so, was 'rootless' and unable to engage with either culture, neither Welsh nor English in a full sense.

Saunders Lewis is often castigated in the mainstream of Welsh politics with various labels including, 'language extremist', 'linguistic racist', and 'language fascist'. These fears often centre on his vision of a Welsh-speaking Wales and the possible coercion needed to ensure that a future self-governing Wales be entirely Welsh-speaking. However, for Saunders Lewis, this possible coercion and the ethics involved in 'forcing' people to speak a language through an education system and other nation-building measures is perceived simply as a reversal of the process of 'forcing' Welsh-speaking people to speak English through an English-language system (as well as through other political and economic pressures) of previous centuries. If such nation-building processes are considered 'benign' then so should Saunders Lewis' conception of ensuring a Welsh-language-only Wales. Thus Saunders Lewis' thought implicitly relies on the notion that had Wales not been historically politically incorporated into England, then it would have developed its own government, as any other such European 'nation', operating through a single medium, in this case Welsh. This 'coercion' of nation-building could be as benign as it had been perceived in previous centuries, whereby Welsh had been seen as an obstacle to moral and physical progress.<sup>306</sup>

---

<sup>306</sup> *The Report on the State of Education in Wales of 1847*, subsequently known as '*The Blue Books*' for their distinctive colour, gained the status of notoriety in Welsh nationalist discourse. Commission of Inquiry into the State of Education in Wales. (1847-8) *Reports of the Commissioners of Inquiry into the State of Education in Wales appointed by the Committee of Council on Education*. London. H.M.S.O.

Social reformers of the time considered education as a means of dealing with social ills, and it was widely believed that ignorance was the cause of the period's social problems. Therefore, in March 1846, William Williams, the Member of Parliament for Coventry (but originally from Llanpumsaint in Carmarthenshire), tabled a measure before the House of Commons, calling for an inquiry into the state of education in Wales. The Government agreed, and R. W. Lingen, Jellynger C. Symons and H. R. Vaughan Johnson were appointed to undertake the inquiry. The three commissioners visited every part of Wales collecting evidence and statistics. The report made direct comment on the religious and moral standing of the people of Wales. The report caused a furore in Wales because of the damning critique by the three non-Welsh speaking Anglican commissioners of the Welsh language, Nonconformity and the morals of the Welsh people in general.

This Report and its recommendations sought the eradication of the Welsh language, deeming it a barrier to moral and physical progress. It is referred to in nationalist discourse as the 'Treachery of the Blue

J.E. Jones, a major figure within the Welsh Nationalist Party in the interwar years, was critical of an approach such as Saunders Lewis', rather than the overall objective of a Welsh-language-only Wales, where Welsh would be the sole public medium. He suggested that such an objective could only come about in the far distant future,

“after self-government, and after its influence has spread through education and through the life of the country for many years...”<sup>307</sup>

Jones' position and vision is identical to that of Saunders Lewis in terms of morally justifying a Welsh-language-only Wales, however he differs from him with regard to how swiftly, in terms of practicality and policy, it could be attained. In contrast to Saunders Lewis, Jones is aware and cautious of the fact that a 'Welsh-language-only' Wales may take several decades, perhaps generations, to become a physical political reality, only after self-government has had a decisive effect upon social and political life in Wales,

“only then will all the Welsh become Welsh-speaking; and then, at that time, it may be possible to make Welsh the only official language of Wales.”<sup>308</sup>

In contrast to Saunders Lewis, J.E. Jones therefore believed that to create a Welsh-language-only Wales would be “foolish to try to achieve unless self-government is achieved first of all”.<sup>309</sup> J.E. Jones' position differs from Saunders Lewis' with regard to the Welsh language being revitalised as a necessary and imperative precursor to self-government. As a consequence, J.E. Jones' position emphasises some of the practical problems of Saunders Lewis' brand of politicised cultural nationalism, i.e. the problem of basing a political nationalism on a cultural foundation where such a significant

---

Books' (*Brad y Llyfrau Gleision*), and is often cited as a spur to late 19<sup>th</sup> century Welsh cultural nationalism. Its impact is clearly evident in Saunders Lewis' thought and is highlighted in *Fate of the Language* (1962) (*Tynged Yr Iaith*) where he directly refers to it.

For in-depth analysis of the Report and its social and political impact please see Roberts, Gwyneth Tyson. (1998) *The Language of the Blue Books: The Perfect Instrument of Empire*. Cardiff. University of Wales Press.

<sup>307</sup> *Y Ddraig Goch*. February 1930.

<sup>308</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>309</sup> *Ibid*.

portion of the population of the prospective 'nation' is not part of that culture, i.e. the Anglo-Welsh population. Saunders Lewis, as previously mentioned, found the idea of basing Welsh self-government on Anglo-Wales anathema, claiming it would have to be based on the claims of 'materialist' nationalism.<sup>310</sup> However, it is debatable as to whether Saunders Lewis would have disagreed with self-government in practical terms, as it would have made achieving a Welsh-language-only Wales a more realistic prospect than without self-government, even though it would have been contrary to his theoretical doctrine as defined in *Principles of Nationalism*.

In common with J.E. Jones, other figures within the Welsh Nationalist Party, such as J.E. Daniel, gave voice to the objective of a Welsh-speaking-only Wales. However, in contrast, J.E. Daniel adopted a more permissive attitude than that of Saunders Lewis, to the presence of the English language. He declared that a Welsh-language-only Wales would be enacted only following a "transitional period"<sup>311</sup> during which, "to avoid injustice and hardship, English would have official status,"<sup>312</sup>

Positions such as J.E. Daniel's, which are sensitive to the practicalities of making Welsh the sole official language of Wales, whilst consistent with the moral objective, do appear more 'realistic' than the position adopted by Saunders Lewis. J.E. Daniel appears much more sensitive to the 'injustice and hardship' endured by individuals in the process of turning Welsh-language communities English-speaking and is aware of such problems in a reversal process. Nonetheless, Saunders Lewis' position is reflective of his approach to politics from a cultural basis, and also highlights some of the conflicts that emerge between political theory and practical politics when engaged with simultaneously.

---

<sup>310</sup> See previous chapter.

<sup>311</sup> Daniel, J.E. (1937) *Welsh Nationalism: What it Stands For*. Foyle's Welsh CO. Ltd. In Davies, D. Hywel. (1983) *The Welsh Nationalist Party 1925-45: A Call to Nationhood*. Cardiff. University of Wales Press. P.78.

<sup>312</sup> *Ibid.* P.78.

### 5.5. Language and Political Nationalism.

Much theoretical significance is therefore apparent in Saunders Lewis' thought regarding language. Not only does it form the basis of a cultural nationalism that in turn informs a political nationalism, but also gives added insight, beyond the Welsh context, of the theoretical dynamics of language rights, and 'official' language status within states and governments. Saunders Lewis' position as outlined in *Principles of Nationalism* and *One Language for Wales* also gives theoretical insight into the dynamics of the interplay of minority and majority languages and seeks to address the normative claims as to whether a state or government should function in one or several languages. Saunders Lewis' position attacks the monolingualism of the British state, yet seeks to replace it with a monolingual Welsh government. He makes a normative claim for a group right, or national right, to language recognition which is made in tandem with a claim for self-government *in lieu* of a distinctive culture.

Saunders Lewis' stance can be seen to be forming part of a wider Welsh socio-political revolt against British state 'nation-building' efforts of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, which, however normatively portrayed, sought to eradicate the Welsh language, whereby figures such as Matthew Arnold deduced for a variety of reasons that in political terms, "the language of a Welshman is and must be English"<sup>313</sup>. Indeed, the issue of Welsh-language eradication through the apparatus of the state led to a philosophical and political backlash, which itself led to "demands that Welsh be accorded recognition and to a linguistically based nationalist campaign for independence."<sup>314</sup> (Saunders Lewis argued for 'self-government' rather than 'independence', see previous chapter).

Saunders Lewis perceives the loss of the language as leading to anomic breakdown. Despite being in agreement with the charge used to argue in favour of the eradication of the Welsh language, that it could not express the propositions of politics and science, Saunders Lewis placed normative value on the fact that the Welsh language was 'more suited' to the terminology and vocabulary of poetry, literature and religion. This is

---

<sup>313</sup> Delaney, F. (1993) *The Celts*. Harper Collins. London. P.172.

<sup>314</sup> Gilbert, Paul. (2000) *Peoples, Cultures and Nations in Political Philosophy*. Edinburgh. Edinburgh University Press. P.43.

evident from, and indeed greatly informs, his preference for the ‘organic community’ and his association of the English language with the ‘materialist-utilitarian’ values of the *Gesellschaft*. Saunders Lewis’ thought does form part of the argument that exists for maintaining a language as being equivalent in value to that for “preserving works of art, namely that it extends and enriches our understanding.”<sup>315</sup> The Welsh language thus embodied an intrinsic and instrumental ‘value’ for Saunders Lewis. Its intrinsic value lay in its ability to embody a unique *Weltanschauung* (world view), and in being the keystone of a culture, a tradition, and a literature. The instrumental value, for Saunders Lewis, was that the Welsh language provided a means to political freedom, as it would ensure that Wales was dependent upon itself as a nation, freeing it from economic dependency (upon England and international capital<sup>316</sup>). As Dafydd Glyn Jones states, “The defence and extension of the Welsh language is, for him (Saunders Lewis), bound up in a direct and literal way with the freedom of the ordinary Welshman.”<sup>317</sup> Jones also notes that for Saunders Lewis, the Welsh language is the “prerequisite for the restoration”<sup>318</sup> in Wales of a “vital, forward-looking, creative community”<sup>319</sup>, and that it is therefore instrumental in the “fight for personal freedom and social justice”.<sup>320</sup>

The notion that the rural areas of Wales are the bastion of Welsh monolingualism and therefore the Welsh-speaking heartlands goes on to inform Saunders Lewis’ thought regarding a rural idealism and the idealisation of the organic community in sustaining Welsh language culture and is evident elsewhere in his political writings. The ‘rural ideal’ of Welsh monolingualism is contrasted with that of the urban and industrial, where he views the Welsh language as being unable to thrive as the *lingua franca* of a community, in all instances losing out to English.<sup>321</sup> It is sufficient to state at this point that Saunders Lewis viewed Welsh agricultural society as embodying several values,

---

<sup>315</sup> Ibid. P.43.

<sup>316</sup> This idea is explored in more detail in the chapter in this study entitled ‘A Social Vision for Wales: *Canlyn Arthur*’.

<sup>317</sup> Jones, Dafydd Glyn. *His Politics*. In Eds, Jones, Alun R. & Thomas, Gwyn. (1973) *Presenting Saunders Lewis*. Cardiff. University of Wales Press. P.31-32.

<sup>318</sup> Ibid. P.32.

<sup>319</sup> Ibid. P.32.

<sup>320</sup> Ibid. P.32.

<sup>321</sup> This aspect is examined in greater detail in this study in the chapter entitled ‘A Social Vision for Wales: *Canlyn Arthur*’.

notably Welsh self-sufficiency, as it was not dependent on 'outside' 'English' capital. Economic self-sufficiency thus supported Welsh-language continuation and 'tradition', in marked contrast to the industrial areas. This self-sufficiency and tradition provided a basis of cultural freedom upon which Saunders Lewis deemed political freedom could be built.

Saunders Lewis' argument seeks to justify why a 'separate' language should form the criterion for a 'separate' political existence i.e. a Welsh polity. He seeks only that amount of political control for Wales that enables the continuance of the Welsh language, indeed to revive and secure it as the *lingua franca* of Wales. Conflict does arise, however, on the measure of 'self-government' necessary to achieve those ends. (This question of the degree of self-government 'necessary' pervades much of the thought of Saunders Lewis in an often subdued and paradoxical manner. See previous chapter). In addition to this, Saunders Lewis' condemnation of state-power as outlined in *Principles of Nationalism* appears to conflict somewhat with his plans for fully employing the powers and apparatus of the state (education system, government communications, etc.) to ensure a language revival in Wales, as well as the normative issues of ensuring a significant portion of the population have Welsh as their 'national' language when they are English-speaking. The implication is that a self-governing Wales would have to ensure a 'drive for uniformity' which was condemned by Saunders Lewis in *Principles of Nationalism*.

The tensions in the dynamics between minority and majority languages and their official recognition, and indeed whether a state or government can be 'language neutral' are apparent in the thought of Saunders Lewis, and are a matter of contemporary discourse and importance. Kymlicka notes that the recognition of a minority language by the state has consequences. Officially recognising a minority language is precisely what members of the dominant language group typically wish to avoid, as it leads to normative claims to nationhood. For,



“accepting that a regional language group is also a ‘nation’ has potentially far-reaching consequences. Assertions of nationhood typically involve not only claims to protection of a group’s language and culture, but also a claim to territory (the nation’s homeland) and a claim to self-determination over that territory, perhaps even its secession.”<sup>322</sup>

Kymlicka notes this is one reason why most Western states were, until recently, quite unwilling to accord official status to ‘regional’ languages as they knew it was tantamount to, or a step towards, accepting the claim to nationhood by the regional group, and hence opening up claims to self-government.

It is easy to transpose Kymlicka’s evaluations to that of the history of Welsh language in terms of political and legal status within the context of the British state, as well as its relationship with nationalism. In the political thought of Saunders Lewis, Wales is the minority nation and language group, and thus oppressed, with the English nation being the dominant nation, and language group within the state. The perceived reluctance of the British state to recognise Welsh-language rights is a symptom of English refusal to recognise Welsh nationhood according to Saunders Lewis. Kymlicka’s analysis can also be applied to Saunders Lewis’ own vision of a Welsh-language-only Wales, within which a significant portion of the population did not speak Welsh.

For Kymlicka, the contemporary implication is that,

“the shift towards official language rights in the West therefore, is intimately tied up with the increased acceptance of the legitimacy of minority nationalism.”<sup>323</sup>

The politics of the Welsh language can often be a highly emotive issue and has undoubtedly been a controversial political issue in the latter half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and continues to be so.

---

<sup>322</sup> Kymlicka & Patten (Eds). Context, Issues, and Approaches in (2003) *Language Rights and Political Theory*. Oxford. Oxford University Press. P.5.

<sup>323</sup> Ibid. P.5.

Saunders Lewis' political thought as outlined in *One Language for Wales* therefore argues for a monolingual Wales in terms of a national 'group' right, and seeks to define the Welsh nation linguistically as a separate consciousness. He sees a monolingual Wales enabling a national liberation, this linguistic freedom being of central importance, and bringing about a halting of English political and linguistic domination (with self-government producing this effect in reverse, and acting in tandem). Saunders Lewis' arguments, whilst relevant to the Welsh sphere, are therefore also of importance to wider political theory. His thought on the matter of government 'official' languages sheds light on the coercive capacities of state powers, however seemingly benign, in a nation / state building process. What is apparent is that despite Saunders Lewis' attempt to solve the problem of language decline with a mirror reversal of British state policy, i.e. official monolingualism, there was an element of utopianism evident. In decrying the state power of England for its role in the decline of the Welsh language, there is doubt as to whether a revitalisation, such as envisaged by Saunders Lewis, could be successful without employing such coercive methods. Saunders Lewis, in effect, was prescribing a 19<sup>th</sup> century nation-building project in a 20<sup>th</sup> century setting, that was devoid of his own normative framework. Such a critique of his thinking in *One Language for Wales* appears to have been accepted by him by the 1960s in *Fate of the Language*. Again, rather than being an effective or practical policy aim, Saunders Lewis' political thought here serves a better purpose as a critique of British state policy with regard to the Welsh language, and of Welsh history with regard to Welsh political inaction and should therefore be viewed as such.

States rarely form neatly around human societies in geographical terms, yet only recently in several western states has there been official acknowledgement of minority languages in limited form, as Kymlicka and others note. Whether they should be officially recognised with speakers legally entitled to communicate in the public sphere is a legacy of nation-building in modernity (however seemingly benign), and is a matter for normative theory. The question of whether official monolingualism can be justified as a means to language revival is therefore relevant in contemporary discussions on state power and minority languages. Whilst 'official monolingualism' formed the basis of Saunders Lewis' thought

regarding the Welsh language and nation in the 1920/30s, his argument was to undergo a subtle change by the 1960s with *Tynged Yr Iaith (Fate of the Language)*.

## **A Move Towards Individual Rights: *Fate of the Language* (1962)**

Proviso: All quotes are referenced in footnotes apart from direct references to *Fate of the Language* where the page reference is given in parenthesis after the quotation.

These page references refer to

P.127-141 Saunders Lewis, John *Fate of the Language*. In (1973). *Presenting Saunders Lewis*, Eds. Jones, Alun R; & Thomas, Gwyn. Cardiff. University of Wales Press.

In this chapter Saunders Lewis' thought regarding language and its political significance is identified and analysed with specific reference to his *Fate of the Language* address in 1962. Whilst many of his central ideas remain constant, there is a marked shift in how he treats the issue of language between the 1920/30s and the 1960s. Essentially it moves from being that of a group right, to that of an individual right. This chapter will therefore seek to identify how Saunders Lewis presents this argument and how he interprets the changing of circumstance that necessitates such a shift. It will demonstrate how he again utilises a historical critique and a contemporary evaluation in his thinking, and how a combination of the two leads him to a revised stance: official bilingualism, in place of official monolingualism. An analysis of such a stance is given and an exploration of how official bilingualism ties in to contemporary normative political theory regarding minority languages and nations. The chapter will conclude by discussing the political legacy within Wales of Saunders Lewis' thought as it appears in *Fate of the Language*. The chapter will therefore address how and why he changed his approach to the language issue, i.e. the changing context, and its political significance.

### **6.1. A Change of Approach.**

*Tynged yr Iaith (Fate of the Language)* marks a subtle change in the social and political thought of Saunders Lewis. He does not deviate from his belief in the Welsh language being essential to Welsh 'civilisation' and embodying Welsh nationhood, or from his conviction that the Welsh language is of intrinsic as well as instrumental value. All these are evident and set forth in *Un Iaith I Gymru (One Language for Wales)* some

thirty years previously. What is of note and interest is how Saunders Lewis evolves in his argumentation. He remains true to the core principles he sets out in *One Language for Wales*, yet in *Fate of the Language* he was to change in his attitude towards the English language in Wales, and, as a consequence, subsequently revised a portion of his political thought. In *Fate of the Language*, Saunders Lewis recognises the contemporary inapplicability of his previous 'nation-building' through monolingualism, as advocated in *One Language for Wales*. Empirical events were influencing the thought of Saunders Lewis, his thinking thus requiring a revision. By the early 1960s, census reports locate this figure at around only 20%<sup>324</sup>. (Please see previous chapter for reasons for the decline of the Welsh language).

The context in which *Fate of the Language* was written is poignant. In contrast to his political writings of the 1920s and 1930s, he was no longer at the centre of the Welsh nationalist political movement, neither publicly involved with Plaid Cymru nor actively engaged in political life. *Fate of the Language* was written long after he had resigned from public political life after stepping down from the Plaid Cymru leadership in 1939. He had resigned due to the perception at large of supposed 'proto-fascism', as well as the continued furore concerning his Catholicism, and his personal style. Despite gaining widespread sympathy in Welsh-speaking Wales for his part in the arson attack on the R.A.F. bombing school in Penyberth in 1937, his incarceration in Wormwood Scrubs prison and involvement in such a revolutionary act was regarded as an impediment to his continuance as Plaid Cymru leader in the post World War II era. The intervening years of the 1940s and 1950s saw Saunders Lewis produce vast amounts of literary works, both critical and his own theatrical plays and dramas. Saunders Lewis had been 'compelled', as he saw it, to enter into one last foray into public political life.

---

<sup>324</sup> The combined totals of monoglot and bilingual Welsh speakers in the census from 1891 to 1921, and their percentage of the total Welsh population were as follows:

1891 - 898,914 (54.4 %)

1901 - 929,824 (49.9%)

1911 - 977,366 (43.5%)

1921 - 929,183 (37.2%)

Censuses of England and Wales, 1891-1921. Census information cited from

Davies, D. Hywel. (1983) *The Welsh Nationalist Party 1925-45: A Call to Nationhood*. Cardiff. University of Wales Press.

He was dismayed at the way Plaid Cymru had lost its commitment to the Welsh language and a vision of a Welsh-speaking Wales, as he perceived it. The context of the late 1950s and early 1960s brought the issue of Welsh-speaking Wales dramatically to the forefront of Welsh political life. The great Welsh political issue of this period was the flooding of the Tryweryn valley and the destruction of the village of Capel Celyn, a Welsh-speaking village, to create a reservoir for Liverpool.<sup>325</sup> For many this echoed strongly the sentiments of Pen-y-bont some 30 years earlier, yet this time the issue was subject to greater public attention, focus and resulting sympathy for those campaigning against the proposed flooding.

Rather than focusing on a projected self-governing Wales where Welsh would be the language of public life in Wales, as in *One Language for Wales*, Saunders Lewis adopts a different approach to his reasoning and his vision of a future Wales in *Fate of the Language*. Instead, he faces and confronts the possibility of losing the Welsh language completely and the ensuing tragedy. *Fate of the Language* is therefore a complex argument. It expressly calls for the need for a linguistic political nationalism that is also dependent upon the need for a political recognition of Welsh nationhood in self-government. He is still critical of English state nationalism and its policies. He is still adamant that the Welsh-language is essential to there being a Welsh nation and that the two are synonymous. The major difference with *One Language for Wales* is that he relinquishes his grip on his desire for Welsh monolingualism in any future state of Welsh self-government. In *Fate of the Language*, Saunders Lewis outlines the history of the Welsh language with regard to its legal and political recognition, and draws a parallel with the history of the legal and political recognition of Welsh nationhood. This paralleling used by Saunders Lewis is no mere stylistic trait, by explicitly linking the subjugation of the Welsh language with that of the subjugation of Welsh political nationhood, he expressly seeks to define the Welsh language as a political issue. This is of theoretical significance and echoes *One Language for Wales* in this respect. However, whereas *One Language for Wales* was an outline of the need for

---

<sup>325</sup> For greater discussion of this period in Welsh history, the flooding of the Tryweryn valley and the social and political unrest surrounding it, see Davies, John (1993) *A History of Wales*. London. Allen Lane. Penguin Press. P.664.

monolingualism in a future state of Welsh self-government, *Fate of the Language* was an appeal to a wider mainstream audience in Wales, an appeal, or 'call to action' regarding the worsening situation of the Welsh language, and the necessary recognition of Welsh-language rights as a means to halt this decline.

There are two major differences between the position adopted by Saunders Lewis in the 1920s and 1930s and that adopted in the 1960s in *Fate of the Language*. The first is that he makes theoretical room for, and allows for, a 'bilingual' Wales (whereas he would not even consider this a possibility in *One Language for Wales*). He does this whilst still maintaining that a Wales without the Welsh language would not be Wales. The second major difference is that previously he had argued for the group right of the nation to speak Welsh. In *Fate of the Language* he argues in favour of the right of the individual to converse in Welsh, and to have this officially recognised. Beyond this, he effectively lays responsibility for the continuation of the Welsh language at the feet of the individual as a matter of conscience and existential importance. Saunders Lewis seeks to appeal to individual Welsh-speakers to make the political and legal recognition of their right to converse in the Welsh language a matter of importance. Saunders Lewis suggests this will be an arduous struggle and process, as already shown through the history of the subjugation of the Welsh language.

He appeals to the individual Welsh speaker to have the strength of conviction and to take up the cause, pushing for and demanding the political and legal recognition of their 'right' to speak and conduct communication with public services through the medium of Welsh. Within the context of Wales in the 1960s, this was considered 'radical', as political attitudes towards the official recognition of the Welsh language were at best lukewarm, and at worst openly hostile.<sup>326</sup> In addition to these apparent differences, there are also some other specific changes of attitude evident in *Fate of the Language* when compared with his interwar writings that lead to the conclusion that Saunders

---

<sup>326</sup> In the 1960s, throughout Wales, all public signs (road signs, etc.), as well as all public service communication, utilities, etc. were in English only. This can be contrasted with the current situation where all county councils in Wales operate a bilingual policy for road-signs, utility bills, and the vast array of public communication.

Lewis' position had been revised. These changes are with respect to the role of the Welsh language in culture and society, as evidenced in *One Language for Wales*, as well as the role of industry in Wales.

*Fate of the Language*, like *One Language for Wales*, begins with a referral to the latest census figures for the Welsh-speaking population. Whereas in the 1930s Saunders Lewis was dismayed at the decrease in the number of Welsh monoglots, in 1962 he is dismayed at the vast decrease in the number of Welsh speakers overall. He presupposes that the statistics will "shock and disappoint" (P.127) those who consider that "Wales without the Welsh language will not be Wales" (P.127), reinforcing his view that the Welsh language is essential to any conception of the Welsh nation. The position of a monolingual Welsh-speaking Wales that he adopted in the 1930s has changed somewhat. Rather than contemplating a monolingual Welsh-speaking Wales, he faces the other extreme and contemplates an entirely English-speaking Wales, and how that would not, to his mind, constitute 'Wales'. Rather startlingly and pessimistically, he foresees the death of the Welsh language, which will "end as a living language" (P.127) by the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century if the 'present trend' of it not being legally and politically recognised continues. Saunders Lewis goes on to assert that the death of the Welsh language would be the logical conclusion of successive British state policies since the Act of Union (1536), and thus the "aim of the English Government" (P.127) to politically and culturally incorporate Wales into England "will at last have succeeded" (P.127).

It is of theoretical significance that Saunders Lewis changes the approach of his argumentation to that employed in the interwar period. It is a subtle shift to the argument he outlined in *Principles of Nationalism* where he did not lay the blame for the demise of the Welsh language and political identity at the door of the Act of Union of 1536. Rather, he suggested that this was merely a symptom of the problem that was the Reformation and 'moral insurrection' that placed the state as the supreme moral arbiter, thereby giving rise to English 'materialist' nationalism and growth of the English state. Instead of focusing upon the wrongs of 'independence' and state



'materialist' nationalism, Saunders Lewis homes in on the specific laws and policies of English governments that have led to the demise of the Welsh language, and thus Welsh political identity.

## **6.2. A Historical Critique.**

In *Fate of the Language*, Saunders Lewis recalls the political and legal legacy of the subjugation of the Welsh language as a means to explicitly link the political subjugation of the language with that of Welsh identity. Thus he seeks to demonstrate the language to be a political issue. In quoting (an unnamed) lawyer in a court of law in 1773, Saunders Lewis agrees with his assertion that "it has always been the policy of the legislature to introduce the English language to Wales" (P.127).

Saunders Lewis' aim of seeking to identify the Welsh language as a political issue is demonstrated by his own use of history in *Fate of the Language*. He quotes, and indeed castigates, the position held by Matthew Arnold, an Inspector of Schools who in his official report in 1852 stated that it should "always be the desire of a Government to render its dominions... homogeneous" (P.127). This echoes Saunders Lewis' castigation of materialist nationalism which sought to culturally homogenise its populations as articulated in *Principles of Nationalism*, yet here he presents it in specific detail. He also notes that Arnold's stance sought the eventual eradication which, in line with the state mentality, was "socially and politically so desirable" (P.127).

Saunders Lewis uses the example of Mathew Arnold, and what nationalist terminology has deemed 'the treachery of the Blue Books' of the same period, to demonstrate that the Welsh language represents a different and separate consciousness from that of England, in the cultural sense and, by necessity, the political sense. He suggests that if England and Wales are one "totally united kingdom – homogeneous is Matthew Arnold's word" (P.129), and it has been the policy of 'successive English governments' to eradicate the Welsh language to encourage this homogeneity, then the existence of an historical Welsh language is a stumbling bloc to this very conception of a 'united

kingdom'. In contrast to the homogenising efforts of English governments the Welsh language serves as a "reminder of a different state of affairs" (P.129). Crucially for Saunders Lewis, it is still vital in inspiring a political nationalism, as the Welsh language represents "a danger to the union" (P.129).

In the same way that the education system had been a focus of Saunders Lewis as the means for the transmission of culture in the 1920s/30s, so was it now. He welcomes the instigation of Welsh-medium education, but berates the fact that it is still English which is essential for every administrative post in Wales, in a sense rendering the Welsh language 'useless' in practical terms despite efforts to revive it through the education system.

Saunders Lewis berates the fact that throughout history, from the 16<sup>th</sup> century up until the 20<sup>th</sup> there had been little effective or practical opposition from Wales to the "principle of a united indivisible kingdom" (P.128) i.e. a political nationalism that sought to challenge the unitary nature of the British state, and make a stand in the face of attempts to eradicate Welsh culture. He lamented the fact that the Act of Union of 1536 meant that the concept of Wales as a nation and a historical unit "ceased to be a memory, an ideal or a fact" (P.128). Bound with this also, is the berating for there not having been an attempt in Wales (until the 20<sup>th</sup> century) to win for the Welsh language political recognition as an "official or an administrative language" (P.129). Again, history proves to be central to his criticism as he notes that Wales was simply satisfied with the complete suppression of its political and cultural identity, manifest in the lack of any concerted movement.

Although alluded to in *One Language for Wales*, and ignored completely in *Principles of Nationalism*, Saunders Lewis deals specifically with *The Report on the State of Education in Wales of 1847* and its subsequent effect in contributing to the demise of the Welsh language. He notes the demonisation of the Welsh language by the officials who produced the report, and of their condemnation of the Welsh language as an obstruction to 'progress' in both moral and material terms. Saunders Lewis cites

Lingen's (one of the three inspectors) assessment of Welsh society that its malaise is due to the Welsh language which is "never found at the top of the social scale" (P.131), and is a barrier to social progress as it keeps the ordinary Welshman "under the hatches" (P.131). In Saunders Lewis' mind, all of this is a result of the lack of a movement to successfully obtain official recognition of the Welsh language. Crucially, he cites Lingen's noting that Welsh is a language of "old-fashioned agriculture, of theology, and of simple rustic life" (P.131). This marks a subtle change of direction in Saunders Lewis' thought, yet is of great theoretical significance when it is compared with his earlier thought. As becomes apparent in *Fate of the Language*, Saunders Lewis is keen to assert the value of Welsh as a modern language, equipped to articulate modern concepts. This is in contrast to his previous assertion that Welsh was the language of agriculture and religion, the moral value of which he had asserted over modern aspects such as science and business.

Saunders Lewis, whilst in agreement with Lingen's analysis, differs greatly in his prescription to remedy the problem. In conjunction with this criticism of English state policy he sees official recognition of the Welsh language as the remedy to Welsh social malaise. Whereas Lingen and the other inspectors had prescribed the complete eradication of the Welsh language, and the flourishing of the English language to liberate the individual as the means to 'progress', Saunders Lewis asserts that with official recognition of the Welsh language, the individual would not be barred from 'progress'. Further to this, Saunders Lewis cites Reginald Coupland's title, *Welsh and Scottish Nationalism*<sup>327</sup>, and concurs with Coupland's assessment that it was 'the Blue Books', and Lingen's social analysis in particular, that "stung Welsh nationalism awake" (P.130) in the latter half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and thus directly inspired the specifically political nationalism of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century.

In his earlier work, Saunders Lewis did not refer to specific laws, legislation or policy that led to the demise of Welsh culture, but this was to change in *Fate of the Language*, where he offers a critique of specific Welsh cultural and religious movements that

---

<sup>327</sup> Coupland, Reginald. (1954) *Welsh and Scottish Nationalism: a study*. London. Collins.

failed to make a political stand with regard to the language and/or self-government.<sup>328</sup>

This is indicative of the fact that Saunders Lewis is still adamant that culture and politics act in reciprocal fashion. He condemns societies such as the Honourable Society of the Cymrodorion<sup>329</sup> as the movement for Disestablishment due to their having accepted the political governance of Wales by England, “the principle of the United Kingdom” (P.129), despite their various claims on behalf of Welsh culture. Saunders Lewis is still certain that without self-government, their claims on behalf of Welsh culture would fall on deaf ears as the ‘metropolitan chauvinist’ attitude controlled policy within the unitary state of the United Kingdom, which Lingen, Arnold and others exemplified. Such movements on behalf of Welsh culture that decoupled their efforts from the claim to self-government were self-defeating in Saunders Lewis’ mind. He noted that the position of such movements was identical with Arnold’s, yet Arnold’s was more logical as it was in “English he spoke and he wished that Welsh should die” (P.129).

Reflective of his analysis of nation-building and of the importance of an education system in the transmission of culture, Saunders Lewis criticises the University of Wales, which was founded to be a Welsh-speaking institution, but failed to meet this objective. He describes it as having been the principal creation of the “national awakening of the ordinary people of Wales” (P.133) at its conception, and terms its current lack of genuine support for Welsh culture as “an ironic and bitter tragedy” (P.133). In a bitter indictment, he notes the lack of fight on the part of Welsh-speaking Wales, which allowed these institutions to subside into being appendages to the British social and political system. Saunders Lewis is adamant that the University of Wales, and other public institutions should have sustained the national life of Wales through its language and should have formed the basis of a specifically Welsh civic society and thus polity. He sees the lack of politicisation of Welsh-speaking Wales to be at fault, as

---

<sup>328</sup> *Principles of Nationalism* is heavy in normative content and he refers in broad terms between ‘old’ and the ‘new’ Welsh nationalism. (He viewed the early Welsh Nationalist Party to be the bearers of the ‘new’ Welsh nationalism).

<sup>329</sup> Saunders Lewis notes that the Honourable Society of the Cymrodorion set out to ‘restore breadth of interest and the culture of nobility to the Welsh language’, yet failed to do so, in his analysis, as they had de-coupled their efforts from that of Welsh self-government.

well as claiming that all of this is in line with successive English state policy and that, caught in a state of paralysis, “Welsh Wales is satisfied” (P.133).

This reveals the intention of Saunders Lewis in writing *Fate of the Language*. He seeks to assert the Welsh language as an expressly political matter, and by highlighting its possible fate, its death, will ‘sting’ Welsh-speaking Wales into social action. This effectively articulates the prominent radical strand that exists in Saunders Lewis’ thought.

Saunders Lewis’ change of thought regarding the assertion that the Welsh language can be a modern language, capable of articulating modern scientific and economic ideas, is most evident in his reference to the University of Jerusalem. Here, he notes that Hebrew is the medium of “all instruction in the most subtle and modern sciences” (P.133). This is reflective of his assertion of the importance of education in a nation-building project, but also highlights his assertion that Welsh can be ‘revived’ and revitalised if a political movement of individuals seek to make it so. Again he refers to the University of Jerusalem and the use of Hebrew as a public medium in modern Israel where it had been a “dead language long before Christ” (P.133).<sup>330</sup> In addition to the University of Jerusalem, Saunders Lewis also considers the universities of Switzerland, as well as those of “Ghent and Louvain in Belgium” (P.133). Such institutions are cited as examples of universities in states that were not as politically centralised as the U.K., and where linguistic diversity was officially recognised, e.g. Switzerland where universities operate in French, German and Italian, and the Belgian reference with its Flemish / Walloon, linguistic divide. All this seeks to highlight the possibility, in Saunders Lewis’ mind, of the viability of Welsh as a modern ‘official’ language.

Saunders Lewis’ previous position regarding the industrialisation of South Wales appears to have softened somewhat in *Fate of the Language*. He remains convinced of

---

<sup>330</sup> Whilst Saunders Lewis cites the example of the resurrection of Hebrew in Israel, its context is very different to that of Wales. Contemporary Israel draws its population from a vast immigration influx, who, sharing many different languages, thus create the ideal circumstances for Hebrew to be employed as the public medium in the nation-building project of uniting such a linguistically diverse population.

the value of rural life yet his hostility appears softened by his acceptance of an academic study<sup>331</sup> that shows that it was the Industrial Revolution which kept the Welsh language alive in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. He accepts Thomas' findings that were it not for

“coal-mining valleys and the industrial undertakings of the South the drift of people from rural Wales would have been the death of Welsh” (P.132).

This allowed for the continuation of the Welsh language at least until the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. However, Saunders Lewis remains critical of the fact that people were left in a state of “wantoning in plenty” (P.132) in such poverty in the industrial areas.

The rallying point for Saunders Lewis is therefore the official recognition of the Welsh language, which he views as being essential if the Welsh language is to avoid further decline and death. In a marked change from his earlier calls for a monolingual Welsh-speaking self-governing Wales, he is now arguing in favour of Welsh language rights. He is critical of the disregard for the Welsh language within Wales, noting that it was subject to public ridicule and regarded as ‘backward’. All this while “no one arose to demand its rights in parliament” (P.133) or on a political platform, and thereby seeking its official recognition, according to Saunders Lewis, in his scathing analysis of Welsh social and political history. The lack of conviction, or of fortitude, of previous Welsh cultural movements is for Saunders Lewis exemplified by the Cymru Fydd movement of the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. He notes the lack of conviction of the movement after it was in effect ended by an English businessman who declared that there were several thousand English people in South Wales who would “never submit to the domination of Welsh

---

<sup>331</sup> Saunders Lewis cites the work of Brinley Thomas whose field was economic migration. He produced several studies on the topic, and in particular on the economic migration to the South Wales coalfields. Thomas, Brinley. (1930) *The Migration of Labour into the Glamorganshire Coalfield (1861-1911)*. Economica. London.

Thomas, Brinley. (1954) *Migration and Economic Growth: a study of Great Britain and the Atlantic Economy*. Cambridge. Cambridge University Press.

ideas” (P.134).<sup>332</sup> The passivity that allowed this extinguishing of Welsh national hopes and instead allowed the domination of English ideas is condemned by Saunders Lewis.

Whilst his nationalism is still one of a culturally informed political nationalism, it becomes apparent in *Fate of the Language* that rather than contemplating a future state of Welsh self-governance (as is the case with *One Language for Wales*), he now focuses on the immediate steps necessary to ensure the continuation of Welsh as a living language. One of those immediate steps is to argue for, and put forward the moral case for, Welsh language rights. This is in contrast to his previous standpoint where he argued for them only as part of comprehensive ‘national rights’. Saunders Lewis seeks to question if there is any tradition of defending the Welsh language “through political means” (P.134) in Wales. Not of simply paying it lip-service, but to make a stand and view it as a political matter, “as the English Government has always seen it” (P.134), and from there argue in favour of its political recognition.

In satirical mood, Saunders Lewis suggests that anyone who had advocated defending the Welsh language previously was considered ‘somewhat eccentric’. Anyone who had sought to defend the language publicly and politically was accused of particularity, insularity and ‘narrowness’, “the narrowness of nationalism and the narrowness of language” (P.135). All this was placed in contrast to the “broad highway that leads to Westminster” (P.135) for Welsh politicians seeking to advance their own careers. Saunders Lewis is berating the fact that Wales is always regarded as peripheral in a political system that treats it as such, and that any thought or effort that attempts to assert Welsh identity and language is derided as ‘narrow’.

*Fate of the Language* also highlights Saunders Lewis’ position as remaining steadfast in his essentialism with regard to his conception of Welsh nationhood. This is reflected in his praising of Emrys ap Iwan and Michael D. Jones, both 19<sup>th</sup> century iconic

---

<sup>332</sup> Saunders Lewis states that the Cymru Fydd movement effectively came to an end effectively when the South Wales Liberal Federation failed to endorse calls for Welsh Home Rule. At a Cymru Fydd conference, an English businessman named Bird made a statement that “throughout South Wales there are many thousands of English people... A cosmopolitan population who will never submit to the domination of Welsh ideas” (P.134).

nationalist figures.<sup>333</sup> He is in agreement with Emrys ap Iwan's statement that the Welsh language was Wales' "foremost political issue and the essence of her being" (P.135). Crucially, in viewing the language in instrumental terms, Saunders Lewis concurs that every political problem was "secondary compared with that" (P.135). Such programmes of linguistic and political freedom and revival were therefore "revolutionary" (P.135) in Saunders Lewis' mind and he insisted that this revolutionary aspect must be resurrected and embraced in order to 'save' the language in the contemporary context.

Rather than suggest that violence, or indeed violent struggle, be used when employing the term 'revolutionary', Saunders Lewis is in fact seeking to place the ideas of Michael D. Jones in the context of Welsh political and cultural history where there was 'little or no history of defending the Welsh language politically'. Within contemporary Welsh nationalist discourse, Michael D. Jones is recognised as the first to advocate a political solution to defending Welsh linguistic identity, and therefore is seen as one of the most significant forerunners of Welsh nationalism. This is mainly due to Saunders Lewis' emphasis on the attempt at nation-building by Michael D. Jones, albeit distant from Wales. Thus Saunders Lewis answers his own question of whether there had been a tradition of defending the Welsh language as a political matter. His answer is that yes, there had been, but that it was a tradition of "suffering, obloquy and persecution" (P.135) and that this was reflective of the fact that in mainstream public life in Wales, everything can be forgiven except being "seriously concerned about the language" (P.135).

The first section of *Fate of the Language* is primarily concerned with the history of the Welsh language in terms of its relationship to, and interconnectedness with, the

---

<sup>333</sup> Emrys ap Iwan and Michael D. Jones, both 19<sup>th</sup> century Nonconformist ministers who sought to assert the political value of the Welsh language and nationhood. Michael D. Jones, faced with the increasing encroachment of the English language and the subsequent demise of the Welsh language, sought to found a Welsh colony in Patagonia (Argentina), where "there will be a chapel, a school, and a parliament building there, with the old language as the medium of worship and commerce, of teaching and government. A strong nation will grow there in a Welsh home." (P.135) Saunders Lewis no doubt concurs with Michael D. Jones' vision when he asserts the need for Welsh public life to be conducted through the medium of Welsh.



political incorporation of Wales into England. It concludes that despite attempts to defend the Welsh language, these were far outweighed by the state measures employed to eradicate it. The second half of *Fate of the Language* is concerned with the contemporary (1960s) situation of the Welsh language, indeed Saunders Lewis terms it “the crisis of the language in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century” (P.135). In pessimistic, yet realistic, evaluation he concludes “it is a weak situation” (P.135).

It is of theoretical significance that Saunders Lewis changes his position in *Fate of the Language* regarding the role of the Welsh language in Welsh society. Effectively he is stating that during the great Nonconformist period in Wales (mid to late 19<sup>th</sup> century), the time of Emrys ap Iwan and Michael D. Jones, it would have been practical and indeed ideal to establish Welsh as the sole public medium in Wales. In reviewing his own interwar thought he reveals that he thought it would be possible to do so then, “given time, and a consistent policy followed for a generation or two” (P.136). Crucially, however, he now asserts that “today it is not possible” (P.136) to create a monolingual Wales. His thought rests on the realisation that there had been massive social change in Wales in the intervening period. Of theoretical importance is his current acceptance that Welsh is the “language of a minority” (P.136), ever decreasing in numbers.

Saunders Lewis is still adamant that the power of government can have an effect upon the Welsh language. He still believes that the domination of the English language is a direct result of the centralised nature of the British political system, echoing his earlier decentralist thought. Indeed he believes the pervasiveness of the English language through government has been enabled by “Government interference with social life in the Welfare State” (P.136) which has mushroomed in recent times. The power of government, asserts Saunders Lewis, is therefore greater than ever before. He notes that the “Whitehall government” (P.136) policy on the Welsh language has softened, recognising as it has the “claims of Welsh culture” (P.136) and that it is now the social attitude of those in Wales itself towards the Welsh language that is the prime obstacle to Welsh language survival. Thus it is to this task that Welsh nationalism must apply

itself according to Saunders Lewis, to attempt to educate and influence social attitudes that the Welsh language is of social worth in Wales. Thus from a culture that is now in “retreat” (P.136), its main struggle is as a minority within its own ‘home’ territory, to gain acceptance and recognition from “English-speaking Wales” (P.138). With Saunders Lewis’ noting of an ‘English-speaking Wales’ comes his acceptance of it as part of Wales and Welsh society, whereas previously his position had been somewhat ambiguous, and even hostile.

### **6.3. Official Bilingualism.**

Indeed, the aim of Saunders Lewis’ contemporary vision for the social, political and legal status of Welsh is clearly stated in *Fate of the Language*. He seeks equal status for the Welsh language, “as an official language on a par with English” (P.137). Despite the change in governmental attitude towards the Welsh language, he believes that achieving this aim will be a massive challenge as he now believes the “Welsh-speaking minority in Wales” to be unable effectively to defend itself politically, such is their inertia. Saunders Lewis is convinced of the need for concerted radicalism and that ‘revolutionary’ efforts will be required to ensure that the Welsh language gains official status. Only this will enable it to avoid its ‘fate’.

This makes *Fate of the Language* a metaphorical ‘call to arms’, in effect calling on the individual Welsh-speaker, and in essence implying a sense of duty, to become politicised regarding the Welsh language, and to make a political stand in favour of official Welsh language recognition. It is at this point that Saunders Lewis presents an ultimatum to the intended audience, making the continuation of the Welsh language a matter for the existential choice of the individual, to be achieved through political activity.

In typically pessimistic tone, Saunders Lewis evaluates the situation as being that the political tradition of the centuries, and all contemporary economic tendencies, militate against the continued existence of the Welsh language. He concludes that in order for Welsh not to simply die out as a living language, “determination, will power, struggle,

sacrifice and endeavour” (P.139) are needed to ensure its continued existence. The aim of that struggle is to ensure Welsh is made co-official language in Wales.

He criticises those parts of Anglo-Wales that vehemently oppose the Welsh language and its expressions of culture, such as the Eisteddfod. He defends the Eisteddfod as being, “not an official legal or administrative institution” (P.138) but of being purely the fruit of the cultural endeavours of Welsh-speaking society, the “only Welsh mythos” (P.138). Crucially, he sees the Eisteddfod, and by extension the Welsh language, as being something that is only in existence because people will it to be so. In a thinly veiled attack on the Labour Party in Wales and the prevalence of anti-Welsh language sentiment in English-speaking Wales, he criticises its leaders in Wales for being “full of poison towards the language” (P.138) and the consequent lack of concern regarding the future of the Welsh language amongst this section of Welsh political society. Indeed it is from this section of Welsh society that the opposition to making Welsh the co-official language in Wales would come, according to Saunders Lewis.

A stark choice is therefore offered by Saunders Lewis with regard to the survival of the Welsh language. If no political action is taken, then such are the factors that weigh against it that the Welsh language will die out. However, to his mind, hope does exist, as well as a practical example of the means to employ in order to secure Welsh as co-official language. Saunders Lewis cites the example of a Welsh couple who struggled over the course of a decade to receive public service communication through the medium of Welsh. He notes the case of a coal-miner and his wife in Llangennech, near Llanelli, who, after a long and protracted legal battle were successful in getting a bilingual local rate demand.<sup>334</sup> Saunders Lewis praises this example yet notes the immense personal sacrifice of the couple in terms of effort and money. The couple had also demanded that court proceedings be conducted in Welsh. The case served to highlight a bitter irony for Saunders Lewis, as, constituting the council that had so resolutely resisted a move to the small measure of a bilingual local rate demand, each

---

<sup>334</sup> A local-rate demand is the equivalent of a contemporary council tax bill.

and every councillor spoke Welsh, and this in an area where the overwhelming majority spoke Welsh.

In highlighting this case Saunders Lewis was certain therefore that the path of non-violent direct action was the one to follow with regard to gaining official recognition of the 'right' to communicate publicly through the medium of Welsh. Indeed, the case demonstrated the couple's assumption of personal responsibility with regard to the Welsh language, and that it is through the political endeavour of the 'average Welsh-speaker' that change may occur.

Saunders Lewis' change of emphasis from that of official monolingualism to that of official bilingualism in Wales is also evident in his criticism of the lack of contemporary provision for the Welsh language within the legal system in Wales. Indeed his support is implicit, in retrospect, for a 1941 petition that had called for the Welsh language to be placed "on a footing of equality with the English language" (P.140) in all mediums of communication that involved the justice courts system and public services in Wales. Thus securing the provision of such Welsh-language services became the aim of his vision in *Fate of the Language*.

Saunders Lewis is adamant that only a concerted political campaign will ensure legal and political recognition for the Welsh language as co-official language in Wales, and thus ensure it continues to be a living language. He appeals to the individual, as a matter of conscience, to demand that all matters related to government and administration in Wales be communicated through the Welsh language 'on a par with English'. He remains hopeful that the Welsh language can be 'saved', as Welsh-speaking Wales is "still an extensive part of Wales territorially" and that such a "minority is not yet wholly unimportant" (P.141). Crucially this means that the campaign for official Welsh language recognition should be mounted in the respective districts where Welsh speakers are a substantial proportion of the population.

Saunders Lewis makes a clear call for a political movement, with direct action as its means rather than fighting “purposeless parliamentary election” (P.141). This was a veiled attack on Plaid Cymru for having distanced itself from language matters, as well as articulating his belief that slow constitutional change brought about through party politics and elections would not be quick enough to secure the future of the Welsh language. The aim of such a movement, to his mind, should be to raise the Welsh language as the “chief administrative issue” (P.141) in every district and county. Although noting the case of the coal-miner and his wife in Llangennech, and citing their methods as the method and policy of such concerted campaigning, Saunders Lewis notes that rather than being a haphazard and sporadic method for individuals, a movement should be formed in the areas where Welsh is the “spoken language in daily use” (P.140). It is of theoretical significance that Saunders Lewis asserts the need for a specific movement dedicated to official language recognition for Welsh. This meant a movement aside from Plaid Cymru, which he had initially conceived to be the political movement which was to secure Welsh culture. Implicit here is his acceptance that self-government is the aim of Plaid Cymru and that in political terms, for him, self-government and the immediate ‘rescuing’ of the Welsh language must be separate matters.

Although the main thrust of argument in *Fate of the Language* in effect decouples the fight for official language recognition from that of self-government, self-government still remains a desirable end in Saunders Lewis’ mind. Having avoided public life for the preceding 20 years, Saunders Lewis now emerged to engage in social criticism in the wider Welsh context. It is certain that he remains committed to the principle of Welsh self-government as evidenced by his highlighting of the lack of effective political opposition in Wales to halt the English government’s plans, in the late 1950s and early 1960s, for the inundation of the Tryweryn valley in order to create a reservoir to provide Liverpool Corporation with water. This situation, yet on a far grander scale, mirrored much of Saunders Lewis’ opposition to the building of a bombing school in Penyberth some 20 years previously. He echoes much of his thought regarding the need for effective political control of Wales by Wales. The case of Tryweryn represented for

him the manifestation of Welsh political peripheral powerlessness faced with the central power of the English state that was able to override Welsh protest and “desecrate” Wales in “order to feed Lancashire with electricity” (P.138)<sup>335</sup> Indeed the communitarian strand is still prevalent in Saunders Lewis’ thought as he asserts that to defend the Welsh-language community of the Tryweryn valley, threatened by its flooding, is to “defend a language, to defend a society, to defend homes and families” (P.138). Saunders Lewis is certain that such is the threat to existence of Welsh-speaking communities that “Wales cannot afford” (P.138) to lose such a community. Indeed, echoing his earlier nationalism as articulated in *Principles of Nationalism*, Saunders Lewis equates his own nationalism with that of seeking to assume responsibility for Wales by the Welsh people. Indeed he blames the inertia and political deference of the Welsh population as debilitating, as he asserts that the Tryweryn affair was “our responsibility, and ours alone” (P.138).

There are also echoes of Saunders Lewis’ advocacy of the need for Welsh economic self-sufficiency in sustaining its language and thus nationhood. He berates the “attitude of mind” (P.138) of Welsh-speaking Wales, and criticises a collective lack of self-reliance and vitality as well as the mentality that views the only answer to the problem of the rural areas as being to ask the Government to “bring them factories and industries from England” (P.139). This is a reiteration of his argument that Wales should not be thinking and acting in ‘provincial’ terms. For Saunders Lewis, Wales will be helpless culturally, politically and economically, as long as it relies on England, and illustrates his call for Welsh self-sufficiency. This is based on his assessment that the whole “economic tendency in Great Britain” (P.139) with its “centralisation of industry” (P.139) is to drive the Welsh language in to a corner “like a worthless rag” (P.139). His position in regard to industry is still that which is articulated in *Nationalism and the Industries within Canlyn Arthur*

---

<sup>335</sup> This is a reference to British government plans to build a nuclear power station at Wylfa, Gwynedd, a plan that went ahead.

The wider theoretical significance of Saunders Lewis' linking of economic self-sufficiency to language in this regard, carries the implication that by creating industry from within Wales itself, Welsh-speaking populations would be able to stay in Wales and thus continue to speak Welsh if they so chose. This would negate the need for emigration from Welsh-speaking areas to cities and industrial areas which were English-speaking, either in Wales or in England. Indeed economic migration out of Welsh-speaking areas is one of the prime factors in the demise of the Welsh language (and continues to be so) and would have been at the forefront of Saunders Lewis' mind. Again, the target of Saunders Lewis' criticism is centralised industry and also the lack of economic initiative and innovation in Wales, as part of a wider social inertia and helplessness.

*Fate of the Language* therefore brings to light several matters of theoretical importance with regard to Saunders Lewis' thought on language and its political status. He effectively de-couples the political nationalism objective of self-government from that of an actively political cultural nationalism which has the aim of cultural revitalisation. Previously Saunders Lewis had considered the two as reciprocal. According to D. Hywel Davies, "the real objective for nationalists was a Welsh-speaking Wales"<sup>336</sup> in the 1920s, and that the establishment of a Welsh government would be a "means to an end."<sup>337</sup> At this time, this is directly applicable to Saunders Lewis. However, by the time he wrote *Fate of the Language* it is no longer applicable to his thought. Now he simply speculates that the Welsh language might "bring self-government in its wake - I don't know" (p.141). Moreover, he is keen to assert that even if self-government were achieved before the Welsh language gained co-official status, then its demise would be "quicker than it had been under English rule" (P.141).

There is an apparent acceptance of English-speaking Wales as being part of, and constituent in the make-up of, the Welsh nation evident in *Fate of the Language* where his earlier theoretical framework allowed no accommodation of it. Whilst he accepts

---

<sup>336</sup> Davies, D. Hywel. (1983) *The Welsh Nationalist Party 1925-1945: A Call to Nationhood*. Cardiff. University of Wales Press. P.73.

<sup>337</sup> *Ibid.* P.73.

English-speaking Wales as part of Wales, he still maintains that the Welsh language is central to any conception of Wales and Welsh identity. Indeed, Wales would not be Wales without the Welsh language.

The distinction of 'materialist' and 'spiritual' nationalism is gone. As self-government is still sought by Saunders Lewis, it would have to be gained for Wales on the basis of 'materialist' nationalism, as he acknowledges that Welsh-speaking Wales is a minority now. The only path that his brand of politically engaged cultural nationalism can now take is that of arguing for official Welsh language recognition. In spite of this, Saunders Lewis is still asserting that the purpose of Welsh nationalism should be cultural preservation. In losing this as its primary objective, Welsh nationalism may achieve 'independence', i.e. political self-government, yet it will not have achieved 'freedom'. Thus in securing Welsh language recognition, 'freedom' could be attained regardless of whether Wales was self-governing or still subsumed by the 'English' British state. Another implication of this is that the struggle for Welsh language rights could, and would, continue in a future self-governing Wales. The nationalist goal of 'self-government' is therefore distinct from the issue of 'language rights', despite Saunders Lewis maintaining that the Welsh nation has a moral right to self-government by virtue of its 'civilisation'.<sup>338</sup>

Saunders Lewis' earlier national project ('nation-building') with regard to the Welsh language and his advocacy of a Welsh-speaking monolingual Wales can be viewed as a direct challenge to the British state policy of cultural homogeneity during the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, as exemplified by Arnold's and Lingen's approach. Despite Saunders Lewis defining such attempts at cultural homogeneity as 'metropolitan chauvinist' domination within the British state, he nonetheless sought to meet 'might with might'. In effect, adopting the same attempt at cultural homogeneity as the British state had employed, yet in the Welsh language rather than the English language. Whilst *Fate of the Language* maintains that language is of intrinsic as well as instrumental

---

<sup>338</sup> In theoretical terms, an individual could therefore be in favour of Welsh language rights, but disinterested in self-government, and vice versa.



value, Saunders Lewis' acceptance of bilingualism also has implications for his concept of nation-building. Wales is thus a 'bi-cultural' nation.

The issue of language is, therefore, crucial to issues of national identity in this respect, and as a consequence, to the issue of nationalism. Kymlicka's analysis of this interrelation between language and national identity is highly pertinent with respect to approaches such as Lingen's and Arnold's, which represent state attempts at enforcing cultural homogeneity, as well as that of Saunders Lewis. As Kymlicka notes,

"Attempts to impose a single state language throughout the territory of the state are often attempts to impose a hegemonic national identity on all citizens, and to entrench the idea that the state is a nation-state belonging to the dominant group and embodying its right to self-determination."<sup>339</sup>

Thus Saunders Lewis' Welsh nationalist response to state attempts at minority language eradication can be viewed as a response to a threat to the continued existence of national identity. This issue of language is consequently highly formative in nationalist thought, such as that of Saunders Lewis, which conceives the state as being in the possession of the dominant cultural group, i.e. England. Alternatively, Kymlicka's analysis can be applied to Saunders Lewis' interwar vision of a monolingual self-governing Wales (despite Saunders Lewis' denunciation of 'self-determination' as 'independence'). Indeed, his intended attempt to 'impose a single state language' represents an attempt to impose a Welsh national identity on all citizens, despite his arguing for it in terms of a restorative justice. Whichever way such an analysis is applied, it remains true that

"Majority support for official monolingualism, as much as minority demands for bilingualism, are typically manifestations of nationalist projects".<sup>340</sup>

---

<sup>339</sup> Kymlicka, Will & Patten, Alan. (Eds.) (2003) *Language Rights and Political Theory*. Oxford. Oxford University Press. P.5.

<sup>340</sup> Ibid. P.5.

This is so, whether they are part of a benign, or a vitriolic, nation-building project.

#### 6.4. Political Legacy.

The main impact upon mainstream nationalism, and Welsh society at large, occasioned by *Fate of the Language* was that the Welsh Language Society (*Cymdeithas Yr Iaith Gymraeg*) was inaugurated shortly afterwards.<sup>341</sup> Whilst *Fate of the Language* is often construed as a thinly-veiled attack on Plaid Cymru for moving in a more popular electoral direction and for its loss of focus on cultural matters, Saunders Lewis had in fact been aware of the party's need to be more than a cultural pressure group. As McAllister states of Saunders Lewis' involvement with Plaid Cymru in the 1920s and 1930s, he was not trying to make Plaid Cymru a political pressure group, rather he was convinced it should become a "proper political party with coherent policies and strategies."<sup>342</sup> Nonetheless, his criticisms of Plaid Cymru had begun to multiply by the late 1940s, most notably for having 'lost sight' of the cultural objective. Such criticism was made in private, but has become apparent from his correspondence with Kate Roberts, a fellow early Plaid Cymru member and literary figure in Wales. In his correspondence he complains of the increasingly diluted agenda of Plaid Cymru, yet ultimately he concedes that it is the "only movement and we have to stick with it".<sup>343</sup> He acknowledges that "Wales would be the darker without it"<sup>344</sup>, but is critical of the fact that its approach as a political party is so "careful and respectful."<sup>345</sup>

By the 1960s, Saunders Lewis' focus was once again the Welsh language. In the public debate that followed *Fate of the Language*, and in confirmation of all that he had argued for in it, Saunders Lewis' correspondence with Kate Roberts reveals much of the thinking behind his writing. Indeed, he surmises succinctly by stating that the

---

<sup>341</sup> For an in-depth discussion of the events and social situation in Wales that led to the creation of the Welsh Language Society see

Thomas, Ned. (1971) *The Welsh Extremist: A Culture in Crisis*. London. Gollancz.

<sup>342</sup> McAllister, Laura. (2001) *Plaid Cymru. The Emergence of a Political Party*. Bridgend. Seren. P.53.

<sup>343</sup> Saunders Lewis, John. In Ifans, Dafydd. (Ed.) (1992) *Annwyl Kate, Annwyl Saunders (Dear Kate, Dear Saunders) Correspondence 1923-1983*. Aberystwyth. National Library of Wales Press. *Letter no.133, 9<sup>th</sup> May, 1949*. P.152-153.

<sup>344</sup> *Ibid.* P.153.

<sup>345</sup> *Ibid.* P.153.

“future and the status of the Welsh language is a political matter”.<sup>346</sup> However it appears from this correspondence that he did not envisage the specific creation of a new movement or political pressure group, but rather intended that it is “Plaid Cymru that should be fighting this battle”<sup>347</sup> of imposing the language on local authorities and government offices in the Welsh-speaking areas. It appears from the correspondence that he had hoped Plaid Cymru could have been more than a political party contesting parliamentary elections, and had continued to be a multi-faceted cultural pressure group and educational movement, much as it had been at its inception. This issue serves to demonstrate perfectly the tension that existed between a cultural nationalism that seeks to engage with a political nationalism and of the friction that arises between a cultural-based nationalism that needs to appeal to an electorate at large that may not share in the cultural/linguistic basis of that cultural nationalism. For Plaid Cymru as a political party, this meant the need to appeal beyond Welsh-speaking Wales and to extend its appeal to English-speaking Wales, thus distancing itself from such a finite cultural stance as a consequence.

Kate Roberts, whose ideological strand of thought was socialist, in contrast to Saunders Lewis’ conservative-traditionalism, illustrates the dichotomy between culture and politics at this point in the evolution of 20<sup>th</sup> century Welsh nationalism in her correspondence with Saunders Lewis. Kate Roberts was convinced of the need for Welsh nationalism to appeal beyond Welsh-speaking Wales and into English-speaking Wales. She was in complete agreement with Saunders Lewis that “it is through political means that it (the Welsh language) can be saved”<sup>348</sup>, and continued to be so, yet was convinced that in such a minority was Welsh-speaking Wales within Wales that “culture has to be disconnected from politics”.<sup>349</sup>

---

<sup>346</sup> Saunders Lewis, John. In Ifans, Dafydd. (Ed.) (1992) *Annwyl Kate, Annwyl Saunders (Dear Kate, Dear Saunders) Correspondence 1923-1983*. Aberystwyth. National Library of Wales Press. Letter No. 179. 8<sup>th</sup> May 1963. P.193.

<sup>347</sup> Ibid. P.193.

<sup>348</sup> Roberts, Kate. In Ifans, Dafydd. (Ed.) (1992) *Annwyl Kate, Annwyl Saunders (Dear Kate, Dear Saunders) Correspondence 1923-1983*. Aberystwyth. National Library of Wales Press. Letter No.180 9<sup>th</sup> May 1963. P.194-195.

<sup>349</sup> Ibid. P.195.

The distancing of mainstream political nationalism from ‘language matters’ in Wales in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century was facilitated by the creation of the Welsh Language Society, a cultural pressure group, campaigning for Welsh language ‘rights’, which in turn allowed Plaid Cymru to ‘grow’ as a political party. As McAllister notes, the creation of the Welsh Language Society allowed Plaid Cymru to more fully focus its attention on and “develop more fully other policies related to the goal of self-government.”<sup>350</sup> This creates tension within political nationalism between the immediate political and cultural goals of on the one hand, self-government, and on the other, that of arresting linguistic decline. As McAllister states, it highlights the need for balance between ‘linguistic motivations’ and “non-cultural aims”<sup>351</sup> within Welsh nationalism. *Fate of the Language* illustrates this tension.

Although intended for Plaid Cymru to re-direct its attention to ‘language matters’, the immediate legacy of *Fate of the Language*, was the creation of the Welsh Language Society, which in the latter half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century has engaged in non-violent direct action in seeking to secure official recognition for Welsh as co-official language in Wales. As a direct result of its campaigning, public life in Wales has been transformed with regard to the Welsh language, leading to increasing social acceptance, as well as legal recognition, of Welsh as a public medium. Of course, it is feasible that a language pressure group may have been created without *Fate of Language*, but it nonetheless remains as evidence of the direct influence of the political thought of Saunders Lewis upon public life in contemporary Wales.

There exists an unusual inheritance for the Welsh Language Society from Saunders Lewis. *Fate of the Language* inspired its founding, with its call for non-violent direct action. However, Saunders Lewis’ political belief and philosophy was that of a conservative and traditionalist, yet he gave rise to, and inspired a movement that saw itself within the context of the international civil rights movements, and social justice movements of the era. The Welsh Language Society went on to campaign outside

---

<sup>350</sup> McAllister, Laura. (2001) *Plaid Cymru. The Emergence of a Political Party*. Bridgend. Seren. P.104.

<sup>351</sup> *Ibid*. P.104.

Welsh-speaking areas, which had been the original intention of Saunders Lewis, and campaigned for the right of access to public services through the medium of Welsh throughout Wales.<sup>352</sup>

The conceptual framework of contemporary normative liberal rights is not the framework within which Saunders Lewis' thought operates, yet it is possible to clearly identify his move towards a conception of individual rights regarding language, away from that of a group right as conceived in *One Language for Wales*. The changing of circumstances since the 1920/30s definitely influences his thinking. He seeks to influence the elective power of the individual in language choice as a means to secure language continuation. Crucially, state power in the form of 'self-government', whilst still relevant, is less attached to the need to secure such a language right for the individual as 'official monolingualism' is dispensed with. Underpinning this is his assertion that if language continuation is a choice for the language speaker, then a need arises for legal recognition within a state (Welsh or otherwise), and this is essentially what *Fate of the Language* argues for i.e. 'official bilingualism'. The argument as put forward by Saunders Lewis in *Fate of the Language* is one that has framed much of the debate within Wales since the 1960s regarding the Welsh language. Ultimately, his approach is more in keeping with his own normative framework of plurality and diversity, yet does not diminish his assertion that language is a key marker of a nation, albeit not the sole marker as previously.

---

<sup>352</sup> The successes of the Welsh Language Society are discussed in Davies, John. (1993) *A History of Wales*. London. Allen Lane. Penguin Press. P.650. Whilst deemed to have not placed the Welsh language on a truly equal footing with English in Wales, the Welsh Language Act (1967) and Welsh Language Act (1993) nonetheless have meant official recognition in certain fields, and are arguably the direct result of campaigning by the Welsh Language Society.

## **A Social Vision for Wales: *Canlyn Arthur (In the Footsteps of Arthur)***

Proviso: All quotes are referenced in footnotes apart from direct references to *Canlyn Arthur* where the page reference is given in parenthesis after the quotation. These page references refer to

Saunders Lewis, John. (1938) *Canlyn Arthur (In the Footsteps of Arthur)*. Gwasg Aberystwyth. Aberystwyth.

*Canlyn Arthur* itself is a compilation of chapters written at various periods throughout the late 1920s and 1930s, each chapter addressing a different topic.

This chapter aims to identify the ideas underpinning Saunders Lewis' vision of society in Wales, its organisation and economic function. It considers how the idea of tradition is key in underpinning Saunders Lewis' idea of an organic 'rooted' society in a Wales, undistorted and free from the domination of unfettered capitalism on the one hand, and rigid authoritarian state socialism on the other, and how an assertion of decentralism countered both of them. Various sections of *Canlyn Arthur* are examined in order to identify and examine his idea of political economy, the role of the state, and how this supports the ideal of the organic community. These ideas are then considered in terms of the ideas and examples with which Saunders Lewis was engaged in order to devise his own social vision for Wales. In political terms, Saunders Lewis' admiration for Tomas Masaryk and the utilisation of the Czech example as an ideal is considered and analysed. The influence of Distributism and Guild Socialism upon his social vision, what he terms *Perchentyaeth*, are also analysed. Ultimately, the Catholic social doctrine which Saunders Lewis was steeped in is considered with a view to analysing the impact of it upon *Perchentyaeth*.

Despite Saunders Lewis asserting the cultural above the political, he was nonetheless convinced that Welsh political nationalism should contain a coherent social programme. As such, the social ideal envisioned in *Canlyn Arthur* embodied his thought on the nation, and his analysis of Welsh national history under the English

state. It also reflected his definition of the Middle Ages as an ideal period in terms of governance and socio-economic relations, as outlined in *Principles of Nationalism*.

Early in the 1920s, Saunders Lewis had equated nationalism with conservatism, “conservatism is another name for nationalism”<sup>353</sup>, relying heavily on tradition as the preserving social thread, and noted that this was adhered to by what he termed the most successful nationalist movement, the English Conservative Party. Underpinning this adherence to tradition was a rejection of revolution, as Saunders Lewis stated,

“The first principle of conservatism is to reject all revolutions, to keep the thread of social life unbroken... to respect more than anything else in life the traditions of the nation.”<sup>354</sup>

This early definition of nationalism underlined his desire that a Welsh nationalist movement should seek to replicate and be a ‘Welsh Conservative’ Party. This does, however, belie the radicalism, and indeed ‘revolution’, needed to wrestle Welsh self-government from the ‘English’ British state. Nonetheless, there is no doubting the strong thread of traditionalism present in any future self-governing Wales in the mind of Saunders Lewis at this point.

The assertion of rootedness and tradition are key to Saunders Lewis’ thought. *Tragedy*, written in 1926, is a lament for the *Man Uchelwyr*, and how they supported a socio-economic system in Wales that enabled culture to flourish. This class of Welsh minor nobility / landed gentry had previously acted as the patrons of Welsh literature and culture, thus sustaining Welsh ‘civilisation’, according to Saunders Lewis’ definition. The demise of the *Man Uchelwyr* and their loss of tradition, or rather their Anglicisation is therefore considered to be a ‘*Tragedy*’ by Saunders Lewis, who links it in terms of gravity to the Welsh nation to that of a “Greek tragedy” (P.31).

---

<sup>353</sup> Saunders Lewis, John. *Y Faner*. 6 Sept. 1923.

<sup>354</sup> Saunders Lewis, John. *Y Faner*. 6 Sept. 1923.

The *Man Uchelwyr* are deemed to have betrayed their native culture and role in Welsh society by becoming anglicised. Had they remained Welsh in culture and spirit this would have stifled Welsh incorporation into England, according to Saunders Lewis. The legacy of this loss of patronage was the loss of Welsh from a position of 'high culture' to being perceived as being a peripheral peasant language. Implicit in this is that had this class remained Welsh in culture into the modern industrial age, it would have been a Welsh *bourgeoisie* and thus in a position of political power with regards to a Welsh national identity and movement.<sup>355</sup> Now, however, it was merely an extension of the English *bourgeoisie*, "like an island of (English) gentry amongst a sea of Welsh life" (P.31). Thus, for Saunders Lewis, the lament is two-fold: in not adhering to their 'roots', the Welsh squires "had neither roots in England nor in Wales" (P.33) and as a result of this they "languished and died" (P.33), and with them disappeared the basis for a modern Welsh political class. Ultimately he asserts that, "without root there cannot be a stump, there cannot be nobility" (P.33). Thus Saunders Lewis' criticism of the Welsh nobility is of their lack of tradition.

Indeed the reason for the contemporary Welsh social malaise was a lack of tradition, and this was a major theme in his thought. In his mind, the Welsh nobility had not been "conservative enough, they did not have enough tradition" (P.31). Present in *Tragedy*, therefore, is the demand for 'rootedness' and tradition.

Having visited the Rhondda Valley in 1932, Saunders Lewis was infused with a much more radical aspect to his political thought in the 1930s.<sup>356</sup> Having previously concentrated his thought on the Welsh nation and its characteristics centred primarily in its Northern and Western rural hinterlands, his reaction to the poverty and its ill-effects on the industrial South were to cause a rethink. Rather than being converted wholesale into a 'revolutionary' Marxist Socialism, Saunders Lewis remained steadfast in his

---

<sup>355</sup> Unlike other minority nations in Europe, Wales did not have an 'inherent' middle class steeped in Welsh language and culture, nationally self-aware, which then could have had the potential to push for increasing political reform / devolution. e.g. Scotland, Ireland, Catalonia, Basque country

<sup>356</sup> Whilst Saunders Lewis had previously equated nationalism with conservatism, the injection of a radicalism to his thought in the 1930s is also attributable to the influence of Thomist thought regarding the applicability of Christian social doctrine to mass industrial society. This found voice primarily in the papal encyclical *Quadragesimo Anno*.



adherence to tradition, and sought to use this as an ideal with which to combat the ill-effects which he had witnessed in the industrial South. Thus, his traditionalism was infused with a greater radicalism. In his reaction to his visit to the Rhondda valley, Saunders Lewis was perturbed at the state of social deprivation, which led him to question the “essential *raison d'être* of Welsh Nationalism”.<sup>357</sup> His conclusion was that it should be to “change the entire system of government and of imperialist capitalism”.<sup>358</sup>

For Saunders Lewis, modern government in alliance with modern industrialism was at fault. Where once he had renounced revolution he now embraced it,

“The desirable revolution (for Wales) is that which will remove alien government from Wales and will re-create the Welsh nation and the Welsh ‘common tradition’ as a necessary first step to the social and economic reconstruction of Wales and the swift overthrow of barbaric capitalist exploitation”<sup>359</sup>

For Saunders Lewis, the answer did not lie in state socialism, or the capitalist centralised state, but rather in the reorganisation of Welsh social life on a smaller, politically and economically decentralised structure.<sup>360</sup> The social ideal articulated in *Canlyn Arthur* is committed to a social pluralism within national communities and set out to avoid the ‘twin evils’ of state socialism and the capitalist state. In marked contrast to the early 1920s, Saunders Lewis’ consideration of his own radicalism and of his own nationalism now saw him define it as the

“defence of the individual soul against the oppression of the centralist, imperialist state, and against economic materialism that denies or ignores the spiritual nature of man.”<sup>361</sup>

---

<sup>357</sup> Saunders Lewis, John. *Welsh Nationalist*. May. 1932.

<sup>358</sup> Ibid.

<sup>359</sup> Ibid.

<sup>360</sup> This small scale, decentralised structure was highly influenced by Guild Socialist and Distributist thought, with which Saunders Lewis shared many theoretical foundations.

<sup>361</sup> Saunders Lewis, John. (1935) *Y Frywdr Dros Rhyddid (The Struggle for Freedom)*. Caernarfon. The Office of the Nationalist Party. P.5.

Thus Saunders Lewis iterated his fusion of tradition and radicalism, and set out his social vision for Wales as being a battle of liberation from capitalism which “denied the natural and spiritual rights of man”.<sup>362</sup> These rights were considered to be the right to freedom, property, one’s family, one’s nation, and, crucially for Saunders Lewis’ conception of tradition, the language of one’s fathers.<sup>363</sup> Beyond Wales, Saunders Lewis saw this as part of a wider, universal struggle to assert the ‘natural and spiritual rights of man’.

The state and the allegiance of the individual to the state were thus to be rejected by Saunders Lewis (*Principles of Nationalism* laying the foundation). *Canlyn Arthur* developed the need for political and economic decentralism. Saunders Lewis conceptualised the nation as a “community of communities” (P.52). These communities, which consisted of families, neighbourhoods, trade unions, etc. were perceived to be in possession of fundamental rights that no state could ignore. In Saunders Lewis’ mind, the poverty created by industrialism was a result of centralism, capitalism and economic materialism, and the solution lay in assuming the rights and duties of nationhood.

The idea that there were rights and duties in nationhood, was indicative of the influence of Christian Catholic social thought upon Saunders Lewis, i.e. that Christianity was possessed of moral and social answers to the problems of modernity. This Christian nationalism formed the basis of Saunders Lewis’ rejection of Marxist state socialism, with its commitment to centralisation. Attacking its inherent materialism, and its division of society into two classes as the ‘engine’ of social progress, Saunders Lewis stated that, “Christian motives”<sup>364</sup> greatly influenced the formulation of his political thought, as had “Christian sociology”<sup>365</sup>. For him, “Christianity is as essential”<sup>366</sup> to his thought “as is anti-Christian materialism to Marxism”.<sup>367</sup>

---

<sup>362</sup> Ibid. P.5.

<sup>363</sup> Ibid. P.5.

<sup>364</sup> Saunders Lewis, John. *Y Ddraig Goch*. March. 1938.

<sup>365</sup> Ibid.

<sup>366</sup> Ibid.

<sup>367</sup> Ibid.

At the heart of the social ideal envisioned in *Canlyn Arthur*, is the belief that the nation is one organic whole. In contrast to Marxist socialism, there exists vertical solidarity rather than a 'class war', as capital is deemed to be the product "of the joint efforts and joint sacrifices of many", thus it should be "shared among the multitude of the nation."<sup>368</sup> Reflecting this belief, Saunders Lewis envisions that "the majority of citizens"<sup>369</sup> should be "small capitalists: owners of land, factories, or quarries."<sup>370</sup> This is based on the belief that property should be as widely distributed as possible, so as to give each individual a stakehold in society, as "that alone can ensure freedom for him, so that he will be master of himself".<sup>371</sup> Thus liberty is directly linked to property.

Also central to any conception of liberty in Saunders Lewis' mind, is the Welsh language.<sup>372</sup> A cornerstone of tradition, it forms part of a coherent whole for Welsh 'freedom'. Reiterating his conception of language and nation, Saunders Lewis notes that it "is for man that language exists" (P.15), and that the reason for defending the Welsh language is based on a caring for the "good of the common man" (P.15). For Saunders Lewis the ultimate aim of politics is to "cherish the life of man" (P.15). He reasons that the Welsh language is not merely a "fetish" (P.15), but is something concrete that enables every Welshman to live a life that is "complete, civilised, happy and fair" (P.15).

Saunders Lewis states his belief in the efficacy of the organic community, noting that "man is a social being" (P.16) and that "in society only does he have dignity" (P.16). Beyond this for Saunders Lewis, the nation is conceived of as "the normal formation of society in Europe" (P.17), and an interdependent whole. He notes that civility can be contrasted with the savage state. The difference being that a savage "does not take care to keep anything, but to consume it as soon as he has won it" (P.17). The implication of

---

<sup>368</sup> Saunders Lewis, John. *Y Ddraig Goch*. June. 1926.

<sup>369</sup> Ibid.

<sup>370</sup> Ibid.

<sup>371</sup> Ibid.

<sup>372</sup> This aspect is fully explored in this study in the chapter entitled 'The Welsh Language: One Language for Wales'.

this being that 'civilised' society takes care of its members and nurtures itself. Thus for Saunders Lewis, the nation creates and collects capital collectively, and not only in the material sense, for its continuation and flourishing. Crucially, this capital belongs to "the nation, not the government" (P.18), and by that "the individual men that work industriously ... but no one totally independent of the other" (P.18).

In a critique of the contemporary economic situation, Saunders Lewis contrasts this vision of the organic community with the reality whereby Wales is not a country of 'small capitalists', but a country that has "comparatively few capitalists" (P.20).

As to leave no doubt that *laissez-faire* capitalism was the scourge of the organic community, Saunders Lewis notes that "capitalism is one of the main enemies of nationalism" (P.20). In seeking to depict society as an organic interdependent whole, Saunders Lewis conceptualises the ill-effects of capitalism as being detrimental, not simply to some ill-fated individuals, but to the whole of society. This destruction is characterised under capitalism, for Saunders Lewis, by the nation being "split into two classes" (P.20) and thus "society is torn into two parties, and the standard of civilisation is reduced" (P.21) as organic unity is diminished. The consequence of this is deemed to be that neither class can live as "full citizens" (P.21). The effect of capitalism is therefore to turn man against man according to Saunders Lewis and thus society exists in an unhealthy state, as, under capitalism, "freedom and indebtedness together are not possible" (P.22). Crucially, when society is divided into two classes, tradition, that most valuable of assets is lost according to Saunders Lewis, as it loses "that connection to the past and the love towards the nation" (P.22) that is necessary to ensure the continuation of 'civilisation'. To demonstrate this point, Saunders Lewis notes that this class war turns institutions such as an education system into "preparation for economic war" (P.22), when it should be acting as the instrument for the transmission of culture.

### 7.1. Political Economy.

Despite Saunders Lewis' assertion in the first of his *Ten Points of Policy* that it is not the

“function of government to create a complete system and economic machine” (P.11) by which a society operates, invariably what is offered is nonetheless a socio-economic ‘plan’ for Welsh societal economic organisation. What Point 1 of the *Ten Points of Policy* does assert is that it is not for the state to plan an economy along the lines of a centrally planned ‘socialist’ economy. However, neither is it a *laissez-faire* economy, but rather a distributist one.

Saunders Lewis' criticism of *laissez-faire* capitalism essentially stems from the belief that unrestrained capitalism, free from the control of government, is a “great evil” evidenced in the poverty caused by heavy industrialism. Thus, what he offers as an alternative is a radical solution, in terms of a distributist economy, termed *Perchentyaeth*<sup>373</sup>, and is in keeping with the “philosophy of co-operative nationalism”(P.11). Whilst it is clear that the purpose of government is not to centrally plan an economy, in Saunders Lewis' mind it should intervene in the workings of an economy in order to “control money and conditions and credit institutions”(P.11) for the benefit of industry, social development and the general well-being of its citizens. However, what is to crucially differentiate this from the intervention as practised in a centrally planned economy is “co-operative societies of individuals and of local and administrative authorities” (P.12) in an ‘industrial democracy’ whereby trade unions and multiple other collective bodies arrive at a consensus that effectively controls the economic organisation of society.

Underpinning this economic philosophy of co-operativism was the foundational belief that right to ownership entailed wider “social duties and responsibilities” (P.12), which were deemed to be grossly lacking under *laissez-faire* capitalism.

---

<sup>373</sup> *Perchentyaeth*, translated literally by McAllister as ‘houseownership-ism’, yet probably better understood as a ‘stakeholder’ economic system. See McAllister, Laura. (2001) *Plaid Cymru: The Emergence of a Political Party*. Bridgend. Seren. P.26.

However, it is not that capitalism per se is deemed to be normatively objectionable, rather the concentration of wealth, itself founded upon ownership of the means of production, into the hands of the few. Saunders Lewis surmises that the ideal economic structure of the 'healthy nation' would be one that abolished "completely the class of the big capitalists" (P.23) and instead seeks to increase the number of 'small capitalists' by redistributing property.

In *The Small Capitalists*, Saunders Lewis details his vision of a Wales whereby property is redistributed as widely as possible, creating a more 'just' society as well as revitalising Welsh culture and language. Also integral to this distributism, is a firm belief in the moral value of 'rootedness', and 'tradition' embodied in the rural organic community. Thus in distributing property as widely as possible it is envisioned by Saunders Lewis that the majority of a country's citizens will be rural-dwellers, possessed of their own land, and therefore economically self-sufficient to a certain degree. The fact that the mainstay of the economy would then be agriculture again benefits the assertion of the moral value of rural organic life, and its associated cultural strength.

Thus it is a society of small-scale capitalism that Saunders Lewis envisions, of "the small owner, the small farmer, small craftsmen, the small shop owner" (P.63). In *The Small Capitalists*, he acknowledges the criticism of distributism that despite such plans to eradicate the position of 'large capitalist', and redistribute property to small-holdings, that it is also "as a small man that the large capitalist begins" (P.63). In redistributing property therefore, there is no safeguard against the free processes that ensure that property is accrued and adjoined whereby the small owner becomes larger at the expense of other small owners. Saunders Lewis' response to this is that checks and barriers will be needed in the form of government legislation, and thus intervention, to ensure such accumulation does not occur and therefore stopping a drift back to the "curses of the present immoral order" (P.63).

Despite the economic pressures that may mitigate against such continued intervention, Saunders Lewis, in typical fashion, cites Welsh history as evidence of the effective functioning of such an economic principle. Crucially he notes how *Perchentyaeth* was the “essence of Welsh civilisation in the 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> century” (P.64). In conjunction with his historical analysis put forward in *Principles of Nationalism*, Saunders Lewis maintains that it is only after incorporation into England in the 16<sup>th</sup> century that such economic structures were dismantled by English laws designed to “to delete every Welsh law, every Welsh tradition, and even the independence of the Welsh nation” (P.64), and that these Welsh laws, customs and traditions included the practice of smallholdings. In addition, he notes 19<sup>th</sup> century Welsh nationalism as being in large part a response to the closing of the common field and the common land, “the remnants of the Welsh order of the Middle Ages” (P.64). This leads him to assert that the principle of small ownership represents the essence of Welsh civilisation in the “period of its independence” (P.64). Effectively, Saunders Lewis is arguing that it is government legislation that enabled ‘early’ *laissez-faire* capitalism to take place in the first instance, and that it is newly planned legislation that will ensure small-holdings remain small after redistribution.

The legislation that Saunders Lewis envisions will be such that it will be easy for large estates to dissolve into smaller ones, but that it would be “hard and without profit for anyone to add farm to farm” (P.66). Whilst not arguing explicitly for a centrally-planned economy, he is arguing for a highly regulated economy and gives the working example of using legislation to make sure a chemist finds it easy to open one pharmacy, but difficult to open a second and nigh impossible to open a third.<sup>374</sup> He notes that a future Welsh legislature would ensure that large English chain stores would have to sell at reasonable prices in the main towns, and that using legislation, it would “be entirely unprofitable for anyone to form one limited company in Wales to buy those shops together” (P.66). This regulation, Saunders Lewis assures, will be possible through the

---

<sup>374</sup> Saunders Lewis, John. *The Small Capitalists*. In (1938) *Canlyn Arthur*. Aberystwyth. Gwasg Aberystwyth. P.66.

use of tax law, in effect creating unfavourable circumstances for “large shops that sell everything” (P.66).

Saunders Lewis envisions an economically harmonious Wales whereby craft again becomes a way of life, and, where artefacts are necessarily made in large factories, there will be worker control. Despite an idealisation of rural life, and of ensuring liberty through empowerment in property, he acknowledges that it would be impossible to “abolish the wage-man completely” (P.23), and he would be necessary in several situations, in key industries (such as steel and coal). Nonetheless, these workers’ liberty would be assured through workers’ control, in conjunction with the wider redistribution of property. Beyond that, only “the government should be the big capitalist” (P.23) yet, as ever, Saunders Lewis remains cautious of governmental power as he notes, “and one should watch even its capital” (P.23).

In *Nationalism and the Industries*, Saunders Lewis is critical of the centralised structure of the British economy, and of how decisions made by financiers in England, “gentlemen that sit in London” (P.85) are to the detriment of the Welsh economy. He goes on to articulate his vision of an industrial democracy as an alternative. His solution is to advocate self-government in industry; co-operative ownership of individual steelworks, coalmines, etc. in order to protect Welsh steel and coal from the vagaries of the international market, and enable Welsh mines / steelworks to regulate their own export market in place of London financial institutions. The idea that the Welsh economy can avoid the vagaries of the international financial system is a point he echoes in his *Ten Points of Policy*, that the economic unit should be congruent with the political and social unit as this would be the only way to “defend people from external oppression” (P.11). However, Saunders Lewis, does not envisage a Welsh government hermetically sealing itself off from the rest of the world. To the contrary, according to him, a future Welsh government would co-operate with other governments with regard to the problems of “provisions and industrial organisation” (P.11), and that trade unions and industrial boards would be left free to operate and consult with similar organisations in other countries. In addition to this, Saunders Lewis envisages that the



natural resources of Wales are to be “dealt with carefully” for the benefit of the Welsh nation as well as for the “benefit of its neighbours in other parts of the world” (P.12).

Crucially, such workers’ control would operate on a co-operative basis in each individual case, and would not simply be owned and run by the state in a monopoly, ‘in the name of’ the workers as is the case under state socialism. Thus, in Saunders Lewis’ mind, it would avoid the various “dangers that emanate from local authorities interfering *directly* in market or industry” (P.87). He is not ignorant of the realities of economics in putting forward his plan for co-operativism in industry, noting that the first consideration would have to be “the *market*, and second, *money*” (P.87). Transferring from a system of heavy industries to a system of light industries, the priority would have to be “the buyer first and the producer second” (P.88). Again Saunders Lewis seeks to promote economic self-sufficiency as the model for a future self-governing Wales as he is convinced that a market can be built within Wales itself.<sup>375</sup>

Saunders Lewis’ solution to the problem of economic re-structuring of the heavy industries in Wales is that “local authorities adopt the co-operative system of industrial production” (P.90). He goes on to cite the fact that this system had been used to great effect in Belgium as well as in France and Italy, and gives a history of its success and inner workings, and notes the lack of a single occurrence of failure.<sup>376</sup> Crucially, the state will not run industry, rather it will be self-governed by workers’ co-operatives, and that such institutions in Wales will be called a “Public Co-operative Utility Board” (P.91). Saunders Lewis asserts that Welsh government should be a common member in such a Board. Saunders Lewis suggests that co-operatives will secure their own markets in Wales, thus maintaining a harmonious Welsh economy. Crucially in the co-operative system,

---

<sup>375</sup> Saunders Lewis, John. *Nationalism and The Industries II*. In (1938) *Canlyn Arthur*. Aberystwyth. Gwasg Aberystwyth. P.88.

<sup>376</sup> Saunders Lewis, John. *Nationalism and The Industries II*. In (1938) *Canlyn Arthur*. Aberystwyth. Gwasg Aberystwyth. P.90.

“No monopoly will be had, nor state control, nor over-officiating, but rather democratic co-operative control and a safe market”. (P.96)

Thus, as the result of a switch to workers’ control, industry will see a marked change from “irresponsible capitalism” (P.96) to a cooperativism that will be for the “benefit of the nation” (P.96). As if to reinforce the point made in *One Language for Wales*, Saunders Lewis links Welsh economic autarky to that of freeing Wales from English political and cultural dominance, when he notes that “English is the language of capitalism” (P.67), and by that, “when the English language is buried the economic freedom of the Welsh people will have been won.” (P.67).

## **7.2. The Role of the State.**

For Saunders Lewis, state power is viewed with a deep mistrust. Thus his economic vision for society is intended to enable the self-government of individuals within the communities and associations of which they are part, in effect creating their liberty. Saunders Lewis claims that liberty is preserved in society rather than by the state. By making the “families of a nation” as free as possible by distributing ownership, neither the “state nor individual nor a collection of individuals can oppress the people economically” (P.12)

It is also through voluntary associations that the liberty of the individual is guaranteed against the power of the state, according to Saunders Lewis. In *The Labour Unions*, he stresses his commitment to the validity of trade unions and the essential role that they would play in a democratic self-governing Wales. He asserts that he is in favour of moderate unions that fight for concessions from the capitalist system and its aide, the government, which seek to exploit them. Indeed, he goes as far as to assert that they should possess a key role in the political functioning of any future Welsh government, and should form the second chamber of any Welsh legislature. This is founded upon the belief that associations such as trade unions are essential in the maintenance of a nation being a “community of communities” (P.56). It is these associations or ‘communities’ that maintain a social pluralism which acts as a buffer between the individual and the

state/government, so protecting the individual from exploitation and therefore guaranteeing his or her freedom. The ideas that these associations, or 'community of communities', maintain the liberty of the individual is the main theme within Guild Socialism, e.g. the idea of decentralised governance politically, and in industry by trade and professional associations, 'Guilds'.

In formulating a position on the role of the state in relation to voluntary associations such as trade unions, Saunders Lewis considers the hostility of the "English government and parliament" (P.51) towards them. In contrast, in a future self-governing Wales, he envisages that there would be an essential role for the labour unions within Welsh political life.<sup>377</sup>

Indeed he describes the labour unions as being "priceless in value and blessed institutions" (P.52) and that their "continuance and their success" (P.52) is essential in establishing the ideal type of society.

He berates Communists for seeking to infiltrate trade unions as a means of advancing a political ideology. They are condemned for not, in effect, supporting trade unions, as in reality they are against any institution "that attempts to stand in the middle between the government and the individual" (P.52) in their intended political society. This is contrary to Saunders Lewis' basic tenets. He notes that, for him,

"a society is not a society of individuals but a society of societies. The family and the tribe came before the state, and voluntary unions came before the sovereign power of government." (P.52)

As if to reinforce this point, Saunders Lewis notes that it would never have been possible to keep a language, culture, and traditions of a nation if there had "only been individuals and governments" (P.53). Saunders Lewis also states that because a nation is comprised of a 'community of communities', in turn a "nation's civilisation is

---

<sup>377</sup> Saunders Lewis, John. *The Labour Unions*. In (1938) *Canlyn Arthur*. Aberystwyth. Gwasg Aberystwyth. P.52.

complex and rich, and because of that the freedom of the individual is possible” (P.53). This commitment to a ‘community of communities’ contrasted with the situation where there exists only state and individual, where the individual is “the slave” (P.53). For Saunders Lewis, the assertion of the moral value of a ‘community of communities’ therefore parallels the principle of the liberty of the individual, because

“The freedom of the individual depends on them being part of many societies and not only in one, and the attack on the just rights of small societies, such as the family, the churches, the co-operative unions and the labour unions, amounts to depriving the individual of his natural defences (against the coercive power of the state).” (P.53)

Saunders Lewis again invokes Welsh history, noting that a “Welsh standpoint on the state” (P.53) emanates historically from the “Welshman’s idea of freedom” (P.53).

In recognition of the moral and practical worth of the labour unions to the vitality of the Welsh nation, Saunders Lewis makes several commitments to their status in a future self-governing Wales. The most prominent and important being that when the Welsh parliament is established, the unions will be given “official representation in the second house of the Welsh Parliament” (P.56) and that this is in line with the “Welsh Christian nationalist philosophical system” (P.56) of “*communitas communitatum*” (P.56).

In *The Family*, Saunders Lewis, in conservative ‘traditionalist’ mode, considers the role of the state with regard to the family. He asserts the moral value of the family as a social unit, as well as its formative role in the nation and that it constitutes “the foundations of a Christian nation” (P.43). In making this assertion, Saunders Lewis focuses his criticism on what he terms ‘false humanism’, namely the tendency to “weaken the bonds of the family and to lessen the responsibility of the heads of families” (P.43), tendencies that he perceives as undermining the strength of the family as a social unit. He launches an attack on state interference in the family unit, noting that it is the basis of society, and that its moral health is therefore of paramount importance. In denying parents the responsibilities and duties of parenthood, Saunders

Lewis argues that the state is effectively making individuals ready to obey the state in terms of economics and war.

Saunders Lewis justifies his criticism of state interference under the guise of welfare as being a mask for something sinister, namely that of grooming its citizens for becoming mere cogs in an economic machine. With religion negated in this 'false humanism' that drives towards "a generation of good machines" (P.44), spiritual health has been neglected, according to Saunders Lewis. He denounces state involvement in all aspects of life that were traditionally the preserve of the family, its rights and duties (in accordance with natural law, deriving from Thomism). He berates the assumption of the duty of child-rearing by "the scientific bureaucrat" (P.46). Saunders Lewis is seeking to assert Christian values in the same way Eliot did.<sup>378</sup> He is critical of the "dangerous humanism that kills humanity" (P.46) as he perceives it to be eroding the basis of the Christian society. Russia is given as an example of a country where "they destroyed the Christian system of the family life" (P.47), which in turn he perceives as having created the ideal conditions for totalitarian government.<sup>379</sup>

The idea of Christian society is therefore central to Saunders Lewis' conception of society regulating itself, rather than the state doing so. He argues that Christianity has shaped the Welsh tradition and that its impression was "deep on our law and on the Welsh custom of holding land and its inheritance" (P.47). The idea of the "moral authority of the family" (P.47) is also the foundation of that Christianity. In concluding *The Family*, Saunders Lewis is keen to link the idea of reasserting the tradition of the family with that of emphasising the tradition of a nation. In "the Welsh Christian state" (P.50) the moral authority of the family would be restored, according to Saunders Lewis. This strong linking of Christianity to the family, its rights and duties, is again linked to Welsh self-government, and in turn, cultural continuance. Saunders Lewis criticises the authorities in Wales for not upholding the rights of families, in the same way as they are failing to uphold the right "to safeguard a history and language of a

---

<sup>378</sup> See the chapter entitled 'Intellectual Peers and Influences' in this study.

<sup>379</sup> Saunders Lewis, John. *The Family*. In (1938) *Canlyn Arthur*. Aberystwyth. Gwasg Aberystwyth. P.47.

country through cultural mediums” (P.50). Again, Saunders Lewis criticises government for thinking it better to “give spectacles to children and look for holes in their teeth” (P.58) than to make the preservation of the Welsh language a political matter. This is not to say that Saunders Lewis did not think that maintaining children’s health was not worthy, but rather that it was and should be the responsibility of parents: the role of a nation’s government being to ensure that children know the ‘history and language of their country.’

### **7.3. The Organic Community.**

The main aim of Saunders Lewis’ social policy was to “strengthen the lesser associations, both organic and functional, and in particular the family”.<sup>380</sup> However, for him, consent is a false basis for society, as consent is ultimately a form of yielding, however rational or voluntary, to strength, whereas human relations must rest upon respect, affection, kinship, and equality, not fear or prudence and utilitarian calculation.

In his work, there is an echoing of both Aristotle’s and Rousseau’s assertion that the ‘natural’ unit for men to live in is that of the small group, in which men can know each other face to face. (Aristotle placed normative value on the exact size of the unit of governance – the polis). This is reflected in his normative emphasis on the organic community, as well as the more general advocacy of small-scale decentralism with regard to politics. However, he looked beyond this to firmly state that the nation, which is composed of multiple communities (a ‘community of communities’) is the composite of human groups with a shared language. Whilst the community is still a fundamental ‘building block’, the nation transcends this, as well as any state.

Saunders Lewis’ interwar political thought surrounding an ideal Welsh society in which heavy industry would be redistributed more evenly throughout the land, is illustrated vividly in *Canlyn Arthur*. He sets out a societal ideal for Wales and seeks to show how this could be engineered politically. Despite Saunders Lewis’ assertions that *Canlyn*

---

<sup>380</sup> Jones, Dafydd Glyn. *His Politics*. In Eds. Jones, Alun. R. & Thomas, Gwyn. (1973) *Presenting Saunders Lewis*. Cardiff. University of Wales Press. P.34.

*Arthur* 'represents the thought of the Nationalist Party', it is undoubtedly his own specific thought. This is evident in terms of how he advocates the organization of society in Wales, with clear elements of Thomist and Catholic social thought evident, as well as Guild Socialist and distributist ideas. These relate mainly to the role of the family, the relationship of his conception of nationalism to that of capitalism and that of the heavy industries. Evident in *Canlyn Arthur* is Saunders Lewis' depiction of *laissez-faire* capitalism as being an extension of English capitalism and symbolising Wales' cultural assimilation into England (and capitalism's spawn, what he terms 'materialist socialism'). Present in Saunders Lewis' vision is the idea of a spiritual 'wholesomeness' being present in rural life, and thus the idea of organic community, a '*communitas communitatum*', 'community of communities', structure to society, and he merges them in a proposal to "de-industrialise South Wales" (P.12). As McAllister states,

"For him, it was the individual, through the family, to the formation of a community that the origins of the nation as the ultimate aggregate of communities could be traced. The nation was thus presented as the ultimate realisation of this organic process."<sup>381</sup>

Saunders Lewis thus places moral value upon the *Gemeinschaft*, the organic community and is critical of the *Gesellschaft*, the relationship of the two being evident from the start of his writings in *Principles of Nationalism*, and which is continued in more detail within *Canlyn Arthur (In the Footsteps of Arthur)*<sup>382</sup>. Saunders Lewis

---

<sup>381</sup> McAllister, Laura. (2001) *Plaid Cymru: The Emergence of a Political Party*. Bridgend. Seren. P.52.

<sup>382</sup> Saunders Lewis' strong communitarian position draws an affinity with that of J.G. Herder's. Whilst it remains doubtful whether Saunders Lewis had in fact ever read Herder, his own position originating from, and being influenced by Catholic social thought, their similarity of thought is striking. The most obvious of these is their conception of society as a collective of individuals in a community, which is in turn defined by language. Both thinkers adopted anti-statist positions and placed normative value upon the organic community. Both were also convinced that human creativity is embedded in the particular culture of a communal language, whilst at the same time, acknowledging that this cultural particular is integrated in a universal humanity. Both argued that such cultures should be preserved.

Saunders Lewis' thought clearly resonates with what F.M. Barnard describes as Herder's maxim that a people's claim to political recognition "must be grounded in its consciousness of a collective cultural heritage"

Barnard, F.M. (1965) *Herder's Social and Political Thought*. Oxford. Clarendon Press. P.172.

believed that Welsh economic self-sufficiency would enable a loosening of the hold of English capitalism and thus political dominance. This assertion of the moral value of the rural organic community led to Saunders Lewis' claim that "agriculture should be the chief industry of Wales" (P.12), as rural 'organic' community life was seen as supporting Welsh culture. It was therefore the "basis of its civilisation" (P.12).

*Weblai and St. Emilion* relates Saunders Lewis' imagined experience of travelling to these villages in England and France respectively. Whilst not existing in reality, they serve as portraits of a typical English and French village. Saunders Lewis argues that these two villages represent the essence of human existence in each of the respective countries, each village embodying the national personality in terms of their culture and societal functions. Both villages operate on an 'organic' scale, representing the *Gemeinschaft* ideal, the moral value which Saunders Lewis was keen to assert. He describes how Weblai, the English village, is becoming increasingly depopulated due to the exodus of young people to the big cities and factories. In contrast to Weblai, St. Emilion is portrayed as buoyant as its young continue to live and thrive there, and leads to Saunders Lewis commenting that the "heart of France beats healthily, but that some cancer is eating at the guts of England" (P.39).

*Weblai and St. Emilion* combines a critique of 'English capitalism' and the relentless, antihuman, and centralising 'machine' of industrialism, with an assertion of the rural vitality reflective of French culture. St. Emilion is portrayed as providing 'roots' for the nation, whereas Weblai in England suffers culturally in its unabated pursuit of economic advance, with its destructive effects upon 'human' existence. Saunders Lewis condemns English imperialism as being characteristic of, and a predecessor to, such capitalism, noting that "through winning an empire, the English have lost England" (P.38). Thus the cost of such capitalism, according to Saunders Lewis is 'true' English culture, supported and given roots in the English rural communities. Such rural

---

Herder and Saunders Lewis share an approach to politics that is firmly concerned with the aspects of tradition, community, language and the nation. The case for the examination of J.G. Herder's thought in relation to contemporary communitarian positions is made by Charles Taylor  
Taylor, Charles. (1995) *The Importance of Herder*. In *Philosophical Arguments*. London. Harvard University Press. P.79.



communities are perceived to be the root of European culture, as he notes that “England was once a part of Europe, and that is what explains dear towns such as Weblai” (P.40).

Weblai therefore represents ‘true’ England, the England “of the poet Chaucer” (P.39), and crucially “the England of which St.Emilion was once part” (P.40), that being the same cultural and religious system which was the “same tradition as France” (P.40), in a pre- Reformation Europe. *Weblai and St. Emilion* then turns into a critique of imperialism and the principle of sovereignty, ideas inextricably linked in Saunders Lewis’ mind.<sup>383</sup> Such political projects have been to the detriment of English culture as “the English betrayed their own country. They won the world but lost England” (P.40).

In his mind, heavy industrialism is the result of the imperialism that sought material advance at all cost, and he notes 19<sup>th</sup> century English imperialism as linked to English capitalism.<sup>384</sup> The result of such rampant imperialism / capitalism, according to Saunders Lewis, is the “ugliness of the industrial areas of South Wales and the North of England” (P.40). The poignancy of the situation of a large population of ‘rootless’ workers ‘divorced from the land’, in contrast with the organic communities of *Weblai and St. Emilion*, is not lost on Saunders Lewis. It is this critique of the human cost of heavy industrialism in terms of physical and cultural terms, borne out of the experience of visiting the Rhondda valley in 1932, that spurred him to conclude that

“For the sake of the moral health of Wales and for the moral and physical welfare of its population, South Wales must be de-industrialised.” (P.12)

Thus plans to de-industrialise South Wales were viewed as a way of combating industrialist capitalism, as well as asserting the moral value of the organic community and its associated rootedness.

---

<sup>383</sup> This is much in the same vein as *Principles of Nationalism*.

<sup>384</sup> Saunders Lewis notes the “theft of South Africa, and the extending of rapacious fingers on China and Egypt” in criticism of 19<sup>th</sup> century English imperialism. Saunders Lewis, John. *Weblai and St. Emilion*. In (1938) *Canlyn Arthur*. Aberystwyth. Gwasg Aberystwyth. P.40.

Clearly evident in *Canlyn Arthur* is a social ideal of moral virtue based in rurality. Despite espousing the ‘moral wholesomeness’ of the countryside as a common theme amongst nationalists and intellectuals in the Romantic period of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, within *Canlyn Arthur* Saunders Lewis developed an ideal based on the perceived moral efficacy of rural life without a complicated romanticism. In effect, the rural is envisioned as a place that blends tradition and modernity and their inherent societies, the *Gemeinschaft* and *Gesellschaft*. Rather than simply rejecting technology and progress outright as a harbinger of cultural degeneration, it is heavy industrialism, in its concentrated urban form and perceived moral decay, that was to be rejected. The solution was seen to be to redistribute heavy industry. Thus, intense social deprivation and poverty, both materially and morally, would be avoided. Saunders Lewis saw rural society as emerging from a living tradition and, ultimately, a living language. Thus rural life assumed immense significance in the context of modern challenges to cultural continuity, as well as to urban social deprivation.

Prominent nationalists also shared Saunders Lewis’ belief that the rural organic community represented the backbone of Welsh ‘civilisation’, and that its revitalisation and ensured continuance was of political importance. Moses Gruffydd, Chief Agricultural adviser to Plaid Cymru at the time, articulated this belief succinctly in his statement that placing people “back on the land”<sup>385</sup> was not only appropriate, but “essential if the Welsh nation is to live”.<sup>386</sup> This was based on a belief that the Welsh nation was a “nation with its roots in the country and the soil”.<sup>387 388</sup>

---

<sup>385</sup> Gruffydd, Moses. (1937). *Amaethyddiaeth Cymru (Welsh Agriculture)*. Caernarfon. Office of the Welsh Nationalist Party (Pamphlet). P.8.

<sup>386</sup> *Ibid.* P.8.

<sup>387</sup> *Ibid.* P.8.

<sup>388</sup> Ambrose Bebb, a prominent member of the early Welsh Nationalist Party, noted that “One of Wales’ greatest needs today is not only to keep her sons on the land, but to bring back from the city to the land the masses who flowed there during recent years.”

Davies, D. Hywel. (1983) *The Welsh Nationalist Party 1925-1945. A Call to Nationhood*. Cardiff. University of Wales Press. P.91.

The rural personality was perceived to be more developed and more culturally attuned, as is demonstrated in *Principles of Nationalism*.<sup>389</sup> Within Saunders Lewis' thought, the rural organic community is conceived as an essential challenge to materialism and industrial values. Underpinning his political thought is the view that it is rural society that sustains society as a whole. What therefore arises is the conclusion that modern society should be built upon a rural foundation. Indeed, Welsh national life is deemed to be centred in this rurality. The rural village is conceived of as a self-sufficient community and a co-operative system. Saunders Lewis believed that Welsh rural life, and indeed Welsh 'civilisation' as a whole, depended on the preservation of rural industrial organisation, based on a combination of agriculture, industry and the crafts. An initial reading of Saunders Lewis' political thought as laid out in *Principles of Nationalism* and elsewhere, suggests he is firmly anti-modern. However, a deeper investigation of the ideas apparent in *Canlyn Arthur*, and his advocacy of the co-operative ownership of heavy industry (*Nationalism and Industry*) reveal his reconciliation with industrial and technological advance, whilst still critical of human exploitation.

*Nationalism and Industry* demonstrates his advocacy of a more even distribution of industry throughout the land which avoids heavy concentration, and thus avoiding large industrial slums and urban conurbations. This was far from seeking to establish a somehow dystopian 'Luddite' vision of an agrarian society whereby all technology and aspects of modernity are rejected.

The move towards a new social ideal based on the idea of the even re-distribution of industry blended with the idea of the organic community, has been termed 'techno-arcadianism', whereby the old moral order is re-established on modern, technological foundations. As Pys Gruffudd notes, far from being a nostalgic retreat to the past, and despite some rhetoric to the contrary, this can be viewed in 'progressive' terms for its context. The redistribution of light industry was seen as a calculated move to "re-

---

<sup>389</sup> In *Principles of Nationalism*, Saunders Lewis notes the cultural pre-occupations of rural Wales, where Eisteddfodau results feature prominently in the newspapers, whereas it is sport and boxing that feature in the newspapers, and thus the interests, of industrial South Wales.

establish the moral geography of the organic communities”.<sup>390</sup> Small factories and industrial plants were seen as being capable of revitalising declining areas, stemming population flow and thus re-establishing the old social organisation and its moral basis of co-operation on a new technological foundation.

There was of course greater ideological significance to this. Rural de-population and cultural encroachment could be combated in this ‘return to the land’ philosophy. Further to this rejection of heavy industrialism is that the establishment of co-operative self-sufficient organic communities would ultimately benefit Welsh self-government, as the rejection of heavy industrial capitalism was equated with being rid of English influence and dominance in a political sense.<sup>391</sup>

Pyr Gruffudd’s study<sup>392</sup> of ‘back to the land’ politics in interwar Wales portrays Saunders Lewis as somewhat ‘regressive’.<sup>393</sup> This is in order to serve a purpose, that of portraying Iorwerth Peate<sup>394</sup>, an early Welsh Nationalist Party member, in a positive and ‘progressive’ light. However, closer inspections of Saunders Lewis’ own works suggest that such a distinction between the two is incorrect; indeed, Saunders Lewis actively embraced many of the principles that Iorwerth Peate adhered to, and that far from rejecting ‘modernity’ outright, sought to combine technological advancement with a rural ideal and to redistribute heavy industry more evenly.

---

<sup>390</sup> Gruffudd, Pyrs. *Back to the Land: Historiography, Rurality and the Nation in Interwar Wales*. Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers. Vol. 19, No. 1 (1994). P.72.

<sup>391</sup> A cartoon from *Y Ddraig Goch* Oct. 1937 illustrates this well. A peasant farmer has an elemental beauty about him, in contrast to the innate ugliness and awkward nature of the capitalist. The peasant farmer ploughs tranquil fields with his horse, whilst the capitalist stands in front of his environment, that of polluting industry. The caption, “Capitalist: For the sake of the free market – don’t become self-sufficient!” indicates the frustration of the capitalist as he sees his influence upon the peasant diminishing as the peasant becomes self-sufficient.

<sup>392</sup> Gruffudd, Pyrs. *Back to the Land: Historiography, Rurality and the Nation in Interwar Wales*. Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers. Vol. 19, No. 1 (1994). P.61-77.

<sup>393</sup> Gruffudd, Pyrs. *Back to the Land: Historiography, Rurality and the Nation in Interwar Wales*. Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers. Vol. 19, No. 1 (1994). P.70.

<sup>394</sup> Iorwerth Peate was an early Welsh Nationalist Party member. A socialist by ideology, Peate left the party in the 1930s dismayed at what he perceived to be a drift rightwards. He was greatly influenced by the ideas of the noted human geographer H.J. Fleure, an academic at Aberystwyth University at the time. Iorwerth Peate was influenced by the rural folk movements of Scandanavia, and set up the Welsh Museum of Folk Life at St. Fagan.

The notion of rural 'virtue' was prominent in intellectual thought at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and during the interwar years. These 'back to the land' ideologies, far from being an anachronistic response to 'modernisation', actually represented "utopian fusions of tradition and modernity which challenged the polarised notion of rural stagnation and urban modernisation."<sup>395</sup> These 'back to the land' ideologies spanned the left-right political spectrum, and despite its employment of rural genetic purity in the Nazi 'Nordic Myth'<sup>396</sup>, elsewhere it was instead based on the perceived moral and sociological strength of the rural community without any such racial associations. Indeed, Saunders Lewis can, and should rightly, be placed within the wider European theoretical concern for the rural that resulted in several 'back to the land' and rural 'progressive' movements of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. In Saunders Lewis' work, as it was in much early 20<sup>th</sup> century European thought, the concept of 'habitat, economy, and society' denoted the countryside as being the embodiment of tradition.<sup>397</sup> This wider European desire to reassert the normative value of rural life and society was not simply a nostalgic response to modernity and lament for a simpler past. As Gruffudd notes, in many cases it represented, "an attempt to theorise the perceived spiritual importance of the remote rural areas and their peoples, seen as wellsprings of 'civilisation'."<sup>398</sup> The peasantry, referred to as the *gwerin* in Welsh, were perceived as embodying universal and abiding values, and rural life retained a vital diversity. Indeed, progress became a matter of contention for such thought, and it came to be conceived in different terms to the 19<sup>th</sup> century liberal definition of 'positive' advancement. This is clearly evident in Saunders Lewis' thought through his *Ten Points of Policy*. He was not anti-urban, or in any way anti-South Wales, but rather the conditions of industrial capitalism, the effects on both people and environment, he perceived as being highly negative. Inherent in this was the belief that modernisation had a detrimental effect upon personality. In contrast,

---

<sup>395</sup> Gruffudd, Pys. *Back to the Land: Historiography, Rurality and the Nation in Interwar Wales*. Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers. Vol. 19, No. 1 (1994). P. 62.

<sup>396</sup> The Nazi 'Nordic Myth' employed pseudo-science to veil sinister political propaganda.

<sup>397</sup> In the case of Germany, the countryside was seen as a reservoir of tradition, and its peasantry as possessing pre-modern characteristics, even though this was later heavily corrupted into the Nazi 'Blood and Soil' philosophy. In France, rural sociology and ethnology flourished after the Great War, and in Scandanavia the study of agrarian history and the roots of folk life were perceived to be of contemporary importance.

<sup>398</sup> Gruffudd, Pys. *Back to the Land: Historiography, Rurality and the Nation in Interwar Wales*. Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers. Vol. 19, No. 1 (1994). P.66.

peasant life was perceived to contain a diversity which protected its inhabitants from becoming 'rootless' wage-slave slum dwellers.

Thus progress was conceived as being a redistribution of industry and property in order to attain a morally 'rooted', less exploitative and 'sustainable' society, thus achieving moral progress, rather than progress conceived of as a head-long drive into further heavy industrialisation.

#### **7.4. Tomas Masaryk and the Czech example.**

Saunders Lewis was clearly influenced by other European political nationalists, and this is evident in his panegyric to Tomas Masaryk in *Canlyn Arthur*. Whereas figures such as Giuseppe Mazzini had an influence upon other Welsh nationalists<sup>399</sup>, Masaryk remained an inspirational figure for Saunders Lewis. Whilst the ideological flavour of Masaryk's nationalism was more liberal than that of Saunders Lewis', both share a valuing of the importance of cultural community. Masaryk, both in terms of his thought and his personal achievements, and the history of the establishment of a 'free' Czechoslovakian nation, nonetheless aid in the definition of Saunders Lewis' own thought and help define what, in terms of political reality, he hoped for.

The section on Masaryk in *Canlyn Arthur* is far more of a testament to an inspirational historical figure who, at a critical time, acted and led his 'small nation' to realise its potential and establish itself politically. Again, it is strange and somewhat paradoxical that Saunders Lewis should laud Masaryk who achieved statehood, rather than 'self-government' for his 'nation'. This, aspect, when combined with the definite shift towards economic autarky and (therefore implied political autarky) envisaged in *Canlyn Arthur*, suggests that there is an underlying acceptance that statehood, rather than 'self-government', would be the ideal form for Welsh political nationhood.<sup>400</sup>

---

<sup>399</sup> D.J. Williams, a prominent interwar figure within the Welsh Nationalist Party, wrote a small book on Mazzini, primarily as a vehicle for 'nationalist education'.

Williams, D.J. (1954) *Mazzini: Cenedlaetholwr, Gweledydd, Gwleidydd. (Mazzini: Nationalist, Visionary, Politician.)* Cardiff. Plaid Cymru Publication.

<sup>400</sup> The second point of the *Deg Pwynt Polisi (Ten Points of Policy)* in *Canlyn Arthur (In the Footsteps of Arthur)* states, "the economic unit, so far as possible, should coincide with the political and social unit,

F.M. Barnard also notes that Masaryk continues the Herderian tradition of viewing social development and political activity as organic rather than ‘mechanical operations’, and that he saw that the unit of political government should be a community, consisting of ‘similar individuals’, whose political association was not the result of physical force or common racial characteristics, but rather the expression of a psychological need. This consciousness was “the feeling of belonging together, of forming a distinct group among other national groups that constitute mankind, primarily on the basis of a common language and common literary and cultural traditions.”<sup>401</sup>

Saunders Lewis seeks to hold Masaryk up as an exemplar patriot, and to demonstrate how the situation of Bohemia and the Czech language and culture under the Austro-Hungarian Empire, “was more hopeless than Wales’ condition ever”<sup>402</sup>. Clearly the ‘life and times’ of Tomas Masaryk hold important lessons in Saunders Lewis’ mind for the ‘new’ Welsh nationalism. Crucially, Saunders Lewis notes that Masaryk was now (1930) “president of a free nation”<sup>403</sup>, but that he never lost his belief in the wider European ideal in tandem with his commitment to Czech cultural and political ‘freedom’.

Saunders Lewis seeks to draw parallels between the condition of Wales as a nation under the British state, and that of Bohemia under the Austro-Hungarian empire. Saunders Lewis notes how there had previously only been a ‘sentimental patriotism’ in Bohemia, rather than an active cultural or solidly political movement. He recalls how Masaryk learnt to be Czech through his wider learning, forming his “Czech consciousness”<sup>404</sup> and re-engaging a Bohemian history that, under Austro-Hungarian

---

because only in that way can a people be protected against pressures from the outside”. This of course, may be a reflection of the economic realities of the post 1929 World Economic Depression, rather than any great theoretical adherence to this on the part of Saunders Lewis.

<sup>401</sup> Barnard. (1965) *F. M. Herder's Social and Political Thought*. London. Clarendon Press. P.175.

<sup>402</sup> Saunders Lewis, John. (1938) *Masaryk* In *Canlyn Arthur (In the Footsteps of Arthur)*. Aberystwyth. Gwasg Aberystwyth. P.121.

<sup>403</sup> *Ibid.* P.121.

<sup>404</sup> *Ibid.* P.123.

rule, had been “an old, dead history”.<sup>405</sup> For Saunders Lewis, Masaryk saw that he was a “member of a small nation that had almost completely lost its national self-awareness”<sup>406</sup>, and how he had then striven to “waken the soul of the nation”.<sup>407</sup> Saunders Lewis also draws inspiration from Masaryk’s caution of virulent nationalism, which instead sought to revitalise Czech culture, but to do so “not through war... but through will power in peace”.<sup>408</sup>

For Saunders Lewis, Masaryk’s ‘European’ credentials are exemplary, a wider commitment to humanity, in tandem with the commitment to one’s own culture and community. Clearly Saunders Lewis draws inspiration from Masaryk’s maxim that “being a good Bohemian meant being a good European”<sup>409</sup>, and it is this wider commitment to humanity that he admires and emulates in his political thought.<sup>410</sup> Saunders Lewis notes how,

“Masaryk always had two homes, Bohemia and Europe. That is the only nationalism that I can admire.”<sup>411</sup>

Saunders Lewis also notes how Masaryk had rejected the notion that Czech and German be made co-official languages, his opposition being based on the belief that it would in effect make Czech redundant as it would only be optional. Saunders Lewis’ *One Language for Wales* draws inspiration from Masaryk being “in favour of there being only one official language for the country and only one.”<sup>412</sup>

---

<sup>405</sup> Ibid. P.122.

<sup>406</sup> Ibid. P.124.

<sup>407</sup> Ibid. P.124.

<sup>408</sup> Ibid. P.124.

<sup>409</sup> Ibid. P.137.

<sup>410</sup> Here, Saunders Lewis notes Masaryk’s ‘wider commitment to humanity’, that it “shows to me and enlarges his humanity more than Arthur Griffiths in Ireland” - a reference to what he considered the ‘insular’ nature of Irish nationalism.

Saunders Lewis, John. *Masaryk*. In (1938) *Canlyn Arthur (In the Footsteps of Arthur)* Aberystwyth. Gwasg Aberystwyth. P.137.

<sup>411</sup> Saunders Lewis, John. *Masaryk*. In (1938) *Canlyn Arthur (In the Footsteps of Arthur)* Aberystwyth. Gwasg Aberystwyth. P.137.

<sup>412</sup> Ibid. P.135.



Crucially, what Saunders Lewis shares with Masaryk (and the wider Herderian tradition), is the tendency to assume that all national cultures can co-exist peacefully. It is simplistic to say that both ignored the aggressive potentialities of states (highly formative in Saunders Lewis' thought in the post WWI era in which he formulated the ideas behind *Principles of Nationalism*). However, it is possible to level the charge that their visions of culturally autonomous communities not clashing with one another may be unrealistic and ahistoric. Neither man thinks that autarky of one kind or another should necessarily lead to conflict. Indeed, the ideal of economic self-sustenance 'self-sufficiency'-style autarky, as posited by Saunders Lewis in the 1930s should be seen as a response to the conflict produced by the open market of excessive 'global' capitalism. In fact, for Saunders Lewis, it should be desired as a means to 'harmony' between nations. Reflecting an advocacy of Welsh economic 'self-sufficiency' in *Canlyn Arthur*, Saunders Lewis is clear that Welsh culture is a 'stand alone' culture: yet it is part of a wider, European 'civilisation', culture and history as well as religion. Again reflective of his assertion of 'unity in diversity'.

Saunders Lewis shares with Masaryk an assertion of voluntary associations, natural ties, and a bitter opposition to armies, bureaucracies, etc. At the heart of their thought is a concern for rootlessness, oppression and dehumanisation.

Both thinkers appear impervious to the idea of there existing any real conflict or antagonism between members of the nation, as defined as a linguistic community. In effect, this 'natural' bond outweighs any other loyalty. Class conflict does not figure in any sense, rather there is an assumed vertical solidarity amongst the nation in both thinkers' social vision. However, the antagonism that does concern both thinkers is between that of the centre and the periphery on political governance lines. Saunders Lewis is opposed to any notions of centralised collectivism, but instead advocates a partnership between a variety of social, economic, cultural, religious, and legal bodies and associations within a political framework free from any one determinate pressure-centre.

### **7.5. Distributism, Guild Socialism and *Perchentyaeth*.**

The tenets of early 20<sup>th</sup> century distributism and Guild Socialism were highly formative upon Saunders Lewis' own social vision for Wales.<sup>413</sup> Saunders Lewis' Catholic social thought, elements of which are evident in *Canlyn Arthur*, are paralleled by other Catholic distributists such as G.K. Chesterton and Hilaire Belloc. Despite being influenced by Catholic social thought, Saunders Lewis' social vision is not exclusively applicable to a Catholic society, nor does it specify it being so as a prerequisite to achieving such a social ideal. Nowhere in *Canlyn Arthur* does there appear an intention to 'convert' Welsh society to Catholicism. Rather than naming his social vision as 'Distributism', or 'Guild Socialism', Saunders Lewis named his *Perchentyaeth*. Translated literally, it means 'houseownership-ism', yet appears somewhat cumbersome in English, and is better described as a system of small ownership co-operatives, or 'stakeholder' system. Saunders Lewis himself described *Perchentyaeth* as 'co-operative nationalism'.

Underpinning this distributist societal ideal was the belief that human freedom is closely linked to the possession of property, thus the more widely distributed ownership of property is, the more free a society may be, thus everyone should be a 'houseowner'. This derives from wider distributist conceptions of freedom and property that eschewed Marxist state socialism which placed property in the hands of the state, and thus denied the freedom of the individual. It also eschewed free-market '19<sup>th</sup> century' capitalism which concentrated property in the hands of the few, and gave rise to the exploitation and denial of freedom of the individual. Distributism, as an ideology, was possessed of more Catholic overtones yet can be located in the same framework as Guild Socialism.

Distributism / Guild Socialism provided a rationale for the equitable distribution of property and restoration of worker control in commerce, agriculture, and industry. It based itself on a retrospective of European history and, employing the Middle Ages as

---

<sup>413</sup> A key text in any study of distributism is Corrin, J.P. (1981) *G.K. Chesterton and Hilaire Belloc: The Battle Against Modernity*. Ohio. Ohio University Press.

an ideal<sup>414</sup>, expressed concern about the present and future of mass industrial society. Calling for a return to the Christian social conscience, both distributism and Guild Socialism warned against the trend toward dehumanising centralised state control of society, and instead argued for the efficacy of the self-contained organic community. This was essentially what Saunders Lewis was advocating in his *Perchentyaeth*: a Welsh emulation of Guild Socialism / distributism.

The restoration of society to a human, organic scale was to be accomplished through a return to a social system not unlike medieval guilds, i.e. small units organised according to natural economic classes and productive functions. Guilds were also regarded as being essentially co-operative associations of small capitalists. They would act as non-governmental curbs on competition in order to check the growth of one business at the expense of another as is the norm under *laissez-faire* capitalism. Also the guild would enable its associate members to pool their resources in order to purchase materials, goods, tools or machinery which would be beyond the means of the individual, in order to prevent any one business achieving a monopoly. The idea was to create a balanced or mixed economy of independent farmers and small industries owned and operated by the workers themselves. Saunders Lewis used the term 'co-operative nationalism'. Independent small farming was to be the backbone of this society based on decentralised control, self-sufficiency, and rural reconstruction. Beyond this, Saunders Lewis conceived it as a vehicle for national renewal and cultural continuity in Wales.

Saunders Lewis' *Perchentyaeth* was undoubtedly influenced by the thought of G.K. Chesterton and Hilaire Belloc. Chesterton's 1910 title, *What's Wrong with the World*

---

<sup>414</sup> In *The Servile State*, Belloc describes how the Middle Ages were an 'enlightened' period of governance, and how this was a genuinely Distributive period in the economic life of Man. He notes that this 'Golden Age' came to an end in the 16<sup>th</sup> century. This analysis of European history is similar to Saunders Lewis' in *Principles of Nationalism*. Belloc's analysis of economic history is charted in chapters 2,3, and 4.

Belloc, Hilaire. (1913) *The Servile State*. London and Edinburgh. T.N. Foulis. (1977 edition. Indianapolis. Liberty Fund.) P.63-106.

A.J. Penty also looked back to the Middle Ages and sought to employ the Guild system as a societal ideal in *A Guildsman's Interpretation of History*.

Penty, Arthur J. (1920) *A Guildsman's Interpretation of History*. London. George Allen and Unwin.

<sup>415</sup>sought to criticise how the interests of capitalism were in fact served by paternalistic social reform, and suggested as a solution the restoration of peasant ownership of property. Following closely, and complementing Chesterton's thesis, was Belloc's 1912 *The Servile State*. Belloc's thesis was that, following Marx's critique, capitalism defined as the ownership of the means of production by a few, was unjust and unstable. However, Belloc was in disagreement with Marx as to Socialism (the ownership of the means of production by the state) being a viable, or indeed desirable, alternative. Crucially, Belloc saw the problem as being centred on the means of production. Rather than being centred in the hands of the state, Belloc believed the just alternative to be the redistribution of the means of production as widely as possible, 'into as many hands as possible'. Combined with this was the societal ideal of the Middle Ages where economic and social life operated along a guild system. This appealed to Saunders Lewis as it offered an alternative to the potentially coercive power of the state, and beyond that for its potential for rural renewal, in effect, the 'cradle' of Welsh civilisation along the lines of his definition.

The political theory emanating from Belloc's and Chesterton's thought came to be known as distributism and shared theoretical space with Guild Socialism. Crucially, it was concerned with political economy and blended thought from other more established political thought positions. It did not want to compromise with either capitalism or socialism, yet took the approach of classical liberalism in being concerned with liberty and property, and in championing the right of the individual against the coercive power and authority of the state. However, like socialism, it was also concerned with social justice and the problems of economic inequality. Within its sights was the perceived incompatibility of political freedom with economic inequality under capitalism. In this sense, the vast majority of people had political freedom, yet this meant nothing as they possessed no property and therefore no means of production, and remain exploited.

At the centre of the distributist critique is the criticism of the capitalist state for supposedly being composed of free and equal citizens. The reality, according to the

---

<sup>415</sup> Chesterton, G.K. (1910) *What's Wrong with the World*. Leipzig. Bernhard Tauchnitz.

distributist critique, is that the great majority of people are condemned to exploitation, insecurity and alienation as they are dependent on those who own the means of production for their subsistence, and are thus bound by them and possess no real 'freedom'. 'Paternalistic' social reform in the form of a welfare state was seen as simply a tool by the vested interest of capitalism to maintain a workforce, a point which Saunders Lewis sought to employ and develop in *The Family*. Saunders Lewis strongly echoes Chesterton's assertion that the family is "older than law, and stands outside the State".<sup>416</sup>

An alternative to the capitalist system, according to the distributist critique, was collectivism. This placed the means of production in the hands of the state, again undesirable as the vast majority remained proletarians and still no closer to being owners of the means of production.<sup>417</sup> Thus, under the solution proposed by distributism, private property would be as widely distributed as possible. This would have the effect of abolishing the proletarian as a wage-labourer 'divorced' from the land, as the proletarian becomes an owner. Thus sharp 'class' distinction would not occur under distributism as there would not be 'capital' or 'labour'. This thinking clearly underpins Saunders Lewis' *The Small Capitalists*, and contributes to a 'vertical' solidarity and harmonious society.

Underpinning the criticism of state socialism was the belief that although the means of production would be owned 'in the name of the proletariat', this would not be the case as the state would be run centrally, by a few, thus creating a system that would be identical in all but name to capitalism. Where there had previously been a few owners, under state socialism there would only be one, the state. This criticism of state socialism was informed by the belief that men can only control what they own

---

<sup>416</sup> Chesterton, G.K. *The Free Family*. In (1910) *What's Wrong with the World*. Leipzig. Bernhard Tauchnitz. P.54.

<sup>417</sup> "The Socialist says that property is already concentrated in Trusts and Stores: the only hope is to concentrate it further in the state."

Chesterton, G.K. *On Peasant Proprietorship*. In (1910) *What's Wrong with the World*. Leipzig. Bernhard Tauchnitz. P.279.

"I do not object to Socialism because it will revolutionise our commerce. I object to it because it will leave it so horribly the same."

Chesterton, G.K. *On Peasant Proprietorship*. In (1910) *What's Wrong with the World*. Leipzig. Bernhard Tauchnitz. P.280.

individually, the ownership of the means of production being shared in the divided sense, rather than the pooled, as would be the case under collectivism. The peasant community is thus perceived as the social ideal. Whilst the idea of community is inherently stressed in the notions of 'organic community' and *Gemeinschaft*, it is important to note from distributist thought that this is a 'communal' ideal and not a collectivist/communist ideal, with sharing in the sense of dividing rather than pooling. The equality of genuine comradeship is revered because it is traditional, rather than the forced comradeship of socialism. Under distributism, the people will act as a collective only in providing the politico-legal framework that will enable the division and distribution of property.

Thus liberty and property were key to distributist thought.<sup>418</sup> Unlike Marxist state socialism, private property was believed to be part of the solution, not the problem. Necessarily under distributist thought, the solution to centralisation was seen as decentralisation. Liberty was thus identified and seen as synonymous with property, as property was seen to represent real, practical power. Property was therefore necessary in order to make a reality of abstract 'freedom'. Men were seen as only being able to be 'free' when they were in possession of property and therefore able to directly control the means of producing their own sustenance. This was not an indirect or theoretical way of claiming that a factory that is owned and run by the state 'belongs to the people', but rather through individuals directly owning shares in the factory, there is true 'worker control'. This is clearly the thought informing Saunders Lewis' position in *Nationalism and the Industries I & II*.

The material and physical improvement caused by the redistribution of property would contribute to the spiritual and moral improvement of people, as material security would enable people to live fully human lives, free from alienation, and would make for a happier and more dignified society. This clearly is what is expected by Saunders Lewis, with its resultant positive effect upon Welsh culture. Without property, man is dehumanised as a consequence of his impoverishment. This is contrasted with the greed

---

<sup>418</sup> Indeed, the title initially proposed for the Distributist League was that of 'The League for the Preservation of Liberty by the Restoration of Property'.

and materialism that characterises the constant drive to acquire more property by the individual under capitalism. Conversely, state welfare is seen to make people dependent on government, as it gives them income but not property of their own, and thus only exacerbates the fundamental problem.

Craftsmanship and peasant agriculture are central to a distributist ideal because they are creative occupations, rather than merely productive, and have been destroyed by the 'soulless' factory system. Distributist thought often argued in the form of aesthetics, that there is no such thing as 'proletarian art', while stressing that there clearly is 'peasant art.' This is why the proposed economic arrangements under distributism centred on the land and the restoration of the peasantry and the guilds, and popular control of the (limited amount of) industry that there was. This is clearly evidenced in *The Function of Art* where Saunders Lewis asserts that 'crafts' should be considered and that there had been a false dichotomy in 'art'. "We in Wales have attempted to convey the new meaning through talking about 'fine arts' as distinct from 'crafts'" (P.142). Saunders Lewis was clearly in agreement with thinkers and critics such as F.R. Leavis in this regard.<sup>419</sup> The idealisation of rural agrarian society and the culture that it supported was contrasted with the inherent 'ugliness' of the 'machine age'. The specialisation, alienation and mechanisation of the 'machine age' would be solved in an envisioned distributist society of craftsmen. Craftsmanship was seen as making every man an artist, and every artefact of daily use a work of art. Aesthetic 'beauty', 'meaning' and 'value' were all inherent in peasant society according to such thought.

The role of government under Guild Socialism / distributism is vague, and this is true also of Saunders Lewis' *Perchentyaeth*. Whilst there is a deep mistrust of the state for its potential for coercive power, such thought seems reconciled to the fact that government must exist, and by that a highly participatory-democratic form in order to ensure the equitable redistribution of property. Under the *laissez-faire* capitalist system, the government was adjudged to be actively abetting the concentration of wealth, so it had to be turned around to foster the principle of 'small property'. This would be done

---

<sup>419</sup> On this aspect of aesthetics and of the inclusion of crafts in any definition of art, see the relevant section on F.R. Leavis in this study in the chapter entitled 'Intellectual Peers and Influences'.

by people, rather than done to them by government. However, this remains vague and not fully developed, at least in Saunders Lewis' work, and he asserts that government legislation will be enacted in the form of tax laws, etc, (*The Small Capitalists*) thereby giving government a large role for regulation and intervention in this regard. (It is possible to argue that the state is therefore assuming an increasingly large role).

The role of the state is principally where criticisms of Guild Socialism, distributism and thus *Perchentyaeth* arise. If the whole point of the political project is to distribute power, reform itself will necessarily need to be made by decree, in itself necessitating central political power. Under such a criticism, people would simply have to 'assume' the responsibility of individual liberty and property. Furthermore there is the problem of productivity in such a system of 'small capitalists', in that if no-one has the opportunity to grow, i.e. to add farm to farm, then there is little, if no incentive. This criticism is exacerbated by the argument that distributism could not sufficiently cope with the mass societies of the late 19<sup>th</sup> / early 20<sup>st</sup> centuries. This line of argument suggests that populations are far too numerous to enable a move 'back to the land' and exist on a subsistence level, not to mention the challenge of 'training' populations in effective land management and agricultural techniques. Populations would need to be willing, as necessary in any 'bottom-up' participatory system. Resituating whole swathes of population 'back to the land' would prove highly problematic. These arguments would also have been pertinent in Saunders Lewis' time, yet there no doubt remained in his thought the idea that Wales was a sufficiently small nation that such a political and social system would be feasible. This in turn leads to the question as to whether Saunders Lewis would have been better served employing another political 'ideology', distinct from his nationalism, with which to achieve his goal of cultural continuation. That he may have done, yet as the nationalist portion of this social and political thought was grounded in his Catholic social thought emanating from a theological position, it is feasible to conclude that his distributist ideology was also grounded in it. His clear commitment to political, social and industrial pluralism was represented in his 'community of communities' ideal. As Laura McAllister notes,



“The projection of Wales as a ‘community of communities’ is an enduring concept in the political discourse of (Welsh) nationalism, and one that echoes the composite of the guild system.”<sup>420</sup>

### 7.6. Catholic Social Doctrine and *Canlyn Arthur*.

Responding to accusations that he was, as leader of the Welsh Nationalist Party, the head of a “neo-Catholic movement”<sup>421</sup> in Wales, as well as accusations of “papist narrowness”<sup>422</sup>, Saunders Lewis sought to outline his political philosophy and to highlight his political influences in *A Letter Concerning Catholicism* (1927). However, at certain points there is clear indication given by Saunders Lewis as to the source of his political ideas. In response to accusations of influence by Charles Maurras and support for the *Action Française*, Saunders Lewis notes how he merely admired Maurras’ work of literary criticism and that his own *Principles of Nationalism* was “in favour of European thinking and anti-state thought in politics”<sup>423</sup> and as a consequence was opposed to the political thought of Maurras. He adds that whilst the *Action Française* is opposed to Europe, for him, “Wales exists as part of Europe.”

Saunders Lewis instead cites as his influences “the Christian dramatist and poet”<sup>424</sup> Paul Claudel, and the novelist François Mauriac. Most interestingly and tellingly of all Saunders Lewis’ self acknowledged influence in *A Letter Concerning Catholicism* is that of Etienne Gilson, as he notes, “I learnt also everything I know about Christian thought of the Middle Ages from that grand scholar”<sup>425</sup>, which is highly indicative of the influence of neo-medievalism in the political thought of Saunders Lewis.<sup>426</sup>

---

<sup>420</sup> McAllister, Laura. (2001) *Plaid Cymru. The Emergence of a Political Party*. Bridgend. Seren. P.51  
McAllister also goes on to note that, “Gwynfor Evans also claimed a direct input from Guild Socialism to his own political outlook. Plaid Cymru has long seen the individual as the source of all natural authority and has gone on to recommend national self-government as the most appropriate political structure for individual and community fulfillment.”

<sup>421</sup> Saunders Lewis, John. Article entitled *A Letter Concerning Catholicism (Llythyr Ynghylch Catholigaeth)*. In *Y Llenor*. Vol. 6. (1927) Wrexham. Hughes and Son. P.72.

<sup>422</sup> Ibid. P.72.

<sup>423</sup> Ibid. P.72.

<sup>424</sup> Ibid. P.73.

<sup>425</sup> Ibid. P.74.

<sup>426</sup> See the chapter entitled ‘A Neo-Medieval Europe: Aspects of Universality and Particularity’ in this study.

Etienne Gilson's status as a French Thomistic philosopher, a historian of philosophy, and one of the leaders of the Catholic neo-Thomist movement, obviously had great influence upon Saunders Lewis' own Thomistic philosophical foundations which provided the basis of his political thought. Etienne Gilson's specialism was medieval philosophy and political thought, and the espousal of Catholic social doctrine in much of Saunders Lewis' thought derives from thinkers such as Gilson and Maritain. This is reflected in his rejection of state sovereignty, his appeal for a 'return to the political principle of the Middle Ages', as well as his overall neo-medievalism with regard to future governance for Europe.

*The Party for Wales* (1942) was again a defence of the Catholic social thought that inspired Saunders Lewis' political thought. The aim of the pamphlet is to refute allegations of totalitarianism and fascism levelled at him by the Secretary of the Welsh League of Nations Union, Gwilym Davies, who published his article on the matter in *Y Traethodydd (The Essayist)* in July 1942. The foundation of Gwilym Davies' accusations was that the Welsh Nationalist Party had taken all its policy instructions from the papal encyclicals and was therefore a 'Catholic' party indebted for its social programme solely to the Papal Encyclicals, "It is taken that the authority for every clause of the policy of the Nationalist Party, as it is revealed in Canlyn Arthur, in the two Encyclicals on moral and social matters."<sup>427</sup> Gwilym Davies also asserts that Saunders Lewis and by extension the whole of the Nationalist Party was anti-democratic and authoritarian, and was indebted to the thought of Charles Maurras and *L'Action Française*, for its ideological basis.<sup>428</sup> This culminated in Gwilym Davies' accusation that under the vision espoused by Saunders Lewis, a future Wales would be:

"(1) independent... (2) totalitarian... (3) Fascist... (4) Papist."<sup>429</sup>

---

<sup>427</sup> Davies, Gwilym. *Cymru Gyfan a'r Blaid Genedlaethol*. Y Traethodydd (The Essayist). 3<sup>rd</sup> Series. Vol. 11. Caernarfon. Calvinist Methodist Printing Press. (1942). P.100.

<sup>428</sup> "The policy of the Party is not to not work with other parties in a democratic Wales, but to take the government entirely into its own hands, And this brings us to the debt of the Party, in its policy and inclination, to *L'Action Française* and Charles Maurras." Ibid. P101.

<sup>429</sup> Ibid. P.105-107.

For even the casual reader of *Principles of Nationalism* and *Canlyn Arthur*, the accusations clearly have no academic grounding. What *The Party for Wales* does do is provide the reader with further inside into the thought of Saunders Lewis as he clarifies points and gives further weight to the claims he makes.

The repudiation of Gwilym Davies' accusations by Saunders Lewis regarding the influence of Maurras hinges on the concepts of *nationalisme intégral*, and *politique d'abord* ('it is essential to start with politics') which occur frequently in Maurras' political writings. Davies attempts to draw a direct parallel between these and Saunders Lewis' use of 'Christian nationalism' and the 'Welsh Christian state' in *Canlyn Arthur*. Tellingly, Saunders Lewis highlights how his Christian nationalism is opposed to the "*nationalisme intégral* of the atheist Maurras."<sup>430</sup> He also states that his political thought has always declared "things of the spirit first"<sup>431</sup>, again opposed to *politique d'abord*, and again a re-stating of his spiritual (cultural) nationalism being oppose to material nationalism, resulting in a "politics second"<sup>432</sup> approach.

Saunders Lewis rejects Gwilym Davies' accusations that Wales will be 'independent' by referring him to *Principles of Nationalism*, and goes on to refute Gwilym Davies' accusations of totalitarianism. Clearly, nowhere in Saunders Lewis' writings is there the assertion that one political party should, having won political power, utilise the power of the state to forbid "the existence of any other party".<sup>433</sup> Saunders Lewis clarifies his already clear opposition to the political principles of totalitarianism and fascism, as he states that

"The less the burden of the State the better; and even under a Welsh Government the Nationalist Party would continue to oppose the conception of an over-centralised state, because the Welsh tradition, which is a tradition of freedom, is opposed to it."<sup>434</sup>

---

<sup>430</sup> Saunders Lewis, John. (1942) *The Party for Wales*. (Plaid Cymru publication). Caernarfon. Nationalist Offices P.5.

<sup>431</sup> Ibid. P.5.

<sup>432</sup> Ibid. P.5.

<sup>433</sup> Ibid. P.6.

<sup>434</sup> Ibid. P.6.

This makes concrete Saunders Lewis' conception of the shape and form of a future Welsh self-government as a democratically elected body. He therefore conceives of there being other political parties in a future Welsh democracy, but that the Nationalist Party would continue as a 'Christian democrat' party for all intents and purposes. This again highlights the tension that exists with being a political party committed to bringing about Welsh self-government, yet also needing to appeal to the electorate on the basis of a social programme. This is why the constitutional aims of the party were marked out by Saunders Lewis as being primary, whilst the social and economic aims of the party were secondary. This is a reality-based reflection of the fact that nationalism interacts and interfaces with various other left-right ideologies.

Saunders Lewis further seeks to refute allegations of totalitarianism by noting how the social ideal conceived in *Canlyn Arthur* is aimed at countering the 'political and economic totalitarianism' that is the "inevitable result of over-industrialisation and that all the advantages of the cheap goods and the cinemas of industrialisation are too little compensation for the slavery of the Welsh workers."<sup>435</sup> In a defence of his *Cwrs Y Byd (the Way of the World)* column in which he refused to condemn Hitler "in the popular style"<sup>436</sup>, he states that he tried to describe Hitler in a structural sense, arguing that he (Hitler) was a "product of the over-industrialisation of western civilisation"<sup>437</sup> and that it was therefore more important to attack the root of the problem (over-industrialisation), rather than the end product. The socio-economic "co-operative, agricultural, de-centralised social system"<sup>438</sup> envisioned in *Canlyn Arthur* is therefore conceived by Saunders Lewis as being the ideal structure with which to combat any inclination towards totalitarianism. This rejection of totalitarianism is coupled with Saunders Lewis' refutation of the accusation of fascism by clearly pointing to the section in *Canlyn Arthur (Labour Unions)* that details the position of the trade unions in a future Welsh second chamber of parliament.

---

<sup>435</sup> Ibid. P.7.

<sup>436</sup> Ibid. P.7.

<sup>437</sup> Ibid. P.7.

<sup>438</sup> Ibid. P.7.

Gwilym Davies seeks to draw a parallel between Saunders Lewis' promotion of the trade unions being represented in the second chamber of a Welsh parliament and that of the Chamber of Fasci and Corporations in Italy. Clearly underlining Saunders Lewis' commitment to democracy, he criticises the fascist order of government which, despite recognising the right of the unions to representation, refuses entirely the "right of the individual as a citizen to his vote, and the people's title to the ballot booth."<sup>439</sup>

In seeking to refute accusations of fascism, Saunders Lewis gives a clearer indication of the set-up of democratic institutions in a self-governing Wales, which he does not do in *Canlyn Arthur*. He asserts that he envisages a future self-governing Wales having as its primary elected body, a First House that would be comprised of candidates "freely elected by individuals joined together in movements or parties if they so desire". In a marked criticism of the undemocratic nature of the British political system, he notes that "there will be no Lords".<sup>440</sup> The Second House of a Welsh parliament would be founded on trade union representation, and that the idea of industrial and occupational corporations, far from being a fascist idea, has been in existence in Europe since antiquity. An alternative for such corporations, according to Saunders Lewis, is guilds and that they had formed the Second Houses of several European parliaments. The corporations had been rendered useless in Italy, in his mind, by their "being subjected to the State".<sup>441</sup> Saunders Lewis sought to underline this point by citing the *Manchester Guardian*<sup>442</sup> which reported that the Italian system, far from being socialist, was in fact, "étatisme building itself upon the beginnings of a corporate ideal that was not Socialist".<sup>443</sup> Of course, *étatisme* is a concept that Saunders Lewis had been vociferous in his opposition to.

Saunders Lewis also responds to Gwilym Davies' accusations that he intended to alter the religious make-up of Welsh society, as his political vision somehow involved

---

<sup>439</sup> Ibid. P.7.

<sup>440</sup> Ibid. P.7.

<sup>441</sup> Ibid. P.8.

<sup>442</sup> *Manchester Guardian*. April 2<sup>nd</sup> 1936.

<sup>443</sup> Saunders Lewis, John. (1942) *The Party for Wales*. Caernarfon. Nationalist Offices. P. 8.

making Wales ‘Papist’, Roman Catholic, and that this was central to his plan. This can often appear obscure to the contemporary reader, yet is indicative of the status accorded to religion within Welsh society at the time, and its instrumental action in influencing the social ideas of many of Saunders Lewis’ contemporaries. From Saunders Lewis’ statement in *Canlyn Arthur* that

“If Wales were to be awakened in reality, if she demanded the opportunity to plan her own life, it would be essential for her to possess so much of the spirit of her past that she would be likely to follow the course directed by her traditions and to re-found, on firm foundation, a Welsh Christian State.”<sup>444</sup>

Gwilym Davies interprets the ‘Welsh Christian state’ to be indicative of Saunders Lewis’ plans to create a ‘Papist’ Wales in conjunction with a totalitarian and fascist state.

Saunders Lewis counters this by noting that despite his own conversion to Catholicism, his use of the words ‘Welsh Christian state’ was intended to reflect that the central religion in Wales was Christianity, and that a future Welsh government reflect the society it seeks to represent, irrespective of denomination. It is clear that having considered the influence of neo-Thomism in particular, Saunders Lewis was keen for there to be a return to the Christian moral conscience, but that the Welsh state be Christian in terms of its social values. This is far removed from suggesting that a future Welsh state impose a state religion, and by that Catholicism.<sup>445</sup> The contemporary reader may be confused and indeed be concerned about the level of separation of Church and state in the phrase ‘Welsh Christian state’ which Saunders Lewis employs. Suffice to say that the ‘Welsh state’ here would reflect the Christian values which Welsh society was deemed to hold. Indeed there could not be a ‘state Church’ in Wales due to the proliferation of non-conformist Churches. It is clear that Saunders Lewis accepts and indeed values the separation of Church and state in political terms.

---

<sup>444</sup> Ibid. P. 8.

<sup>445</sup> For a more detailed discussion of this idea of a ‘Welsh Christian state’, see relevant section on T.S. Eliot in the chapter entitled ‘Intellectual Peers and Influences’ in this study.

Therefore, rather than seeking to ensure a political and social vision for Wales in which Roman Catholicism is the predominant Christian denomination, Saunders Lewis asserts that it should be Christian, in the broadest sense of professing Christianity and adhering to certain social and political principles as a consequence.<sup>446</sup> Saunders Lewis also notes that the vast majority of his contemporaries in the Welsh Nationalist Party were nonconformist in terms of religion.

Saunders Lewis does not seek to deny that he was influenced greatly by the moral philosophy of the Catholic Church. Rather than seek the Catholicisation of Welsh society in actual terms, he saw that Catholic social doctrine, in terms of its application as a social philosophy, was universal. He notes how the Papal Encyclicals were agreed upon by various other Christian denominational bodies and churches throughout Wales in terms of the applicability of the social recommendations made within them. Indeed, the influence of *Rerum Novarum* and *Quadregismo Anno* upon his social philosophy was part of a broader range of influences. His ideas had been forming long before *Quadregismo Anno* had appeared in 1931, (many of the chapters of *Canlyn Arthur* having been compiled in the 1920s) and had served as an affirmation of the ideas he already held. Beyond this, his “studies in Welsh literature played an important role”<sup>447</sup>. It is his Christianity that informed his gradual discovery between 1920 and 1926 that

“the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ had leadership to give to the modern world in social and economic affairs”<sup>448</sup>

Again, this may appear obscure to the contemporary secular reader, but is indicative of the fact that within Christian philosophy, Catholic social thought embraced principles and values which it sought to apply to ‘remedy’ the problems of modernity. This itself was based upon a discovery that Christianity could be used to “criticise... the injustices

---

<sup>446</sup> The idea that the early Welsh Nationalist Party was ‘crypto-Catholic’ is negated by the fact that the vast majority of members were Non-conformists.

<sup>447</sup> Saunders Lewis, John. (1942) *The Party for Wales*. Caernarfon. Nationalist Offices. P.9.

<sup>448</sup> *Ibid.* P.9.

of capitalism and 19<sup>th</sup> century Liberalism”<sup>449</sup>, and that the answer to the problems of modernity lay in tradition and that within the principles and teachings of Christianity there was the basis for a “social reform on humanistic and honourable lines”.<sup>450</sup> This verified his conception of a social vision that aimed to avoid the extremes of both unregulated international capitalism and state socialism, both of which devalued the individual. Beyond his acknowledgement of the influence of Chesterton, Belloc and A.J. Penty, in this regard, he notes the influence of Charles Gide, who he says revealed the importance of the co-operative principle in industry. This is the principle demonstrated in *Nationalism and the Industries*, and Saunders Lewis notes that it is

“a principle which fulfils, or completes, that which is lacking in the over-simplified ideas of the English Distributists.”<sup>451</sup>

It is of immense theoretical importance that Saunders Lewis, for all intents and purposes, declares himself a Christian Democrat in terms of contemporary politics. He notes his admiration for European Christian Democrat parties in Italy and Germany before the advent of fascism. Of the German Catholic Party, Saunders Lewis is keen to state that it produced Germany’s “greatest statesman of this century”<sup>452</sup> in Dr. Bruening, and that as an organisation, it encouraged the publication of such seminal works on Christian social doctrine as Johannes Haessle’s *Das Arbeitsethos der Kirche*, which he “studied in the French translation”<sup>453</sup>, and was a great influence upon him.

Although Catholic social thought influenced him, Saunders Lewis asserts that it is this, in harmony with a broad Christian social philosophy, which *Canlyn Arthur* reflects. He says that it is the expression of the

---

<sup>449</sup> Ibid. P.9.

<sup>450</sup> Ibid. P.9.

<sup>451</sup> Ibid. P.9.

<sup>452</sup> Ibid. P.9.

<sup>453</sup> Ibid. P.9.



“traditional Welsh social philosophy, developed through concerted discourse within the Welsh historical and social frameworks.”<sup>454</sup>

*Canlyn Arthur* is therefore the extension of tradition in response to the problems of modernity. Saunders Lewis’ primary influence, therefore, is the inherent ideas of “agricultural co-operation, on the spirit of Welsh rural life, and the old system of Welsh laws”<sup>455</sup> evident in Welsh social history.

Further to the influence of Welsh medieval socio-economic principles and the influences of guild socialism / distributism and neo-Thomism Catholic social doctrine, Saunders Lewis was undoubtedly influenced by those around him in the Welsh Nationalist Party itself. His attention was focused in greater detail on the “economic problems of the South”<sup>456</sup> by D.J. Davies, and Davies’ experience at the Folk Schools of Denmark also alerted him to “Gruntvig’s principles of co-operation and Christian patriotism”.<sup>457</sup> As well as D.J. Davies, Saunders Lewis notes how Moses Gruffudd highlighted how, rather than to simply produce foodstuff, the purpose of the land in Wales was to “raise men, and ensure a healthy traditional rural civilisation”.<sup>458</sup>

Saunders Lewis does not see any conflict between his thought being Catholic-inspired and the Welsh Christian tradition of non-conformism. He asserts that his political thought is Catholic in the sense that it is “universal and Christian”<sup>459</sup> and encompasses what is traditionally Welsh. He maintains that Catholic social thought as an influence upon him is consistent with universally applicable Christian principles, which are

“an emphasis on the family, the neighbourhood and locality, co-operation and trade unions, agriculture as the foundation, opposition to the rule of finance in the life of

---

<sup>454</sup> Ibid. P.10.

<sup>455</sup> Ibid. P.10.

<sup>456</sup> Ibid. P.10.

<sup>457</sup> Ibid. P.10.

<sup>458</sup> Ibid. P.10.

<sup>459</sup> Ibid. P.10.

society, opposition to the oppressive state, opposition to one-sided profiteering industrialism”<sup>460</sup>

All of which form the strand of thought present in *Canlyn Arthur*.

So as to emphasise the universal nature of such principles, Saunders Lewis draws attention to how the social and political recommendation advocated within the Papal Encyclicals have been adopted in similar declarations by the main Churches and “all the main English Protestant bodies”<sup>461</sup>, and that this was done to ensure the co-operation of all Christians in a broad social and international policy. Indicative of the period (1942), Saunders Lewis notes that international co-operation will be a prerequisite for “Christian action in the post-war reconstruction period”<sup>462</sup>.

The concluding section of *The Party for Wales* offers further insight into Saunders Lewis’ conception of a just society in Wales, and that he believes his solution to be of relevance in terms of post-war Europe. He says that other than the Papal Encyclicals,

“hardly a Christian voice was to be found in Europe protesting against the desolation which liberal capitalism, led by England, spread throughout the world in the 19<sup>th</sup> century”<sup>463</sup>.

What is apparent, therefore, is that Saunders Lewis determines that the devastation wrought by the two major conflicts of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, in structural terms, was a result of ‘19<sup>th</sup> century liberal capitalism’. Saunders Lewis clarifies his assertion that Wales should be saved by ‘spiritual means’, by the cultivation and nurturing of culture and small-scale organic communal life. This is placed in contrast to the ‘material means’, as exemplified by state socialism. The ‘spiritual means’ loses its vagueness in the account given in *Party for Wales*, where he says that the spiritual means is essentially the

---

<sup>460</sup> Ibid. P.10.

<sup>461</sup> Ibid. P.11.

<sup>462</sup> Ibid. P.12.

<sup>463</sup> Ibid. P.12.

application of Christian social doctrine in the political sphere. Saunders Lewis is scathing of the fact that Christian denominations in Wales could not produce leaders who stood up against the social injustice of 19<sup>th</sup> century liberal capitalism, and “the havoc that unscrupulous profiteering wrought in the life of South Wales”.<sup>464</sup>

Further to this condemnation of the Christian denominations’ lack of will to appeal to the working peoples in Wales, and their static response to ‘unscrupulous profiteering’, Saunders Lewis goes on to warn of the two extremes that beckon if Christian theorists fail to acknowledge the problems of modernity and excessive capitalism, and fail to combat them. The very real alternative if a Christian social conscience fails to act, in Saunders Lewis’ mind, is the rise of the quasi-religious appeal of Nazism and Communism. He cites that they both “have certainty, they are definite, they have faith”<sup>465</sup>, yet condemns them as “cruel, given to persecution, bloody and merciless”<sup>466</sup>. He sees in them seriously misguided ideals that

“in spite of the atrocities of the concentration camps in Germany and in Russia... Nazism and Communism at least in their earlier years may have aroused men to lives of self-denial and self-sacrifice”<sup>467</sup>

and that this, in turn, acted as an alternative faith for men. Crucially however, in contrast to Christian doctrine, according to Saunders Lewis, both totalitarian systems decreased the value of the individual.

A contemporary reading of *The Party for Wales, Canlyn Arthur*, and a balanced overview of Saunders Lewis’ political writings of the 1930s essentially counters the tendency to describe Saunders Lewis as a ‘fascist apologist’ ‘anti-semitic’, ‘proto-fascist’, or such like. The popular perception is that “the Welsh Nationalist Party became more right wing as the 1930s progressed, refusing to resist Hitler and

---

<sup>464</sup> Ibid. P.12.

<sup>465</sup> Ibid. P.13.

<sup>466</sup> Ibid. P.13.

<sup>467</sup> Ibid. P.13.

Mussolini, tolerating anti-semitism, and supporting Franco and Salazar”.<sup>468</sup> Saunders Lewis, as always, was at the centre of this, with the party often being synonymous with his personal political thought. While Saunders Lewis’, and subsequently the party’s, political ideals became more conservative in outlook during the 1930s, he was far from being quasi-fascist. Refusal to condemn Hitler and Mussolini should, in retrospect, be seen as a somewhat naive attempt to construct an independent Welsh worldview, i.e. not to simply mimic an English press.

In all, despite the validity of Saunders Lewis’ distributist plan for Wales, ‘industrial Wales’ can be seen to have broadly accepted a state socialist programme as a solution to its economic hardship by the 1930s, and had thus accepted that “the remedy for unemployment was a socialist government in London dedicated to planning for full employment”<sup>469</sup> As John Davies notes, Saunders Lewis’ answer to the economic problems of Wales, although by no means negligible intellectually, “could not compete”.<sup>470</sup>

Saunders Lewis’ social vision therefore seeks to (re)establish a form of society in Wales that is perceived as having been lost in modernity, following on from the perceived injustices of modern capitalist society and the state socialist ‘alternative’. As has been demonstrated, Saunders Lewis’ ideology in this regard was by no means unique as various forms of distributism, guild socialism, and ‘back to the land’ ideas and movements asserted themselves throughout Europe in the interwar period. It is clear that he defines it as being a just society, as derived from his neo-Thomistic conceptions of social good. A further benefit of such a social organisation is the perceived revitalisation of the Welsh language that would result. However, as with his vision of official monolingualism, tensions exist in its internal dynamic that are not easily resolved. Its moral assertion is based on an anti-state concept, viewing the organic community as left to ‘run itself’, yet ultimately heavy state

---

<sup>468</sup> Denney D, Borland J.A., Fevre R. *The Social Construction of Nationalism: Racism and Conflict in Wales*. Contemporary Wales. Vol.4. (1994) P. 152.

<sup>469</sup> Davies, John. *Introduction*. In: Jenkins, Dafydd. (1998) *A Nation on Trial: Penyberth 1936*. Caernarfon. Welsh Academic Press. P.ix.

<sup>470</sup> *Ibid*. P.ix.

intervention would be needed to ensure and reinforce such a social system / structuring with regard to its containment of capitalism through market intervention.

For the working classes of the time, policy programmes such as this did not provide practical solutions to their problems, and as history has demonstrated, found much more appealing steps forward through the social democratic policy programmes of the Labour movement and its goal of state appropriation of the means of production. Indeed, whilst language, culture and nation may have been important abstractions, immediate practical steps to avoid extreme poverty were of course more appealing for those faced with its harsh and brutal reality.

Ultimately, Saunders Lewis' *Perchentyaeth* should be viewed as other such distributionist/guild socialist ideas of the period are viewed. Persistent questions arise regarding their practicality. How could people be 're'educated into cultivation of the land after having become landless proletariats? Modern society results in an increase in population, therefore how could large numbers be settled back in an equitable distribution without straining resources? The only way to achieve this would be with significant and coercive use of state power. Again, criticisms boil down to this pivotal matter. As with elsewhere in the political thought of Saunders Lewis, his work is perhaps not best understood as a programme of policy, but rather as a critical tool with which to question the assumptions or norms regarding the role of industry, the state, society and culture / language. His thought focuses on the specific case of Wales, but again such themes are indeed universal.

As a programme of government in Wales it would have required an immense array of extra precursors, and a wider acceptance of its broader strategy (e.g. Welsh self-government – a social revolution in itself). Indeed, within Saunders Lewis' extensive political thought and historical understanding, it forms part of a wider whole. Christian co-operativism underpins such an understanding, what Saunders Lewis does is provide a strong moral case for such an socio-economic system.

Heavy industry is long gone from South Wales, how one would apply such ideas in a post-industrial Wales is beyond the remit of this study. Saunders Lewis' legacy with regard to a social vision in Wales is one that is firmly decentralist, and focuses on the aspect of community with regard to a just socio-economic structuring, and is a moral claim that asserts the validity of a bottom-up political power structure rather than a top-down one. Key to such an understanding is his rejection of the centralising tendency of both statism and unfettered capitalism, and an assertion of a decentralist Christian co-operativism. This was the broad thrust of normative reasoning within Welsh nationalist political thought that persisted through the 20<sup>th</sup> century and beyond.<sup>471</sup>

---

<sup>471</sup> Decentralism, Christian co-operativism, as well as the conception of the nation as a 'community of communities' remained central to Plaid Cymru under Gwynfor Evans. See Jones, Richard Wyn. (2007) *Rhoi Cymru 'n Gyntaf. Syniadaeth Plaid Cymru. Cyfrol 1 (Putting Wales First. The Theory of Plaid Cymru. Volume 1)*. Cardiff. University of Wales Press. Indeed, it could be argued that these ideas persisted in assertions of 'community socialism' in the late 20<sup>th</sup> and early 21<sup>st</sup> centuries. (Plaid Cymru officially incorporated 'community socialism' into its aims after the 1981 conference)

## Welsh Nationhood and British Law: *The Caernarfon Court Speech*

Proviso: All quotes are referenced in footnotes apart from direct references to the *Caernarfon Court Speech* where the page reference is given in parenthesis after the quotation. These page references refer to

P.115-126 Saunders Lewis, John. *Caernarfon Court Speech*. In Eds. Jones, Alun R. & Thomas, Gwyn. (1973) *Presenting Saunders Lewis*. Cardiff. University of Wales Press.

This chapter will identify and analyse the ideas that Saunders Lewis expounds in the *Caernarfon Court Speech* (and the supporting *Bombing School in Llŷn* chapter from *Canlyn Arthur*). He articulates an assertion that rests on a natural law argument (based upon his moral philosophical foundation), in effect charging that the civil law of the British state was acting contrary to the ‘universal moral law’, and was thus to be opposed. Although focusing on the specific case of the building of an RAF bombing school in the Llŷn peninsula in North Wales, it nonetheless contains a universalist argument that is crucial in understanding the ‘nationalist’ thought of Saunders Lewis. The specifics of the court case are related as a context to the speech’s delivery and content. This is followed by an analysis of the cultural / linguistic imperative which Saunders Lewis utilises to justify his actions, and then the utilisation of his universalist normative argument in asserting a seemingly particularist agenda.

The *Caernarfon Court Speech* was given at the *Caernarfon Assize Court* in 1936 as Saunders Lewis stood trial, along with two other members of the Welsh Nationalist Party, Lewis Valentine and D.J. Williams, for an arson attack on the *Penyberth* aerodrome on the Llŷn peninsula in North Wales. They had voluntarily given themselves in to the authorities. What followed has been the subject of controversy, not only at the time, but also in terms of its significance to Welsh history. The case, and its subsequent debateable effect of a cultural-political ‘awakening’ in Wales, is the subject of investigation in several other publications. What is of concern to this study is the explicitly political elements evident in Saunders Lewis’ two principal pieces of political

thought on the matter.<sup>472</sup> These are the *Caernarfon Court Speech* (1936) and *Yr Ysgol Fomio yn Llŷn (The Bombing School in Llŷn)* in *Canlyn Arthur*.

By the mid 1930s the Welsh Nationalist Party was in the political ‘doldrums’, unable to garner more widespread support outside its predominantly academic membership and appeal to a wider electorate and thus, as it hoped, secure electoral success. An opportunity presented itself in the mid 1930s to highlight its political stance and the cause of Welsh self-government, in a *cause célèbre*. The building of an aerodrome in Penyberth on the Llŷn Peninsula, at the centre of Welsh-speaking rural North West Wales, had been inaugurated by the British Government with a view to creating an R.A.F. bombing school. This had been done after several proposals to build on sites in England had been abandoned after objections to Ministry of Defence proposals by noted academics and literary figures, on the grounds of the sites having been of religious, historical or natural beauty significance. Despite several Wales-wide protests, and numerous religious and academic figures in Wales opposing the proposals, the M.O.D. went ahead. Saunders Lewis, Lewis Valentine, and D.J. Williams carried out an arson attack on the aerodrome site whilst it was unmanned and immediately handed themselves in to the authorities. They stood trial in Caernarfon Assize Court where the jury failed to reach a verdict. The case was subsequently removed to London where the three men were convicted and sentenced to a term in prison. (Saunders Lewis served his jail term of nine months in Wormwood Scrubs Prison, West London.) Saunders Lewis was sacked from his post at Swansea University College before his case went to trial.

Saunders Lewis gave his defence from the dock at the Caernarfon Assize Court, and the speech has since remained as a strong signifier as to the content of his political thought. It was a curious defence as Saunders Lewis effectively admitted having committed

---

<sup>472</sup> Other studies of Welsh history and Welsh political nationalism deal more specifically with the cultural and political significance and the impact the arson attack on the Penyberth aerodrome had upon later Welsh nationalism.

Please see -102 McAllister, Laura. (2001) *Plaid Cymru: The Emergence of a Political Party*. Bridgend. Seren. P.28-29 & P.101.

Davies, John. (1993) *A History of Wales*. London. Allen Lane. Penguin Press. P.591-594.



arson therefore breaking the law, yet pleaded for the assembled ‘jury of his peers’ to find him ‘not guilty’ on account of his having acted in accordance with the ‘universal moral law’. His argument was based on, and contains elements of, the political thought present in his 1926 polemic, *Principles of Nationalism*. This was also combined with a strong objection to the use of bombing aircraft as an indiscriminate weapon, not from a pacifist stance, but rather a ‘gentlemanly’ attitude to warfare. Again he reiterated his objection to the ‘state-god’ and instead cited obedience to the ‘universal moral law’ as the moral absolute. Also contained within his argument are neo-Thomistic conceptions of natural law and natural rights, as well as more general Catholic social thought, which undoubtedly had been an intellectual influence on his thought. This intellectual influence or loosely termed ‘political ideology’ interacts and interfaces with Saunders Lewis’ Welsh nationalism to result in a highly coherent political defence of his actions in burning down the Penyberth aerodrome.

Dismayed at how attempts to translate his co-defendants’ speeches into English from Welsh had effectively ‘butchered’ them of all meaning, Saunders Lewis gave his *Caernarfon Court Speech* in English, thus it exists as one of the few pieces of political thought that Saunders Lewis produced directly in the English language.<sup>473</sup>

For Saunders Lewis, the building of the bombing school represented a grave threat to the future of the Welsh language, and therefore to Welsh cultural continuity and national identity. For him, the bombing school was a symbol of Welsh national subjugation by the English state. The domination of the English state, in overriding Welsh sentiment, is seen as symptomatic of the lack of Welsh political self-government. He notes that he saw the “whole future of the Welsh tradition threatened as never before in history” (P.116). This meant a perceived threat to the Welsh language in geographical terms, the bombing school was in North West rural Wales,

---

<sup>473</sup> It should be noted that Welsh did not exist as an official medium in British courts in Wales. In a political stance, defendants made their pleas in Welsh, yet this is no different as to how, say, a speaker of a third language could give their plea in their mother tongue and then have it translated. The Welsh language in Welsh courts bore the same status as that of any other ‘foreign’ language.

part of what is often referred to as *Y Fro Gymraeg* (Welsh-speaking Wales), one of the few remaining areas of Welsh-speaking predominance.

### **8.1. The Cultural Imperative.**

The perceived threat to cultural continuity is cited as the central reason why Saunders Lewis was involved in the arson attack on the bombing school. He claims to have acted in accordance with the duties imposed upon him as a scholar of the aforementioned culture, noting that as a university lecturer he has “not professed a dead literature of antiquarian interest” (P.115) but rather a vital, living language. Echoing and reiterating points first articulated in *Principles of Nationalism*, regarding the reciprocal nature of culture and politics, Saunders Lewis states that in partaking in the arson attack he was acting in accordance with the claims made upon him as a Welshman and an academic of the Welsh language in ‘defending’ it.

Saunders Lewis demonstrates that he is proud of the fact that his brand of Welsh nationalism has often been considered too “highbrow and academic” (P.116), as this has meant that there had never been an appeal to a mob instinct, reflecting the commitment made in *Principles of Nationalism* to avoid extreme and limitless populist nationalism. Saunders Lewis remains committed to the principle that the “Welsh nation must gain its political freedom without resort to violence” (P.116). Indeed he remains so, but had acted in a carefully studied manner, designed so as not to cause human harm, such was the gravity of the situation.<sup>474</sup> Indeed, in reporting their act to the authorities, Saunders Lewis hopes that a situation of “guerrilla turmoil” (P.116) would be avoided.

Saunders Lewis views the bombing school being built on the Llŷn peninsula to be a territorial threat to the continued existence of the Welsh language as he notes from history that as long as the “Llŷn remained un-Anglicised, Welsh life and culture were secure” (P.118). Thus the rural Welsh-speaking hinterland is conceived of, as it is in

---

<sup>474</sup> Saunders Lewis notes that had they wished to “follow the methods of violence with which national minority movements are sometimes taunted, and into which they are often driven”, then they could have asked some young protégés to carry out the act and disappear undiscovered. (P.116)

other aspects of his thought, as the cradle of Welsh civilisation. For Saunders Lewis, the territorial aspect is crucial in this regard as he is concerned that with the building of the bombing school the “forces of Anglicisation” (P.118) will quickly ensure that “the Welsh language and culture will be crushed” (P.118). For Saunders Lewis therefore, this Welsh-speaking hinterland, where the Welsh language acts as the *lingua franca*, is territorially threatened, and in terms of Welsh culture, and by implication, the Welsh nation, it is a “matter of life and death” (P.118). He expresses concern that the bombing range will quickly expand, acquire ever more land in the area, and as a consequence, “destroy this essential home of Welsh culture, idiom and literature” (P.118). The use of the word ‘home’ by Saunders Lewis emphasises the fact that a language needs a territory within which to exist, i.e. an area where it remains a *lingua franca* in order to continue being a ‘living language’, spoken on the basis of it being what is currently termed a ‘first language’.<sup>475</sup> For Saunders Lewis, the threat to the continued existence of the Welsh language was very real, in view of the sharp decline in Welsh-speakers in the preceding decades.<sup>476</sup> Echoing his earlier definition of culture in ‘spiritual’ terms in contrast to the ‘material’, Saunders Lewis states that such a cultural loss could not be effaced nor alleviated by financial compensation, noting that it would be impossible to “calculate in figures the irreparable loss of a tradition of rural Welsh civilisation” (P.124). The value of culture is firmly placed above and beyond material wealth and comfort, conceiving it, as Saunders Lewis does, as the zenith of human expression.

Saunders Lewis maintains that the matter of Welsh cultural continuity is of wider importance than of merely Wales. He regards it as a matter of European importance as it encapsulates, in his mind, the struggle for “Christian liberty and ...justice in Europe” (P.125). The *Caernarfon Court Speech* clearly demonstrates Saunders Lewis’ neo-Thomist philosophical foundation and how this informs his conception of a language necessarily defining a nation and society, as distinct from a state. This is demonstrated by his condemnation of the plans to build a bombing school which would destroy the

---

<sup>475</sup> The idea that a language needs to exist in an area as a *lingua franca* to remain a living language is the belief upon which Saunders Lewis asserts the need for official monolingualism in *One Language for Wales*.

<sup>476</sup> In this study, see the chapter entitled ‘The Welsh language’ for census figures relating to numbers of Welsh-speakers in Wales.

“truly sacred things in Creation” (P.122), those being “a nation, its language, its literature, its separate traditions and immemorial ways of Christian life” (P.122). This pinpoints precisely Saunders Lewis’ conception of culture being the pinnacle of human creativity, and thus its most revered possession or value. Reinforcing the Christianity of his nationalism, Saunders Lewis quotes his intellectual predecessor Emrys ap Iwan, and notes that the “God who created men ordained nations” (P.122).

*Yr Ysgol Fomio yn Llŷn (The Bombing School in Llŷn)* appears in *Canlyn Arthur* in Welsh and is obviously aimed at a Welsh-language-speaking audience. There is an appeal to Welsh-speaking sensitivities regarding the continued existence of the Welsh language, and the direct local implications of an expanding bombing school in the Welsh-speaking area. In it Saunders Lewis appeals to the local population, noting how *The Times* newspaper had stated that the bombing school “will naturally grow from a training ground to be an arsenal”<sup>477</sup> and he notes how this will rapidly encroach upon the area where they live, defined as the territory that supports the society, that in turn ensures Welsh continues as a living language. His cultural conservatism is evident in Saunders Lewis’ appeal to local sensitivities over the fact that

“a monoglot garrison of Englishmen will accustom all the children of Llŷn to the modest and indisputable English accent of the military”.<sup>478</sup>

At the crux of the matter, he states that “whilst Llŷn is Welsh there will exist a Welsh nation.”<sup>479</sup> In addition to this he highlights the negative ecological effect a military area would have, noting how “the sound of bombs exploding and guns firing and hellish machines”<sup>480</sup> would be constantly heard.

---

<sup>477</sup> Saunders Lewis, John. *Yr Ysgol Fomio yn Llŷn (The Bombing School in Llŷn)*. In (1938) *Canlyn Arthur*. Aberystwyth. Gwasg Aberystwyth. P.97.

<sup>478</sup> Ibid. P.97.

<sup>479</sup> Ibid. P.98.

<sup>480</sup> Ibid. P.97.

Saunders Lewis is at pains to stress that for the Welsh nation, the Llŷn peninsula represents so much more than Holy Island does for the English nation.<sup>481</sup> This is based on the fact that the heart of Welsh-speaking Wales is contained within a much smaller geographical location and thus the building of a military facility represents a far greater threat to its survival. In simple terms, a bombing school on Holy Island would not present an existential threat to the English language as a living language, whereas on the Llŷn peninsula it would indeed threaten the Welsh language. Saunders Lewis is adamant that the threat posed by the bombing school, “aims directly and unfailingly at the heart and at the life of our language and our literature and our culture and our existence as a nation.”<sup>482</sup>

A matter covered at greater length in *Yr Ysgol Fomio yn Llŷn*, and not explored in the *Caernarfon Court Speech*, is that of Saunders Lewis’ opposition to the bombing school for its intended future military purpose to cause death and destruction upon ‘defenceless’ peoples. This opposition is not based on any steadfast pacifism, Saunders Lewis of course having fought in WWI and not having undergone any ‘conversion’ to it in the meantime. He opposed bombing from the air as it represented a threat to civilian populations, as well as being a ‘dishonourable’ method of fighting against troops on the ground. He conceives such bombing schools as a threat to the peace of Europe, and accuses the English government of being the least responsible of all “the European governments for the continuance and increase of danger.”<sup>483</sup> Saunders Lewis predicted the mass destruction that would be caused by aerial bombing, and sought to mobilise the consensus of Welsh society against such aggressive means of warfare. In the 1920s and 1930s, Wales was home to several ‘peace’ organisations borne out of the non-conformist pacifist movement. As ever, Saunders Lewis notes how it is not simply Wales that opposes such methods, but that it is “the popular inclination of the people of Europe”.<sup>484</sup>

---

<sup>481</sup> The bombing school had originally been planned to be built on Holy Island, Northumberland, but this plan had been retracted after protests from prominent English scholars and religious figures.

<sup>482</sup> Saunders Lewis, John. *Yr Ysgol Fomio yn Llŷn (The Bombing School in Llŷn)*. In (1938) *Canlyn Arthur*. Aberystwyth. Gwasg Aberystwyth. P.99.

<sup>483</sup> Ibid. P.99.

<sup>484</sup> Ibid. P.104.

Interestingly, Saunders Lewis articulates his opposition to unprincipled international capitalism and unscrupulous profiteering, and the ‘hypocritical’ stance of the English government in opposing German rearmament. In a condemnation of what in contemporary terminology has become known as the ‘military industrial complex’, Saunders Lewis notes how English armament production companies are the “masters of the English State”.<sup>485</sup> He highlights how they have, under licence from the English government, armed Germany, and then sought to alert the English government to Germany’s arsenal and implore them to build their own. Subsequently, Saunders Lewis notes how, despite the vast amount of money spent on armaments, little is spent on improving the lives of those in the poorest towns in South Wales (this also is further evidence of Saunders Lewis seeking to advance the physical welfare of those living in the industrial valleys of South Wales). He notes how plans to make a house into a hospital for sick children in South Wales were refused a grant by the government due to “insufficient funds”<sup>486</sup>. That money should be diverted away from assisting the “poor families of Merthyr”<sup>487</sup>, irritates Saunders Lewis, and reflects the strong redistributionist strand running through his political thought.

Such is the gravity of the situation and the value of what is at stake, according to Saunders Lewis, that the building of the bombing school has the potential to exterminate the Welsh nation, noting that “exterminating a nation is the next disaster after exterminating mankind.”<sup>488</sup> He views the whole prospect of the bombing school, and the nature of the warfare to be practised from such a place, as “a deathly threat of destruction to European Christian civilisation”<sup>489</sup>. This again echoes the idea of Wales being an essential part of Christian Europe, ‘Christian’ Europe being used to denote the shared culture and history of Europe.

For the contemporary reader, Saunders Lewis’ constant invocation of Christian ‘tradition’ and ‘civilisation’ is often viewed as being arcane and archaic, such is the

---

<sup>485</sup> Ibid. P.105.

<sup>486</sup> Ibid. P.105.

<sup>487</sup> Ibid. P.105.

<sup>488</sup> Ibid. P.106.

<sup>489</sup> Ibid. P.107.

secular setting of contemporary political theory. Even as late as the 1930s we still find this 'Christian humanist' aspect present in Saunders Lewis' thought, and it reflects the religious nature of Welsh society well into the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Another aspect which can appear odd, even reprehensible, to the contemporary reader of *Yr Ysgol Fomio yn Llŷn*, is Saunders Lewis' approving references to the 'peaceful' intentions of Hitler, regarding Hitler's appeal in May 1935, for international agreement on the banning of weapons that "bring death not to armed soldiers rather to the unarmed and to small children and women."<sup>490</sup> Rather than supporting accusations that Saunders Lewis was a Fascist or Nazi supporter, it highlights his naivety on the matter, and whilst appearing strange in retrospect, was a view commonly held at the time. As the Welsh historian John Davies states,

"having since worked through the files of the *New Statesman*, I have come to realise that his attitude, although perhaps naive, was by no means unusual."<sup>491</sup>

## 8.2. The Universal Law.

Saunders Lewis presented his defence by stating that whilst their act had been illegal, it had not been in contravention of the 'universal moral law'. To the contrary, they had in fact acted in accordance with it. This conception of an objective morality, as distinct from a positivist legal conception, forms the basis of Saunders Lewis' claim to having acted justly. Indeed, the defendants had immediately notified the authorities and proclaimed themselves responsible. In contemporary terminology, what arises from the *Caernarfon Court Speech* is a critique of the British state for being dominated by the majority nation, in this case England. The ensuing dominance is perceived, in political governance terms, as enabling it to override the will of the minority nation.

Saunders Lewis' citation of the universal moral law derives from his conception of natural law which involves duties as well as rights. As such, he claims that the burning of the bombing range was an act that was forced upon them, and that it was done in

---

<sup>490</sup> Ibid. P. 104.

<sup>491</sup> Davies, John. *Introduction*. In: Jenkins, Dafydd. (1998) *A Nation on Trial: Penberth 1936*. Caernarfon. Welsh Academic Press. P.x.

“obedience to conscience and to the moral law” (P.115), and that the responsibility for any loss incurred by the arson attack is the “responsibility of the English Government” (P.115).

Saunders Lewis does not dismiss the legal proceedings out-of-hand in terms of their acting in the Welsh national interest beyond the jurisdiction of any English court. He was wholly supportive of the process of law regarding who passed verdict on their actions, as it presented an opportunity for “a jury from the Welsh people to pronounce on the right and wrong” (P.116) of the attack on the bombing school. Thus he conceived of it as being the Welsh nation that decided, rather than the English state passing verdict.

Saunders Lewis defends his actions as having occurred after “all democratic and peaceful methods of persuasion” (P.116) had failed in bringing a public hearing for the case against the bombing range. The democratic and peaceful methods of persuasion which Saunders Lewis refers to are those led by a broad movement of Welsh academic and religious figures to petition against the building of the bombing school. Saunders Lewis notes that less seriously grounded protests were made in relation to proposals by the Ministry of Defence to build the bombing school on various sites in England, yet these were heeded. He is angered however at “how differently the protests and remonstrances of Wales and Welsh public men were treated by the English Government” (P.117). However, in the mind of Saunders Lewis, these are all symptomatic of the bigger problem that this case sought to deal with, that “of the limits to the rights of the English State when it transgresses the moral law and acts in violation of the rights of the Welsh nation” (P.117).

This Christian humanism which interfaces and interacts with Saunders Lewis’ Welsh nationalism reaches its zenith in his argument put forward in the *Caernarfon Court Speech* where he details his definition of the ‘universal moral law’ which is fundamental to both his argument and his political thought. He conceives of it as an “essential part of Christian tradition” (P.122) and states that it is “recognised by moral



theologians to be binding on all men” (P.122). Thus in burning down the bombing school, Saunders Lewis conceives of his actions in a two-fold manner: as an act in “defence of the Welsh civilisation” (P.126), as well as an act in defence of “Christian principles, for the maintenance of the Law of God in Wales” (P.126).

Saunders Lewis’ reasoning hinges on the fact that it is this universal moral law that “recognises the family and the nation to be moral persons” (P.122), and that, deriving from this, “they have the qualities and the natural rights of persons” (P.122). His definition of the universal moral law is consistent with a Thomistic conception of natural law, i.e. an objective morality outside of, and in primacy to, state law. With the nation defined as a moral person, as a basic, and natural, unit of human organisation, Saunders Lewis reasons the threat presented to it in the form of the bombing school to be a violation of the universal moral law. In supporting and pressing on with the bombing school, the English state is therefore seen to transgress and violate the essential rights of the aforementioned ‘person’ of the nation, as “their right to live are prior to the rights of any state”(P.122). This is of immense theoretical importance as it is based on the neo-Thomistic ideal that, under natural law, or, as Saunders Lewis terms it the ‘universal moral law’, “no state has a right to seek national advantage which would mean genuine harm to any other nation” (P.122). In the case of the bombing school, in the mind of Saunders Lewis, the English state is seeking to exert its military advantage, which would mean genuine harm to the Welsh nation in terms of its language and culture. Under the neo-Thomistic conception of natural law, the natural law or moral law has primacy over what is termed civil law, or alternatively, the law of the state. In justifying his actions in burning down the bombing school, Saunders Lewis perceives his position as having been in accordance with his ‘duty’ to the natural law, as he is bound to obey the moral above the civil law. This neo-Thomistic conception of natural law and natural rights, and by implication natural duties, underpins his belief that it is

“the duty of members of a family and of a nation to defend the essential rights of the family and of the nation, and especially it is a duty to preserve the life of a nation, or to defend it from any mortal blow” (P.123).

It is interesting, having couched the perceived threat in this manner, that again Saunders Lewis is cautious of extreme nationalism and violence. He is adamant that any action taken should not contravene other natural law edicts of “taking human life or breaking the moral law” (P.123). Indeed, if the danger is conceived of as Saunders Lewis does so, his position in response is remarkably restrained. Thus in justifying the arson attack on the bombing school, Saunders Lewis argues his actions were justified as he “saw the English state preparing mortal danger to the moral person of the Welsh nation” (P.123). He was keen that, rather than judge the actions of those who had carried out the arson attack, the assembled peers should judge the actions of the English state in contravening the moral law. Saunders Lewis perceived this as the only way to “bring the action of the English state to the bar of conscience and of Christian morality” (P.123).

For Saunders Lewis’, the whole situation of the bombing school encapsulates the destructive power of centralised bureaucratic states in eroding the organic ‘local’ communities of which nations are comprised. He is aware that it is “bureaucrats in the Air Ministry” (P.125), acting not out of spite or hatred towards Wales, but rather to whom Wales is simply a region on the map and knowing nothing about the loss of culture and language that is at stake. Indeed, the whole episode of the building of the bombing school reinforces in Saunders Lewis’ mind the benefit of decentralism (and the destructive power of centralism) in terms of governance in a state “materialist bureaucracy” (P.125). This state monolith is of course juxtaposed with the small ‘organic’ communities of the Llŷn peninsula.

The *Caernarfon Court Speech* strongly echoes *Principles of Nationalism* regarding the idea that by assuming sovereignty the state deemed itself to be the moral absolute and therefore above the universal moral law (natural law). Under the neo-Thomistic

conception only God can be the moral absolute, hence Saunders Lewis defends his rejection of the 'state-god'. He states that,

"Now everywhere in Europe today we see governments asserting that they are above the moral law of God, that they recognise no other power but the power of the state."  
(P.125)

Ultimately Saunders Lewis' court defence rested on his political argument, that the jury should find him 'not guilty' of having contravened the natural law, and that in doing so they would effectively declare that "justice, not material force, must rule in the affairs of nations" (P.126).

Reactions to the arson attack on the bombing school in Llŷn at the time were varied. *Time* magazine in the United States noted that Welsh national sentiment "could well be glowing with an effulgence not seen for four hundred years"<sup>492</sup>. This can be contrasted with the *Western Mail* response, noting that, a year after the event, "the fire they lit in Caernarfonshire has already ceased to even be a memory in the land."<sup>493</sup> The truth is that neither report reflects the situation adequately. As John Davies notes, reaction to the 'Fire in Llŷn' can be likened to that of the Chartist Rising in Newport of 1839 as its local response was one of hostility in the immediate aftermath, with it only later being elevated to that of a seminal event in trade union and radical history. Although the events surrounding the 'Fire in Llŷn' did garner support for the Welsh nationalist cause, it was a later generation that "elevated the Penyberth protest into one of the seminal happenings of 20<sup>th</sup> century Wales".<sup>494</sup>

The immediate impact of Saunders Lewis' and his accomplices' actions was therefore limited. What their action did accomplish was to bring to a wider audience in Wales the cause of their new 'brand' of Welsh nationalism. In their own minds, the major victory

---

<sup>492</sup> Davies, John. *Introduction*. In: Jenkins, Dafydd. (1998) *A Nation on Trial: Penyberth 1936*. Caernarfon. Welsh Academic Press. P.vi.

<sup>493</sup> *Ibid.* P.vi.

<sup>494</sup> *Ibid.* P.vi.

was that the trial was removed to London, which led to the view amongst many that, “England has treated Wales as a nation, but as a hostile one.”<sup>495</sup> What occurred in Penyberth in 1937 can be seen as an important occurrence in the development of the Welsh nationalist movement which was only later to garner success. The case of Penyberth helped swell membership of Plaid Cymru, which was to prove invaluable to it in the post war years with its eventual electoral breakthrough coming in 1966.

The long term influence and significance of Penyberth can be seen within the Welsh nationalist movement itself, with the elevation of the incident to the status of ‘folklore’ position. Its effect upon Welsh political nationalism, although not immediate, can be seen within the broad sweep of the 20<sup>th</sup> century as playing a role (if minor) in the eventual political pressures and processes that have led to Welsh political devolution at the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. As Dafydd Glyn Jones wrote in 1973, “Wales is still trying to assimilate the meaning of the fire at Penyberth, and will continue to do so for many years to come.”<sup>496</sup> Whilst this to a certain extent may still be true, with the political developments of the 20<sup>th</sup> century now viewed in retrospect, the effect of the fire at Penyberth can be seen as a part in the process of a gradual ‘national awakening’ that resulted, at the end of the century, in the National Assembly for Wales.

The essential argument put forward by Saunders Lewis in *The Caernarfon Court Speech* and in *Yr Ysgol Fomio yn Llŷn* is that of a universal moral law, which assumes primacy over the civil law. Ultimately, this is the concept first put forward by Saunders Lewis in *Principles of Nationalism*, yet here it finds an actual political and real-life scenario testing. The case of the burning of the bombing school in Penyberth presented an empirical test for such a normative claim. This conception of a ‘universal moral law’, which is to be observed above the law of the state, is derivative of Saunders Lewis’ neo-Thomist conception of natural law and natural rights (and duties). Indeed, it is immensely important that, whilst describing the content of his thought as nationalist, Saunders Lewis does conceive of a wider objective morality, contrary to the

---

<sup>495</sup> Ibid. P.vii.

<sup>496</sup> Jones, Dafydd Glyn. *His Politics* in Eds. Jones, Alun R. & Thomas, (1973) Gwyn. *Presenting Saunders Lewis*. Cardiff. University of Wales Press. P.66.

conventional wisdom that nationalists conceive of a morality relative to the nation and a desired state.

### **A Neo-Medieval Europe: Aspects of Universalism and Particularity.**

This chapter will identify the ideas of Saunders Lewis that are deemed by the author to be of continuing importance, and they will then be analysed in their wider theoretical context. The neo-medievalist strand of thought regarding governance structures is deemed to be of continuing relevance in this regard, and thus it is analysed in terms of its centrality in Saunders Lewis' thought. Deemed integral to this is his rationale of the relationship between state, nation and the concept of sovereignty. The role of supranational authority in the thought of Saunders Lewis is then examined with specific reference to his preferred constitutional status for Wales, reflective of how he envisions a just system of organising the intra-affairs of nations. Underpinning his thought is an idealisation of the medieval period in a social, political and cultural sense. How he converts and interprets this into a contemporary political doctrine, combining universalist and particularist aspirations, is then analysed. The chapter then goes on to examine his understanding of the nation as a moral person, as distinct from the state, and how this is underpinned by a medieval ideal of political organisation. Criticism of his position and an outlining of alternate definitions are also explored. In concluding the chapter, the relevance of Saunders Lewis' neo-medievalism is asserted with reference to wider normative theory regarding multi-level plural governance.

It is correct to describe Saunders Lewis as a neo-Medievalist. There is no doubting that his Catholic faith and the influence of neo-Thomist thought is profound upon his social and political thought. Elsewhere the influence of such ideas upon Saunders Lewis' thought are discussed, yet it is here that Saunders Lewis' conception of Wales and Europe in terms of political governance is examined. Crucial to this examination is the consideration of aspects of universalism and particularity that are present in Saunders Lewis' thought. This neo-Medievalism is central to his thinking regarding not only society and political governance, but also goes on to affect his thinking on societal affairs at the sub national level as well as the intra affairs of nations. Indeed, it permeates all of his thought and is evidenced in almost all aspects. The Middle Ages

are held aloft as an ideal 'Golden Age' of governance in Europe, and within his social and political vision, Saunders Lewis seeks to re-establish the political principles of this period.

Fundamental to this neo-Medievalism is Saunders Lewis' detailing in *Principles of Nationalism* of a necessity to 'return to the political principles of the Middle Ages'.<sup>497</sup>

Contained within *Principles of Nationalism* is the essence of Saunders Lewis' thought from which his wider thinking is derived. Central to this is his core premise that his political ideology, what defines his nationalism, is to "renounce the advantage of political uniformity, and show its ill-effects, to argue instead for the principle of unity and diversity."<sup>498</sup> Implicit in this, in Saunders Lewis' mind, is that the 'struggle is for Welsh 'freedom', its culture, and not simply 'sovereign' political statehood. Part and parcel of this conception is that Wales, as a nation, deserves the outward recognition of other nations and is thus entitled to a "place in the Society of Nations, and the Society of Europe".<sup>499</sup> It is of theoretical importance that Saunders Lewis advocates the clear empirical functioning of political institutions reflecting such 'Societies' on a normative level. This in turn is reflective of a strong conception of a 'universal' moral order and the necessary interdependence of nations.

It is the modern political principle of state sovereignty that Saunders Lewis cites as being the cause of contemporary Wales', and Welsh culture's, demise. He also attributes to it the disruption caused to men throughout the modern period, in terms of alienation through exploitation, as economies are expanded for states to compete with one another. In terms of culture, he sees it to be at fault for the denigration of minority national and local cultures and languages, as they were often to be eradicated in the state's drive for cultural homogeneity. Underpinning all of this is the assumption by the

---

<sup>497</sup> The sections relating to this have been dealt with at length in the chapter entitled 'Principles of Nationalism' in this study. The necessary utilisation and idealisation of a 'Golden Age' in any social and political vision, as well as a discussion on Saunders Lewis' thought regarding the Middle Ages and modernity, are dealt with in the chapter entitled 'The Paradigms of Nationalism' in this study.

<sup>498</sup> Saunders Lewis, John. (1926) *Egwyddorion Cenedlaetholdeb (Principles of Nationalism)*. Machynlleth. Evan Jones Printers. P.2.

<sup>499</sup> Ibid. P.2.

state of its role of moral absolute, i.e. that of sole moral arbiter in a particular place and thus subject to its own demands, in the place of and thus in contrast to the Church and Christianity which had previously been the supreme moral arbiter 'universally' in Europe. The Reformation is thus key in seeking to understand this loss of a united 'universal' Europe in governance terms.

If indeed nationalism is a social and political phenomenon that interfaces and interacts with ideology, then it is possible to identify the 'Welsh' portion of Saunders Lewis' thought, as distinct from his neo-Medievalism.<sup>500</sup> Beyond his thought regarding the intra affairs of nations, the 'political principle of the Middle Ages' is also employed in his thinking regarding 'guilds' and the social and political principles involved in the 'distributism' which he conceives of in *Perchentyaeth*. These ideas, which were prominent at the time both in England and in Europe, form part of the intellectual school to which Saunders Lewis subscribed.<sup>501</sup> An understanding of Catholic social thought, most notably that of neo-Thomism, is central to comprehending the social and political thought of Saunders Lewis. Indeed, in *A Letter Concerning Catholicism*<sup>502</sup> Saunders Lewis identifies the French neo-Thomist thinker / philosopher and historian of medieval thought, Etienne Gilson, as being one of his primary influences. Thus, it is no surprise that Saunders Lewis' social and political thought revolves around re-establishing political principles which were dominant in the Middle Ages, when Catholic 'universal' principles were seen as the 'objective' moral order in Europe.

To a student of nationalism, Saunders Lewis' failure to advocate a strong conception of 'self-determining' statehood as a means by which to ensure cultural continuation is somewhat perplexing. That is to say, if a nationalism upholds the value of converging the national unit with the political unit in Gellnerian terms, then a state would be

---

<sup>500</sup> Whilst it is possible to identify the respective portions of Saunders Lewis' nationalism and ideology respectively, they do combine to form a coherent whole which nonetheless interweaves and contains its own internal reciprocal processes.

<sup>501</sup> The leading exponents of these ideas are discussed in the chapter entitled 'Intellectual Peers and Influences' in this study.

<sup>502</sup> Saunders Lewis, John. *A Letter Concerning Catholicism (Llythyr Ynghylch Catholigaeth)*. In *Y Llenor*. Vol. 6. (1927) Wrexham. Hughes and Son.

See the chapter entitled 'A Social Vision for Wales: *Canlyn Arthur*' in this study.



aspired to in order to achieve this end.<sup>503</sup> Effectively, it is his ideology, his neo-Thomism and its derivative neo-medievalism, that deters him from doing so and, rather, leads him to advocate federative principles based on the idea of subsidiarity.

### **9.1. State, Nation, and Sovereignty.**

Saunders Lewis was writing at a time when the sovereign state was *the* political unit by which the national unit could converge with the political unit. A sovereign Welsh state was the 'logical' demand, as no effective supranational framework existed.<sup>504</sup> It has indeed been the feature of many a nationalism to demand and seek to confer state-status upon the nation. Not every nation is a state and vice versa, yet many nationalisms uphold this goal of combining the nation with the state, thus conferring legitimacy upon the nation, and forcing other states to recognize its existence. This ideal would appear to focus upon attaining sovereignty for the nation, and thus by implication the state. This can be seen in various nationalisms time and time again, defended as the principle of 'self-determination', whereby sovereignty is accorded to the nation through the institution of the state. As Andrew Vincent states,

"In fact, the most spirited defenders of the sovereign nation state compound idea in contemporary politics are often the newer postcolonial, developing and weaker states in the world."<sup>505</sup>

This, of course, is not the case in the nationalism of Saunders Lewis. Saunders Lewis, according to the 'logic' of such analysts, should not have been questioning the fundamental principles of state sovereignty in his political thought but rather, as a nationalist, seek to acquire state sovereignty for his nation, Wales. The fact that he was

---

<sup>503</sup> "Nationalism is primarily a political principle, which holds that the political and national unit should be congruent."

Gellner, Ernest. (1983) *Nations and Nationalism*. Ithaca. Cornell University Press. P.1.

<sup>504</sup> It is interesting to note here how several minority nationalisms in Europe conceive of the European Union as an ideal supranational institutional framework within which to pursue their political aims outside the previous system of sovereign unitary states.

<sup>505</sup> Vincent, Andrew. (2002) *Nationalism and Particularity*. Cambridge. Cambridge University Press. P.37.

not arguing expressly for this makes Saunders Lewis such an interesting thinker in this regard.

David Miller, in *On Nationality*, also notes that 'nation' and 'state' are not synonymous. "The nation is a community of people with an aspiration to be politically self-determining and the state is a set of political institutions that they aspire to achieve."<sup>506</sup> Yet Miller, even as a contemporary theorist, does not see the state (or sovereignty) as a dated or arcane institution. In fact, the state is partly redeemed in Miller's argument, as he argues that 'nation-states' have an underlying right to decide for themselves which rights of sovereignty they should continue to exercise. It is also morally desirable, for Miller, that the nation be politically self-determining. National self-determination "corresponds to the idea of nations as active communities"<sup>507</sup>. Nations might well be less disruptive if tied to a state. For Miller, the state

"is likely to be better able to achieve its goals where its subjects form an encompassing community, and conversely national communities are better able to preserve their culture and fulfill their aspirations where they have control of the political machinery"<sup>508</sup>.

National self-determination usually "requires a state with unlimited rights of sovereignty"<sup>509</sup>. According to Miller, this does not entail that sovereignty or statehood should become a fetish for nationalists. In fact, he sees it as being normatively desirable to transfer some legal powers to supranational and sub-national institutions, which he notes has happened in the European Union. Despite this, he remains certain that there is a close symbiotic relationship between states and nations. Conventionally, nationalism is conceived of as a 'particular' political idea, i.e. it does not deal with any 'universal' political ideas. As it is focused on and pertains to 'the nation', in itself an exclusive group, it often does not make an attempt at a 'universal' political idea. Saunders Lewis'

---

<sup>506</sup> Miller, David. (1995) *On Nationality*. Oxford. Oxford University Press. P.18.

<sup>507</sup> Miller, David. *The Nation-State: A Modest Defence*. In Brown, C. (Ed.) (1994). *Political Restructuring in Europe: Ethical Perspectives*. London. Routledge. P.143.

<sup>508</sup> Ibid. P.145.

<sup>509</sup> Ibid. P.145.

nationalism, however, seeks to embody a 'universal' political idea, indeed for him, Wales as a political idea is part of a wider universalism.<sup>510</sup>

Saunders Lewis' affirmation of the 'universal' and avoidance of the 'particular' - sovereignty and statehood - is arguably borne out of his immediate experience of WWI. The aftermath of the Great War saw the ideal of 'self-determination' come into the ascendancy. It was widely thought that one of the reasons such a catastrophic war had occurred was because the old large empires had 'trampled' on the small nations of Europe. This found expression in the proclamation of Woodrow Wilson, that 'peace' can only be viable when 'every nation is free and self-determining'. Small nations were at the forefront of the thought of Saunders Lewis, he argued that they should be free, yet he was highly sceptical of the principle of 'self-determination' as he defined it.

Saunders Lewis' nationalism embodied a belief that it was the 'particular' embodied in the rise of the political idea of sovereignty in Europe that had been the cause of so much harm. For Saunders Lewis, with the rise of the concept of sovereignty after the Reformation, the 'golden period' of the 'universal' moral authority of the supranational Church came to an end. Thus it is the 'particular' idea of sovereignty that Saunders Lewis defines as 'material' nationalism and which he identifies in the morally objectionable 'state-god'. Thus the previous 'universal' moral authority provided the security for the culture of every country and community as "one of the most profound ideas of the Middle Ages... was the idea that unity included diversity".<sup>511</sup> Under such 'universal' moral authority, small nations such as Wales were afforded protection from the drive towards uniformity brought about by the breaking of this 'moral unity' with the rise of state sovereignty.

---

<sup>510</sup> Saunders Lewis is not alone in this regard. Herder conceived of a 'universalism in particularity' of sorts. Mazzini also conceived of 'Young Europe' as well as 'Young Italy'. Indeed, if nationalism is a social and political phenomenon that interacts and interfaces with political ideologies, then the aspiration of the nation (the particular) is based on realising the universal political ideal.

<sup>511</sup> Saunders Lewis, John. (1926) *Egwyddorion Cenedlaetholdeb (Principles of Nationalism)*. Machynlleth. Evan Jones Printers. P.3.

Saunders Lewis therefore concluded that Welsh nationalism should incorporate a respect for diversity and pluralism, as part of a wider objective 'universal' morality, and that to seek to defend Welsh culture and language from destruction is part of the wider struggle of duty towards a 'universal moral law'.<sup>512</sup> Essential to Saunders Lewis' argument is the political principle of interdependence, as to argue merely for a Welsh right to sovereignty would be morally objectionable, "a materialist and evil thing, leading to violence and oppression".<sup>513</sup>

In recognition of the principle of 'universal' moral authority, and the political principle of interdependence, Saunders Lewis instead conceived of Welsh self-government as a political objective rather than outright statehood. Central to this was the idea that Wales should be morally as well as politically bound to international society in the form of a 'Society of Nations' (League of Nations), "our membership of the League of Nations will crown a struggle begun not in the materialist spirit of narrow and pagan nationalism, but in a generous spirit of love for civilisation and the best things of humanity."<sup>514</sup>

Following on from this, Saunders Lewis asserts that key to his conception of Welsh nationalism, is a political union of Europe, reflecting its cultural union. This is based on his conception of Wales being a nation of Europe, part of the wider cultural tradition of Europe, and Christianity, and is highlighted in *England and Europe and Wales* (1927).<sup>515</sup> *England, Europe and Wales* adds flesh to his concept of a 'universal moral authority' and how this is expressed in terms of political principles and governance in Europe. It is a polemic that berates the English state (Britain) for not renouncing the principle of sovereignty in the aftermath of WWI.<sup>516</sup> He castigates the policy of the

---

<sup>512</sup> It may be questioned here as to how Saunders Lewis could conceive of cultural pluralism yet be committed to a monism in terms of his objective of *One Language for Wales*. He is committed to a pluralism yet it is definitely a patchwork quilt conception of it. Wales forms one of these patches.

<sup>513</sup> Saunders Lewis, John. (1926) *Egwyddorion Cenedlaetholdeb (Principles of Nationalism)*. Machynlleth. Evan Jones Printers. P.3.

<sup>514</sup> Ibid. P.8.

<sup>515</sup> Saunders Lewis, John. *England and Europe and Wales (Lloegr ac Ewrop a Chymru)* In (1938) *Canlyn Arthur*. Aberystwyth. Gwasg Aberystwyth.

<sup>516</sup> Saunders Lewis criticises the English government for not agreeing to 'Articles of Protocol at the League of Nations' which would place limits on Britain's armed forces.

English government in 1927, and in particular Austen Chamberlain, for having said that “England belongs to a union of nations that is older than the League of Nations, which is the British Empire, and that if a collision occurs between the League of Nations and the Empire, then we have to back the Empire against the League of Nations”<sup>517</sup>. He notes that “when Chamberlain said that, he spoke for England, not for his party”<sup>518</sup> as this was also the policy of the other English political parties. Saunders Lewis thinks that the nations of Britain are “naturally and geographically and in part of history belonging to Europe and necessary to Europe”<sup>519</sup>, and berates the English government’s policy for “disowning its relationship and its responsibility”<sup>520</sup>. Saunders Lewis also states his belief that “Europe is the leader and centre of the earth”<sup>521</sup>.

Saunders Lewis states in no uncertain terms, that, “bringing political and economic unity to Europe is one of the first needs of our century.”<sup>522</sup> Instead of viewing a place for the Welsh nation within a hierarchical British Empire, he sees a European political and economic union as necessary to the political vitality of the “small nations of Europe”<sup>523</sup> in an egalitarian mould. The idea of a European union is therefore integral to his political thought. Several noted political theorists, especially in the aftermath of the Great War, were convinced of the need, both moral and economic, of a European Union.<sup>524 525</sup>

---

<sup>517</sup> Saunders Lewis, John. *England and Europe and Wales*. In (1938) *Canlyn Arthur*. Aberystwyth. Gwasg Aberystwyth. P.25.

<sup>518</sup> *Ibid.* P.25.

<sup>519</sup> *Ibid.* P.25.

<sup>520</sup> *Ibid.* P.25.

<sup>521</sup> *Ibid.* P.25.

<sup>522</sup> *Ibid.* P.25.

<sup>523</sup> *Ibid.* P.25.

<sup>524</sup> However, in terms of *realpolitik*, to include it, as Saunders Lewis had done, in the “practical programme of a party competing for seats in the Westminster parliament, when the British Empire still had another twenty years left to run was moonshine”, notes Dafydd Glyn Jones. Jones, Dafydd Glyn. *His Politics*. In Jones, Alun R. & Thomas, Gwyn. (1973) *Presenting Saunders Lewis*. Cardiff. University of Wales Press. P.32.

<sup>525</sup> Other thinkers who advocated European Union in the interwar period included Coudenhove-Kalergi with his publication *Pan-Europa*, and the French premier, Aristide Briand. See Coudenhove-Kalergi, R.N. (1926) *Pan-Europe*. New York. A.A. Knopf. Pagden, Anthony. (Ed.) (2002) *The Idea of Europe: From Antiquity to the European Union*. Cambridge. Cambridge University Press. P.192.

## 9.2. Supranational Authority.

Saunders Lewis' calls for a rejection of the principle of sovereignty and castigates the English government for not signing up to a Protocol that was designed to "bind countries to settle arguments through arbitration and law and that calls on all the other countries to join to punish any country that breaks its agreement".<sup>526</sup> Prevalent in Saunders Lewis' thought was the imperative to "avoid war"<sup>527</sup> which had been the ultimate result of sovereignty. In his mind, any political union should be an active institution in restricting the supreme sovereignty of states to declare war, and instead promoting peace. He is convinced that "the hope of European political peace hinges on having Britain as an essential part of a union of European nations".<sup>528</sup> In the same way that a political union would negate the principle of sovereignty, an economic union would negate the fierce economic competition of unrestricted capitalism which he deems a prime cause of war when he notes that "the economic tendencies of England are as pointed in the same direction as her political tendencies to lead to war"<sup>529</sup> Rather than rejecting capitalism outright, as Marxist socialists did, he maintains that there can be "peaceful economics"<sup>530</sup> in Europe and the world within the context of a European Union, as this would stop the "capitalists of Britain"<sup>531</sup> from turning the "British Empire into an economic army to assault Europe and America."<sup>532</sup>

Saunders Lewis seeks to ground the contemporary imperative for peace in an assertion of the cultural historical basis of a European Union, and Wales' place within it. He is convinced that Wales is the cultural inheritor of the European tradition, an "original part of the civilisation of the West."<sup>533</sup> This stems from his understanding that the Welsh are the "only nation in Britain that was a part of the Roman Empire"<sup>534</sup>. Western civilisation, culture, and tradition are therefore ingrained in the Welsh nation, according

---

<sup>526</sup> Saunders Lewis, John. *England and Europe and Wales*. In (1938) *Canlyn Arthur*. Aberystwyth. Gwasg Aberystwyth. P.26.

<sup>527</sup> Ibid. P.26.

<sup>528</sup> Ibid. P.27.

<sup>529</sup> Ibid. P.27.

<sup>530</sup> Ibid. P.27.

<sup>531</sup> Ibid. P.27.

<sup>532</sup> Ibid. P.27.

<sup>533</sup> Ibid. P.27.

<sup>534</sup> Ibid. P.27.

to Saunders Lewis, and thus make it the ideal interpreter of Europe for the rest of Britain. This also has a political implication, as he maintains that Wales' political history, and desired future, is in Europe.

It is of theoretical importance that the nation is defined as a moral person, possessed of the characteristics of human development, namely that of an infant when he describes Wales as being "weaned on the milk of the West as a baby"<sup>535</sup>, as well as the defining of the wider European cultures / nations as part of a wider 'family'. Evident here is the concerted use of history by Saunders Lewis, to focus on a national cultural continuum with regard to a national project. The idea that the Roman ideal of *Romanitas* is fused with the emerging Welsh nation in the so-called Dark Ages is central to his conception of Welsh history and culture. For him, the *Romanitas* ideal embodies the values of classical philosophy as well as the Christian faith in the Roman Catholic Church, again acting in a symbiotic relationship with his neo-medievalism.

Saunders Lewis defines Wales' 'mission' to be the "interpreter of Europe in Britain"<sup>536</sup> (the geographical area), its cultural and political past having been part of Europe. For him, if there exists a choice "between the Empire and the League of Nations"<sup>537</sup>, he is adamant Wales should choose the latter. He condemns the history of the British Empire as one of materialist nationalism, whilst Welsh history is defined by being an early 'nation of faith', and thus spiritual-cultural in contrast. For him, it is morally desirable for Wales to "obtain a seat in the League of Nations"<sup>538</sup>, gaining the outward recognition of nationhood and enabling it to act as "a chain that binds"<sup>539</sup> other nations together.

It is clear that Saunders Lewis had rejected a conception of a strong form of statehood. Much like his assertion of the moral value of self-government, it is unclear as to the precise measure of political power that would be yielded to supranational authority, and

---

<sup>535</sup> Ibid. P.27.

<sup>536</sup> Ibid. P.28.

<sup>537</sup> Ibid. P.27.

<sup>538</sup> Ibid. P.28.

<sup>539</sup> Ibid. P.28.

if indeed his theory is merely a semantic distinction. Indeed, just how much self-government is needed in order to secure cultural life, tradition and civilisation in Wales? A variety of terms could be used to fill the void here, including Home Rule, devolution, autonomy, all of which are titular, yet clearly demarcate a decentralising of power within a British state.

The political objective of Dominion Status appealed to Saunders Lewis, and was clearly more developed than the above definitions of 'self-government'. The recognition of the supra-national authority of the crown and the empire entailed by Dominion Status was welcome, both as a limitation on sovereignty and because he was a monarchist, yet left Wales free to decide its political and cultural matters. It is strange that Saunders Lewis settled on this despite his condemnation of the British Empire and statehood (both of which Dominion Status entailed), yet perhaps reflects a lack of real alternatives and demonstrates the compromise made in reality, as opposed to normative assertions.

Saunders Lewis stated his objection to republicanism, and stated his monarchist sympathies, by announcing he was pro-royalist because of the dangers to small national groups evident in republics such as Russia and France. In his mind, the centralist tendencies of republicanism militated against the welfare of national minorities. Irish Republicanism should not provide any model for Welsh nationalists either, their objectives being wholly different to his. Essentially, Saunders Lewis did not wish to "break the link with England"<sup>540</sup>, and that, whilst wanting to establish an independent parliament, he would be "fully prepared to take an oath of loyalty to the king."<sup>541</sup> His conception thus resembled a dual monarchy of sorts. This reflects his evaluation of Welsh history where despite being ruled by the English crown, Welsh culture remained free from the 12<sup>th</sup> century until the 16<sup>th</sup>.<sup>542</sup>

---

<sup>540</sup> *Y Ddraig Goch*. March. 1929.

<sup>541</sup> *Y Ddraig Goch*. March. 1929.

<sup>542</sup> See the chapter entitled '*Principles of Nationalism*' in this study for Saunders Lewis' analysis of Welsh history.



This monarchism appears to conflict with his wider political thought. His opposition to imperialism, as well as his claim that a future Second Chamber of the Welsh Senate should be composed of Trade Unions because he thinks that 'Lords' should have no role in a representative democracy (he was against hereditary privilege and patronage), appear in conflict with this affirmation of monarchism. Again it is difficult to ascertain whether this is a problem of separating theory and practice, of separating Saunders Lewis the politician, and Saunders Lewis the theorist, i.e. that monarchist support for 'Dominion Status' was the necessary compromise of active politics.

### **9.3. Medieval Europe as a Political Ideal.**

Saunders Lewis, at least in theoretical terms, had rejected the principle of state sovereignty, and self-determination, and was seeking to re-establish the political principle of the Middle Ages in terms of a new nationalism for Wales. Within academic analysis, the modern era of sovereignty is usually seen as arising in the context of the Treaty of Westphalia (1648). To quote Andrew Vincent, "essentially Westphalia reflected the interests of France, Sweden and Holland. It was focused, at one level, on controlling or thwarting the universalist claims of the universal papacy and the Holy Roman empire".<sup>543</sup> Saunders Lewis, of course, was advocating the political principle of the 'universalist claims' as a means of supra-national moral authority with which to maintain a 'unity in diversity', which he saw as being normatively desirable. This is not to say that he advocated the reinstatement of the Roman Catholic Church as a political supranational authority. Apparent in the term 'neo-medievalist' is the fact that he accepts modern advancements and wholly supports democracy and separation of Church and state. He supports the political principle adhered to in the Middle Ages whereby there was not a conception of sovereign statism, and instead European society was governed by a myriad of associations and institutions, at the community, local, national and international levels. Apparent therefore in neo-medievalism is the need to recreate, as normatively desirable, such a system of 'multi-level' or 'plural' 'dispersed authority' governance.

---

<sup>543</sup> Vincent, Andrew. (2002) *Nationalism and Particularity*. Cambridge. Cambridge University Press. P.17.

The Treaty of Westphalia is characteristically seen as a defining moment in the political practice of modern Europe. It is often cited as the beginning of the institutionalised acceptance and establishment of the 'state form' and the classical absolutist-inclined theory of sovereignty across Europe. Thus Vincent describes the concept of sovereignty that arose as being "understood as the focus of centralised law-making power and political authority in the prince or the executive."<sup>544</sup> In this sense 'sovereign states' now had the "monopolistic right to make war and peace, make treaties and to regulate internally their own religious practices."<sup>545</sup> Westphalian sovereignty, in this reading, thus embodied a transformation from a medieval world of larger empires and more plural 'dispersed' authority, to a purportedly modern world, namely, an international society of centralised sovereign states.<sup>546</sup> As Vincent concludes, "(state sovereignty) has thus become part of the very 'grammar' of modern politics."<sup>547</sup> Saunders Lewis shares Vincent's analysis of the rise of sovereignty. Indeed, he equates centralised law-making power and the absolutist-inclined theory of sovereignty with 'independence', which enforced cultural uniformity. The inception of state sovereignty in Europe, a result of the Reformation, is seen to be a refutation of the universal pan-European moral authority of the 'Universal' Catholic Church and an assertion of the particular state.

Saunders Lewis' brand of Christian nationalism sought not only to re-establish the medieval principle of governance within Wales, but also saw itself as part of something broader and wider in scope. He adheres to an analysis of the Middle Ages that views the 'universal' Church as an overarching moral, spiritual and political unifying entity, in conjunction with the neo-Thomism prevalent in his thought. According to this understanding of medieval Christianity and 'international relations', all Christians were part of the body of Christ - the *Respublica Christiana*.<sup>548</sup> In addition, the church was a

---

<sup>544</sup> Ibid. P.17.

<sup>545</sup> Ibid. P.17.

<sup>546</sup> Ibid. P.17.

<sup>547</sup> Ibid. P.17.

<sup>548</sup> For a deeper discussion of this, as well as an informative understanding of Medieval political history see

universal judicial unit of sorts, premised on systems of canon law. The universal supra-national church remained important in European thought and practice up until the 15<sup>th</sup> century, precisely the point which Saunders Lewis cites as marking the beginning of the breakdown of the valuing of cultural diversity that had previously been the norm in European society. As Saunders Lewis notes, during the Middle Ages, European “unity under a universal moral law, was the safety of the culture of every country and region.”<sup>549</sup>

Otto von Gierke, historian of medieval political thought, notes how despite containing various nations, the Church represented a unity that included diversity, and that

“set before us is a single universal Community, founded and governed by God himself. Mankind is one ‘mystical body’; it is one single and internally connected ‘people’ or ‘folk’; it is an all embracing corporation (*universitas*) which constitutes the Universal Realm, spiritual and temporal”<sup>550</sup>

In essence this meant ‘one God’, ‘one Pope’ for spiritual welfare, and ‘one emperor’ for temporal concerns. In effect, the breakdown of this universal conception was a precondition and stimulated the rise of the particular state. Thus, the fragmentation of the Holy Roman Empire into particular states, led initially by France and England, and more specifically the collapse of both the political and religious influence of the papacy, were viewed as a revolt of the ‘particular’ against the ‘universal’. This, in its broadest sense, was the cause of Wales’ current malaise, in the eyes of Saunders Lewis.

There was little effective overarching sovereignty or central authority in the political arrangements of medieval Europe. The political life of Europe was more generally characterised, at even the most local level, by interweaving and overlapping domains of authority. Medieval kingdoms contained within themselves multiple associations:

---

Geremek, Bronislaw. (1996) *The Common Roots of Europe*. Cambridge. Polity Press.

<sup>549</sup> Saunders Lewis, John. (1926) *Egwyddorion Cenedlaetholdeb (Principles of Nationalism)*. Machynlleth. Evan Jones Printers. P.3.

<sup>550</sup> Gierke, Otto von. Translated by Maitland, F.W. (1900) *Political Theories of the Middle Ages*. Cambridge. Cambridge University Press. P.10.

cities, guilds, nobility, estates, assemblies and clergy. Power-wielding deliberative assemblies acted at all levels of “counties, domains, diocese, boroughs, cities, universities, guilds, villages, and so forth, all had powers and rules.”<sup>551</sup> Medieval kingdoms were therefore interwoven into a large number of associations and groups with diverse loyalties. This gave a cellular structure to medieval society. This structure in turn was reinforced by the practices of feudalism. Under feudalism, the king or prince was bound unto the moral law of the supranational authority, the Church. Unitary conceptions of sovereignty or statehood are difficult to conceive of in this context. Accordingly, within the political thought of the Middle Ages, national entities were a composite of many different types of political association. This is precisely the social ideal at which Saunders Lewis aims in *Canlyn Arthur*, which seeks to avoid a strong conception of statehood, and whereby national life is sustained through interlinking and multiple associations (local, trade, intellectual, etc.). These were to act as a buffer between the individual and government, maintaining the freedom of the individual and the community in a ‘community of communities’.<sup>552</sup> All this was with a view to avoiding the potentially oppressive coercion of government which had arisen under the concept of state sovereignty in modernity.

This cellular theme of ‘international’ medieval political and social life, at the sub-national level was incorporated into Saunders Lewis’ political thought, thus embodying the principles of inter-dependence, co-operation and the free association of organic or functional groups. This prompted him to conceive of the nation as a ‘community of communities’, or in Latin *communitas communitatum*, an idea prominent in Catholic social thought. This multiplicity of lesser associations: the family, the church, a professional or trade ‘guild’ union (all predating the arrival of the state), came between the individual and the state, thereby protecting the individual’s freedom of thought and action.<sup>553</sup> This is a key principle prevalent in various organicist thinkers, who confer

---

<sup>551</sup> Ullman, Walter. (1975) *Medieval Political Thought*. Middlesex. Penguin. P.22.

<sup>552</sup> “*Communitas communitatum*”

Saunders Lewis, John. *Labour Unions*. In (1938) *Canlyn Arthur*. Aberystwyth. Gwasg Aberystwyth. P.56.

<sup>553</sup> “Family and tribe existed prior to the state, and voluntary organisations existed prior to the authority of sovereign government.... A nation’s civilisation is rich and complex because it is a community of

moral value upon the organic community or *Gemeinschaft*. The placing of moral value upon the organic community, and 'protecting the individual person's freedom of thought and action' in a multiplicity of lesser associations, are also key tenets of Distributism and Guild Socialism.<sup>554</sup>

For neo-medievalist thinkers such as Saunders Lewis, states and sovereignty were viewed as 'particulars', in contrast to the universal moral supranational authority of Christianity which had preceded it in the Middle Ages. In effect, the state was a rejection of the universal 'international' aspirations of the Church. The state was the personification of sovereignty. This is the meaning that underpins the concept of 'self-determination', although in terms of the European political vocabulary self-determination is a very recent term, dating from early in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Sovereignty, as self-determination, implies state-person volition. However, for thinkers such as Saunders Lewis, the state could not be conceived of as a moral person. When it came to obeying the law of the state, i.e. the government of England, Saunders Lewis sought to contrast civil law with the universal moral law.<sup>555</sup> He, of course, subsequently regarded the universal moral law to be above the civil law, the law of the state. 'Civil' law was seen to be declared, not created, by monarchs. As Gierke notes,

"Medieval doctrine, while it was truly medieval, never surrendered the thought that law is by its origin of equal rank with the state and does not depend upon the state for its existence"<sup>556</sup>

In addition, powerful associations in the medieval period, e.g. the 'guilds', possessed their own systems of law and courts. The best known of such separate legal systems was Church canon law. There was no definitive unitary legal conception, as became

---

communities, and for that reason also the freedom of the individual is a feasible proposition... His liberty depends on being a member not of one association but of many."

Saunders Lewis, John. *The Labour Unions* In (1938) *Canlyn Arthur*. Aberystwyth. Gwasg Aberystwyth. P.52-53.

<sup>554</sup> In this study see the chapter entitled 'A Social Vision for Wales: *Canlyn Arthur*' for a fuller discussion of the influence of Guild Socialism and distributism upon Saunders Lewis.

<sup>555</sup> See the chapter entitled 'The Caernarfon Court Speech' in this study.

<sup>556</sup> Gierke, Otto von. Cited in Black, Anthony. (1984) *Guilds and Civil Society*. London. Methuen. P.60.

prevalent under state sovereignty. Accordingly, the medieval period can aptly be described as a period of legal pluralism. However, according to Saunders Lewis, the modern state did not recognise international or universal religious law, internal legal pluralism, nor cultural pluralism. As he outlined in *Principles of Nationalism*, the state sought to eradicate them.<sup>557</sup>

#### **9.4. The Nation (not State) as Moral Person.**

Saunders Lewis' position is in contrast to thinkers such as Pufendorf, who place legitimacy upon the state as a moral person. Saunders Lewis defines the nation, above the state, as the moral person, as demonstrated in his seeking to place "limits to the rights of the English state when it transgresses the moral law and acts in violation of the rights of the Welsh nation".<sup>558</sup> Pufendorf, on the other hand, conceptualises the state as a composite moral person, as distinct from what he called 'simple moral persons', which entailed a collection of persons united by a 'moral bond'. For Pufendorf, this composite moral person was not just a legal or fictitious entity. As Boucher notes, it was conceived of as a "real autonomous moral person with the capacity to will, deliberate, and pursue purposes"<sup>559</sup> Thus, the state, is "one person, and is separated and distinguished from all particular men by a unique name; and it has its own special rights and property, which no man... may appropriate apart from him who holds the sovereign power... hence the state is defined as a composite moral person."<sup>560</sup> In Pufendorf's mind, it is sovereignty that animates the person of the state, which is guided by natural law and natural reason, but that should be free from outside interference. Natural law (and reason) places moral controls on the behaviour of the state-person, in that it should concern itself with the safety and welfare of the people.

---

<sup>557</sup> As Vincent notes, "Internal legal pluralism, as a form of micro-particularity, has arisen again within 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century states, in the form of secession, difference, multiculturalism and group rights theories, and is still an immensely problematic facet of states in the 21<sup>st</sup> century."

Vincent, Andrew. (2002) *Nationalism and Particularity*. Cambridge. Cambridge University Press. P.21.

<sup>558</sup> Saunders Lewis, John. *Caernarvon Court Speech*. In Eds. Jones, Alun R. & Thomas, Gwyn. (1973) *Presenting Saunders Lewis*. Cardiff. University of Wales Press. P.117.

<sup>559</sup> Boucher, David. (1998) *Political Theories of International Relations*. Oxford. Clarendon Press. P.237.

<sup>560</sup> Pufendorf, Samuel Freiherr von. Translation by Silverstone, Michael. In Tully, James. (Ed.) (1991) *On the Duties of Man and Citizen*. Cambridge. Cambridge University Press. Bk II, Ch.6, Section 10. P.137.

However, Saunders Lewis, whilst approving of the universal nature of natural law, cannot conceive of the state as a moral person. Saunders Lewis' approach concerning the 'safety and the welfare of the people' is different to that of Pufendorf. It is due to the fact that the state is 'free from outside interference' that it is able to create its own moral absolutism, ignoring the natural law. Under Saunders Lewis' analysis, this allows it to abuse the 'safety and welfare of the people', and more specifically a minority culture. A further contrast to both Saunders Lewis' and Pufendorf's conceptions of sovereignty is that of the Hobbesian model. Whereas Saunders Lewis conceived of the nation, not the state, as a moral personality, and Pufendorf conceived of it as a contractual theory whereby the state was a moral person, for Hobbes the state was strictly a legal personality, based on a morality of prudential or expedient concerns.<sup>561</sup>

Contemporary theory offers insight as to the definition of the nation and/or the state as a moral person. There exists a kaleidoscope of stances dependent on the exponents' definition of the success or failure of the 'nation-state' compound, and as to whether one can truly represent the other and *vice versa*. Neil MacCormick asserts that a distinction needs to be made between law on the one side, and moral or cultural issues on the other. For him the states are "legalistic impersonal entities"<sup>562</sup>, whereas nations are "communities with culture and personality", a form of personal kinship, based on common myths and traditions. He suggests that given the 'cold' character of the state, it is not surprising that those in charge of it have wished to "infuse it with the warm moral personality of a nation"<sup>563</sup>. Thus it is the nation, rather than the state, that embodies and represents a 'moral personality'.

For MacCormick, the nation and nationalism, embodied in a national identity, forms a mode of consciousness that includes "the need for a form of a common governance which recognises and allows for the continued flourishing of the cultural and historical

---

<sup>561</sup> Vincent, Andrew. (2002) *Nationalism and Particularity*. Cambridge Cambridge University Press. P.35.

<sup>562</sup> MacCormick, N. (1982) *Legal Rights and Social Democracy: Essays in Legal and Political Philosophy*. Oxford. Clarendon Press. P.249.

<sup>563</sup> *Ibid.* P.249.

community”.<sup>564</sup> He recognises the need that national communities have felt for gaining their own state in seeking to realise the ‘nation-state’ compound. However, he is reluctant to fully endorse this expectation, and expresses scepticism as to its realisation. In reading 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century history, MacCormick concludes that the seeking of, and achievement of, the ‘nation state’ has not added much to contentment or peace in Europe, or elsewhere. Whether this has been due to nationalism or statism, or indeed a mixture of the two, MacCormick regards as being an open-ended question. MacCormick does in fact look with optimism to the necessary retention of nationalism, but applies normative value in seeking to move it beyond the state model. Thus, MacCormick views it as being morally desirable that the ‘nation-state’ compound be gradually replaced by forms of diffused regional power in the context of federations, such as those of the European Union.<sup>565</sup>

Multilevel plural governance thus provides the best vessel for national aspiration. In this sense, there is an appeal to a form of neo-medievalism, where Europe, once again, becomes cellular and disaggregated. For MacCormick, the concept of a ‘sovereign state’ is of much more recent conception than that of a nation, and developments “such as that of the European community suggest that it may have already had its day”.<sup>566</sup> MacCormick concludes by suggesting that regional federation can be a ‘golden mean’ between the wholesale rejection of nationalism at one end of the scale, and ‘mindless xenophobia’ at the other end. Thus for MacCormick, nationalism (with which he includes patriotism) is the ‘binding agent’ of society and the common consciousness is something that can, and normatively should, develop outside the dated ‘cold and legalistic’ state. MacCormick’s thought, of course, draws strong parallels with the social and political thought of Saunders Lewis with regard to the political principle of sovereignty and of the normative ideal of the principle of governance inherent to the Middle Ages. Theorists such as MacCormick are often cited as neo-medievalist governance theorists. They subscribe to the stance that eroded state sovereignty within a larger regional federation allows for cultivation of ‘common consciousness’ within

---

<sup>564</sup> Ibid. P.261.

<sup>565</sup> Ibid. P.264.

<sup>566</sup> Ibid. P.264.



cultural groups, yet consciously avoids xenophobic and/or militaristic confrontation between such groups. Such theorists are often secular adherents to the political governance principle of subsidiarity.

The interpretation of states and sovereignty as particulars in revolt against the universal has its roots in the wider European discourse of the origin of the state. The principle of sovereignty underpins self-determination and provides much of its meaning. Sovereignty, as self-determination, implies “state-person volition”<sup>567</sup>. The use of ‘self’ in self-determination would thus be “meaningless verbiage unless will and personality were involved”<sup>568</sup>. Proponents of this concept equate sovereignty with personality, with statehood forming the ‘identity’ of this personality. In turn, the state is endowed with the abstract persona of the human individual, and should be regarded in the same way. Saunders Lewis, in contrast does not think that nations, as distinct from states, should be self-determining in this sense, but rather self-governing, and deferring to an egalitarian supranational authority in observance of a wider moral universalism.

In terms of international relations, it is possible to talk of a parallel between the Middle Ages and the characteristics of emerging contemporary multi-level plural governance. Within the medieval system, there was no concrete idea of ‘international relations’ or ‘foreign policy’. The relations that existed between emperors, popes, kings, archbishops, barons, cities, universities, guilds, etc. arguably resembled international relations, but not in a modern sense. These institutions all conducted relations in the form of agreements, diplomacy, arbitration and war, and saw themselves as subject to commonly accepted laws and customs. However, these relations were not between sovereign territorial states but rather between individuals and corporate groups. Thus there is no clear distinction between ‘international’ and ‘domestic relations’ in medieval Europe. This criss-crossing, cellular theme extended beyond ‘national’ boundaries and was at the forefront of Saunders Lewis’ thought. He was not seeking to reinstate emperors, popes and kings in power-wielding positions, but instead promoted

---

<sup>567</sup> Vincent, Andrew. (2002) *Nationalism and Particularity*. Cambridge. Cambridge University Press. P.26.

<sup>568</sup> Ibid. P.26.

the idea that corporate bodies and institutions should not be subservient to the state as the single supreme body and institution. In this respect, corporate bodies could bridge nations and 'cultural communities'. This aids in comprehending Saunders Lewis' definition of a nation as a 'community of communities', where individuals are part of multiple associations: trade, religious, sporting, cultural, etc. Crucially, this 'community of communities' operates without a central body, i.e. a state, able to claim the supreme allegiance over the individual and thus again ensuring a wide dispersal of power. These associations could also extend beyond the nation, although the idea of them becoming centralised in any sense would be anathema to Saunders Lewis.

Saunders Lewis was criticised for his neo-medievalism, and the usage of history and tradition in his political thought. R.T. Jenkins criticised Saunders Lewis for believing that he could simply 'pick and choose' those aspects of medieval society which he admired and sought to re-create, without recreating the whole society of which they were a part. Indeed he castigates neo-medievalists for seeking to turn back time and supposing they can,

"revive those things from the past which please them, without reviving the whole of the social complex of which those facts were part."<sup>569</sup>

In defending himself against such criticism, Saunders Lewis is, naturally, unconvinced by R.T. Jenkins' argument, and believes that there is not "any philosophic proof that such a selection cannot be made."<sup>570</sup> He goes on to note the philosophic revival of the realism of the 13<sup>th</sup> century when he suggests that "Jacques Maritain has made it a force in Europe today"<sup>571</sup>. Saunders Lewis also notes that the neo-medievalist intellectual movement which Jacques Maritain was spearheading "is not without its influence on philosopher-critics far removed from Thomas Aquinas."<sup>572</sup>

---

<sup>569</sup> Jenkins, R.T. (1930) *Yr Apel at Hanes (The Appeal to History)*. Wrexham. Hughes and Son. P.168.

<sup>570</sup> Jones, Dafydd Glyn. *His Politics*. In Eds. Jones, Alun R. & Thomas, Gwyn. (1973) *Presenting Saunders Lewis*. Cardiff. University of Wales Press. P.51.

<sup>571</sup> *Ibid.* P.51.

<sup>572</sup> *Ibid.* P.51.

The question of sovereignty, and the precise measure of it needed to ensure Welsh national rights, is one which has continually beset Welsh nationalism. A Welsh Nationalist Party member, Oswald Rowlands, was highly critical of Saunders Lewis' settling on the principle of dominion status with its recognition of the British monarchy, as well as his wider neo-medievalist rejection of sovereignty. Rowlands argued that it was futile to speak of returning to the non-sovereignty principle of the Middle Ages, and was critical of Saunders Lewis' seeking to recognise the supranational authority of the League of Nations. Of course, Rowlands was arguing in terms of *realpolitik*, as he suggested that it could be forgotten as it had failed completely (1938). In addition to this Rowlands argued that Wales was not a colony of England, and should therefore not remain complicit as a member of an empire "that was established by the sword and bayonet and that is defended today by bombs from the air in Palestine and India."<sup>573</sup> Similarly a 'Cardiff Republican' noted that, "you must either fight for a Welsh republic or accept your present inferior position".<sup>574</sup> Underpinning such statements was the belief that Welsh 'freedom' could only be satisfactorily achieved in sovereign statehood, as well as a left-wing inspired anti-imperialist and anti-monarchist / aristocratic foundation.

Naturally, Saunders Lewis came in for criticism from such nationalists as Welsh republicans, both of the liberal egalitarian mould and the Marxist. Those who saw class warfare as the engine of social progress obviously scoffed at any talk of a return to the principle of the Middle Ages. Many subscribers to such an approach equated the Middle Ages with an unenlightened era of irrationalism, rather than an 'enlightened period of governance', as Saunders Lewis chose to interpret it. Whilst there may have been elements to admire in communal life, for Marxist socialists feudalism represented hierarchy and thus the period was a developmental stage in the progress towards socialism and the emancipation of the working class. Saunders Lewis, in contrast to many Welsh socialists and republicans, conceived of the nation in terms of vertical solidarity instead of horizontal solidarity. However, many such socialists and

---

<sup>573</sup> *Y Ddraig Goch*. Feb. 1938.

<sup>574</sup> *Welsh Nationalist*. May. 1934.

republicans were still committed to Welsh independence, and rejected Saunders Lewis' regard for aristocracy, albeit in a Welsh mode. Kate Roberts, later to become a prominent figure within the Welsh Nationalist Party in the 1930s, was critical of Saunders Lewis' philosophical grounding. She noted,

"I can see Mr. Saunders Lewis' point of view as I love literature, but as I am a socialist I really cannot reconcile myself with his ideas. Personally, I see no difference between doffing one's cap to an English merchant and doffing one's cap to our old Welsh princes"<sup>575</sup>

There were those who agreed with Saunders Lewis' aim of dominion status, yet did not share his reasoning, in terms of the need for 'freedom' rather than 'independence', or his belief in monarchy, or in any moral principles flowing from a neo-medievalist perspective. In contrast to Saunders Lewis, D.J. Davies argued in instrumental mode that 'dominion status' was to be preferred over devolution as,

"Unless national aspirations are given complete freedom of expression, the Welsh national character is denied adequate expression in the material sphere, and political sovereignty is essential if this freedom is to be achieved. For that reason devolution cannot satisfy our national aspirations."<sup>576</sup>

Despite arguing that political sovereignty is essential, D.J. Davies bore in mind the need for a higher international authority, and that a highly impermeable conception of state sovereignty should be avoided, as "it is also essential to recognise the supreme sovereignty of the League of Nations: to avoid strife between self-governing nations."<sup>577</sup>

---

<sup>575</sup> Letter from Kate Roberts to H.R. Jones, undated, Plaid Cymru Records, National Library of Wales, Aberystwyth. Cited in Hywel Davies, D. (1983) *A Call to Nationhood: The Welsh Nationalist Party 1925-1945*. Cardiff. University of Wales Press. P.124.

<sup>576</sup> *Y Ddraig Goch*. April. 1927.

<sup>577</sup> *Ibid*.

The example of the Irish Free State was held aloft as an ideal by many Welsh nationalists. It had 'Dominion Status', recognised the British Monarch as Head of State yet had full control over trade, finance, taxation, economic resources, etc, and crucially, a cultural remit. Implicit also in Dominion Status was the ability to declare Republic status. Saunders Lewis, as noted above, was wary of the Irish Free State's 'insularity', and this, combined with his advocacy of monarchy, would suggest he would oppose any move to declare Wales a republic.

The point that state sovereignty was a novel and relatively 'new' concept, and that, by implication, political and social life could flourish without it, was one being made by neo-medievalist peers of Saunders Lewis. The historian and pluralist theorist F.W. Maitland, drew attention to this, "While we are speaking of this matter of sovereignty, it will be well to remember that our modern theories run counter to the deepest convictions of the Middle Ages – to their whole manner of regarding the relation between church and state."<sup>578</sup> Gierke, F.W. Maitland and their contemporaries were highlighting this point long before neo-medievalist theorists were employing it in their reasoning and defining the social plurality evident in medieval society as normatively desirable. Saunders Lewis employed the medieval concept of social plurality, defined as a 'community of communities', to state that groups in society are in possession of a real personality and will, and that these groups have rights and duties independent of any formal sanction by the state.<sup>579</sup>

The medieval period is defined politically as an epoch when feudal rulers were not in possession of *Imperium* (absolute legal authority) or the right of *Legibus Solutus* (the king or prince being above the law). This was despite the fact that papal rule tried to emulate many of the Roman public law attributes of the emperor, aspects which secular rulers in turn tried to emulate with the advent of sovereignty theory. The existence of codes of customary law, feudal relations, and the presence of the various estates,

---

<sup>578</sup> Maitland, F.W. (Ed. Fisher, H.A.L.) (1908) *The Constitutional History of England*. Cambridge. Cambridge University Press. P.101-102.

<sup>579</sup> In this study, see the chapter entitled 'A Social Vision for Wales' for a fuller discussion of this social pluralism.

assemblies, guilds, towns, cities, etc. ensured that legal powers were not centralised. Medieval society was more universalist by inclination, with regard to religion, and sovereignty resided, if at all, with God, rather than any institution. State sovereignty was as anathema to medieval society as it is integral to modern conceptions, hence Saunders Lewis' definition of the state as the 'state-god'.

Those such as Gierke and Maitland attested to the 'cellular' and federalised structure of medieval society, and the lack of a singular legal and political authority. Even if one deems this 'cellular' aspect to be overstated, it remains impossible to demarcate a singular and fully developed 'sovereign state' in the medieval period. Rulers acted in contractual terms with the Church. However, as Vincent notes,

"gradually, almost imperceptibly, the concepts, insignia, symbols and legal axioms of the church and Roman Empire were absorbed and taken up in the quasi-secular authorities of the new states in the 1500s."<sup>580</sup>

He goes on to note that the state and sovereignty acquired a "strong aroma of incense - often claiming for themselves the mantle of universal empire in their own bounded, quasi-secular realms."<sup>581</sup> Bartelson notes that "the concept, symbols and insignia of rulership took on the sempiternal existence as universal"<sup>582</sup> within their own territories. Thus, as Saunders Lewis sought to highlight, the state became the moral absolute in place of the Church and was thus thereby unrestricted in its policy to pursue cultural uniformity.

The influence of Saunders Lewis' neo-medievalist thought went beyond the political principles of governance to which he subscribed and his condemnation of sovereignty, as he viewed medieval society as a social 'ideal' in terms of culture and economy. Saunders Lewis also employed neo-medievalist thought with regard to a holistic

---

<sup>580</sup> Vincent, Andrew. (2002) *Nationalism and Particularity*. Cambridge. Cambridge University Press. P.16.

<sup>581</sup> Ibid. P.16.

<sup>582</sup> Bartelson, Jens. (1995) *The Genealogy of Sovereignty*. Cambridge. Cambridge University Press. P.98.

political approach to his nationalism which he developed into a socio-economic ideal by which Welsh society was to operate in *Canlyn Arthur*. This itself reflects his view that “there is more to nationalism than a defence of language and literature.”<sup>583</sup> The interaction of guild socialism, distributism, social pluralism, and cooperativism in industry within Saunders Lewis’ political and economic thought all reflected and acted in synergistic fashion with his neo-medievalism.

It is of contemporary theoretical importance to investigate Saunders Lewis’ neo-medievalist conception of European governance. Several theorists have sought to highlight the parallels between the principles of governance at work in the Middle Ages, and that of the contemporary ‘emerging Europe’ where state sovereignty is being eroded. Primarily this analytical work focuses on the parallels apparent in the dispersal of power and authority in both epochs. The complex patchwork of overlapping authorities defines the medieval system. As Wæver notes, “property rights were not absolute but contingent in that they entailed obligations; and there were some universal principles that were supposed to supply legitimacy to all rulers”.<sup>584</sup> He goes on to note that the rights of government were territorial, but they did not entail mutual exclusion (i.e. where one state has exclusive competence to legislate, levy taxes, etc... another is excluded) and the result was the “famous patchwork of overlapping rights of government that were superimposed on each other such that each was incomplete, i.e. not ‘sovereign’ rule”<sup>585</sup>. This for Saunders Lewis provided a contemporary answer for the modern problem of sovereign statehood that on an internal level culturally homogenised, and on an external level competed with other states, leading to war. A neo-medieval system of European government based on the ‘patchwork of overlapping right of government’ meant, under Saunders Lewis’ interpretation, that no single authority would be the sole ‘supreme moral arbiter’ as the modern ‘state-god’ had been, as defined in *Principles of Nationalism*. Indeed, as Saunders Lewis was not ultimately seeking to recreate medieval society wholesale, all that remains is to precisely define

---

<sup>583</sup> *Y Ddraig Goch*. June. 1926.

<sup>584</sup> Wæver, Ole. *Europe Since 1945: Crisis to Renewal*. In Wilson, Kevin & van der Dussen, Jan (Eds). (1993) *The History of the Idea of Europe*. London and New York. Routledge. P.193.

<sup>585</sup> *Ibid*. P.193.

what he was committed to, in terms of a 'European Union'. From the above investigation it can be demonstrated that he was in favour of 'multilevel plural governance' in terms of a *realpolitik* structure to European governance.

### 9.5. Normative Theory and Multi-level Plural Governance.

Commentators on, and proponents of, multilevel plural governance have sought to draw parallels between contemporary 'emerging Europe' and medieval Europe.<sup>586</sup> They draw attention to contemporary forms of governance that are strong reminders of the criss-crossing authority relations that defined medieval social and political structures, both of non-territorial actors, businesses, N.G.O.s and sub-state actors in terms of 'nation-region' governments. (Examples of these are the current Basque and Catalan governments, and the German Lander: in effect pursuing their own 'foreign' policies.) Of course, whether Saunders Lewis would have supported the contemporary E.U. is a matter of speculation. What is important is that the ideas that underpin its functioning are ideas that Saunders Lewis was himself committed to.

Wæver is keen to note that although there have long since been democratically elected, legitimate and authoritative competences in place at regional, national and international levels, what is new is the reality that no longer is there one 'primary' level.<sup>587</sup> In contrast to the era when the sovereign state was the primary level, now "the principle of sovereignty, exclusivity and territoriality is giving way to a pattern of overlapping authorities reminiscent of the medieval system."<sup>588</sup> Instead of authority and power moving towards a bigger sovereign unit, both are being dispersed along multiple levels.

---

<sup>586</sup> For example, see

Jessop, Bob. *Multi-level Governance and Multi-level Metagovernance*. In Eds. Bache, Ian & Flinders, Matthew. (2004) *Multi-level Governance*. Oxford. Oxford University Press. P.62.

Also see

Wæver, Ole. *Europe, State and Nation in the New Middle Ages*. In De Wilde, Jaap & Wiberg, Håkan. (Eds.) (1996) *Organised Anarchy in Europe: The Role of Intergovernmental Organisations*. London. I.B. Tauris.

<sup>587</sup> Wæver, Ole. *Europe Since 1945: Crisis to Renewal*. In (Eds.) Wilson, Kevin & van der Dussen, Jan. (1993) *The History of the Idea of Europe*. London and New York. Routledge. P.193.

<sup>588</sup> Ibid. P193.



There are many interpretations of the precise nature and system of governance regarding sovereignty (or the lack of it) in the 'emerging Europe'. It is not the intention, nor remit, of this study to engage with this point to any great depth. It is merely to indicate how Saunders Lewis' social and political thought with regard to Europe, and his commitment to the principle of subsidiarity in governance terms, may be of contemporary relevance. Contemporary discourse seeks to ascertain as to whether the contemporary European Union has assumed the role of a 'real' sovereign 'super'-state and whether, consequently, the member states are becoming increasingly like regional authorities.<sup>589</sup> On the other hand, there are those who assert that member states have, in fact, retained their sovereignty and that the E.U. is just an international organisation.<sup>590</sup> Conversely, there are others yet again who regard the issue of where ultimate sovereignty lies as being a false dichotomy, and suggest rather that none of them is sovereign.<sup>591</sup>

Theorists such as Wæver believe none of them to be 'sovereign', as he sees change occurring at the level of sovereignty of the territorial state. For him, the 'end of the nation-state' is a different debate as the world moves from the 'modern' epoch which has been defined by the territorial state. Wæver argues that the nation-state is a recent phenomenon and that its passing into history is morally desirable. Underpinning his argument is his analysis that

---

<sup>589</sup> This is arguably more of a media promulgated myth than a solid academic argument. However, certain writers do seem to accept it on favorable grounds as it forms the basis for Haseler's polemic. Haseler, Stephen. (2004) *Super-state: The New Europe and Its Challenge to America*. London. I.B. Tauris. See also the argument articulated by Margaret Thatcher's speech against a 'superstate' Europe in Thatcher, Margaret. (1993) *The Downing Street Years*. London. Harper Collins.

<sup>590</sup> Milward, Alan. (1993) *The European Rescue of the Nation-State*. London. Routledge.

<sup>591</sup> Ruggie, John. (1993) *Multilateralism Matters: The Theory and Praxis of an Institutional Form*. New York. Columbia University Press.

Ruggie, John. (1998) *Constructing the World Polity: Essays on International Institutionalisation*. London. Routledge.

Bauböck, Rainer. *Political Community Beyond the Sovereign State, Supranational Federalism, and Transnational Minorities*. In Vertovec, Steven & Cohen, Robin. (2002) *Conceiving Cosmopolitanism: Theory, Context and Practice*. Oxford. Oxford University Press.

It is interesting that the empirical implications of Bauböck's thought are remarkably similar to Saunders Lewis' yet Bauböck approaches from a staunchly cosmopolitan foundation.

For a general overview of theories relating to European integration see

O'Neill, Michael. (1996) *The Politics of European Integration. A Reader*. London. Routledge.

Rosamond, Ben. (2000) *Theories of European Integration*. London. Macmillan Press.

“For the last two-hundred years or so the territorial state has therefore been combined with the national idea (making up the nation-state), but if we focus on the nation-state we end up in discussion of nationalism, and the national idea persists.”<sup>592</sup>

He notes that change is occurring to sovereignty at the level of the territorial state: nations are continuing, but the nature of states is changing,

“Thus nations continue, but the states they relate to are not what they used to be, since the state is changing, with authority being dispersed across several levels in our ‘new middle ages’”<sup>593</sup>.

Wæver draws his conclusions in light of “west-European developments”<sup>594</sup> which have seen marked changes between the “unit of identification (nation)”<sup>595</sup> and the “unit of political organisation/authority (the state – and increasingly the E.U.)”<sup>596</sup>. He is keen to note that the E.U. is not moving towards a territorial super-state, rather that, “power and authority are being disseminated via the principle of subsidiarity”<sup>597</sup>.

Insights into the erosion of and nature of sovereignty within the European Union which contemporary neo-medievalists are engaged with are relevant to discussion on the social and political thought of Saunders Lewis as they frame his thought, and pose many of the questions he seeks to answer. Underpinning the structure of power relations within the contemporary European Union, as Wæver notes, is the political principle of subsidiarity.<sup>598</sup> Of course, most contemporary neo-medievalist subscribers

---

<sup>592</sup> Wæver, Ole. *Europe Since 1945: Crisis to Renewal*. In Eds. Wilson, Kevin & van der Dussen, Jan. (1993) *The History of the Idea of Europe*. London and New York. Routledge. P.194.

<sup>593</sup> Ibid. P.194.

<sup>594</sup> Ibid. P.194.

<sup>595</sup> Ibid. P.194.

<sup>596</sup> Ibid. P.194.

<sup>597</sup> Ibid. P.195.

<sup>598</sup> Article 3b of the Maastricht Treaty states that subsidiarity is defined as “a principle of federalist government which holds... that regulation should be affected at the level of government able to implement the social goal most efficiently.”

to the principle of subsidiarity do so along secular lines. Saunders Lewis' ethical commitment to the principle of subsidiarity, however, is derived from his Catholic neo-Thomist philosophy.

The crux of Wæver's conclusion focuses on the moral desirability of moving beyond the concept of the territorial state whilst maintaining the idea of nation, or at least noting its role as the unit of identity. He questions what a nation / society will do when it feels threatened culturally as state sovereignty is eroded. He hypothesises what it will do when it is less able to use the instruments of the state to contain people, ideas and technological developments that are felt to be undermining the sense of national cohesion. He suggests that the nation / society,

“... will be compelled to act itself: i.e. threats to a culture have to be met in the arena of culture itself. Nations will have to defend their national identity through culture itself. Nations will have to defend their national identity through cultural means, through reflecting on and intensifying their cultural expression, rather than calling upon the state to block off such challenges.”<sup>599</sup>

For Saunders Lewis it would appear that with state sovereignty negated, and not in existence in the form that he describes as anathema in *Principles of Nationalism*, Welsh culture, society and nation would thus be 'free' to pursue its cultural expression and continuance in the Welsh language. Rather than seeking its own sovereign state in order to secure cultural continuance, Saunders Lewis, as outlined in *Principles of Nationalism*, defines state sovereignty, rather than the lack of it, as the problem to be overcome for the Welsh nation. A 'neo-medieval' European Union committed to the principle of subsidiarity was thus a morally desirable means by which to ensure cultural 'freedom', as well as to avoid the culturally destructive and coercive tendencies of state sovereignty.

---

*Treaty on European Union (Maastricht Treaty)*. (1992) Luxembourg. Office for Official Publications of the European Communities.

<sup>599</sup> Wæver, Ole. *Europe Since 1945: Crisis to Renewal*. In Eds. Wilson, Kevin & van der Dussen, Jan. (1993) *The History of the Idea of Europe*. London and New York. Routledge. P.195.

Effectively, Wæver's projection is that, with a nation's / society's culture unable to utilise the state instrumentally, "culture will need culture"<sup>600</sup>. In this case, a cultural community will have to defend itself by activating and intensifying its forms of cultural expression. This would appear to be palatable to Saunders Lewis, placing as he did 'culture before politics', provided that state sovereignty was universally dispensed with.

The fact that Saunders Lewis was convinced that 'economic and political union' should be brought to Europe, is not indicative of the fact that he was positively committed to a certain type of European Union. His condemnation of the political principle of state sovereignty and his commitment to the principle of subsidiarity suggest that in contemporary terms he would be an advocate of a 'Europe of the Regions' rather than a 'Europe des Patries'.<sup>601</sup> Of course, neither a 'Europe of the Regions' nor a 'Europe des Patries' were in existence at the time of the compilation of the thought of Saunders Lewis. However, on examination, it is possible to trace contemporary Welsh nationalism's embrace of the idea of a European Union. Of course, as noted earlier, Saunders Lewis manages to combine a commitment to cultural continuance (a particularism) with a wider universalism. His thought does not follow 'conventional wisdom' that statehood should be sought in order to secure cultural continuance. Indeed, what he was committed to in terms of *realpolitik* regarding a European Union is necessarily vague, as no such institution existed at that time. By considering the principles to which Saunders Lewis was committed, most notably those of subsidiarity, 'interdependence', and the need to bring 'economic and political union to Europe', it is

---

<sup>600</sup> Ibid. P.195.

<sup>601</sup> Both 'Europe of the Regions' and 'Europe des Patries' are contested terms. However, here it is taken to mean that within a politically and economically integrated Europe Union along contemporary neo-medievalist lines, regional governments, at the sub-level of the previously dominant states will have a large degree of sovereignty transferred to them, and are able to act independently of, and pursue cooperation without consent from, the member state level. (e.g. Catalonia could maintain its own relations with Alsace-Lorraine and the E.U. independent of Spain, the member state). In contrast, Europe des Patries, or Europe des États, is taken to mean a European Union project whereby the member state remains the primary level of sovereignty in a Europe of 'nation-states'. The term itself is attributed to Charles de Gaulle. See Mahoney, Daniel J. (2000) *De Gaulle: Statesmanship, Grandeur, and Modern Democracy*. London. Transaction Publishers. P.133.

For deeper discussion and analysis of 'Europe des Patries' and 'Europe of the Regions' see Wæver, Ole. *Europe since 1945: Crisis to Renewal*. In (Eds) Wilson, Kevin & van der Dussen, Jan. (1995) *The History of the Idea of Europe*. London. Routledge. P.195-200.

possible to measure his normative commitment to such a political project. Of course, included within the principle of subsidiarity, as well as his disdain for centralising states evident in his more general decentralism, is his commitment to an idea of Europe that is definitively federative. The idea of a centralised European super-state was anathema to his wider political principles.

As Vincent notes in *Nationalism and Particularity*,

“It is largely sovereignty discourse, focused on individual and particular identity, which provides the driving energy for the nation. Without it, the nation would have little interest or significance.”<sup>602</sup>

What is encountered within the Welsh nationalist thought of Saunders Lewis is the idea of the nation as a cultural community that actively seeks to consider political structure without the modern ‘sovereign’ state system, which he deems to be at fault for the cultural and material oppression of smaller cultures.

Vincent, in putting forward a cosmopolitan argument, seeks to denote that nationalism is itself a vacuous theory, and that without sovereignty, it has “no language to express this identity (the nation)”.<sup>603</sup> Crucially, Saunders Lewis’ thought seeks to argue that nationalism is cultural and that sovereignty should be actively avoided, as the language which expresses its identity is the nation’s culture and language. Here lies criticism of Saunders Lewis’ position, in that only political sovereignty for the ‘nation’ will allow the ability for, and freedom in, policy-making.

Vincent states that without “sovereignty language”<sup>604</sup> nationalism would be “utterly bankrupt”<sup>605</sup>. The thought of Saunders Lewis effectively counters this claim, as it actively denounces the principle of sovereignty, yet clearly defines itself as

---

<sup>602</sup> Vincent, Andrew. (2002) *Nationalism and Particularity*. Cambridge. Cambridge University Press. P.34.

<sup>603</sup> Ibid. P.34.

<sup>604</sup> Ibid. P.34.

<sup>605</sup> Ibid. P.34.

'nationalist'. Vincent concludes that "nationalism is particularist because both the state and sovereignty are particularist"<sup>606</sup>. Oddly enough it would appear that Saunders Lewis would have agreed with this maxim, with the addition of the prefix 'materialist'. However, Vincent would not seek to make such distinctions between various nationalisms. Indeed, for theorists such as Vincent,

"Terms such as cultural identity or regional self-determination, when deployed by nationalist writers, are just loose surrogates or stop-gaps, which try to avoid sovereignty language"<sup>607</sup>.

Indeed, this suggests that political arguments such as Saunders Lewis' 'which try to avoid sovereignty language' are seeking to provide a smokescreen for ulterior motives. Saunders Lewis' 'nationalist' thought actively seeks to reject the particularity of the state and sovereignty.

Comparisons between the contemporary and the Middle Ages are of course problematic. Despite the numerous differences apparent in seeking to draw parallels, it is possible to conceptualise political ideas outside the modern state system. Present day fluidity with regard to the concept of sovereignty, and the rise to prominence of 'multi level plural governance', have meant that neo-medieval governance theorists have necessarily drawn attention to the fact that such concepts can again be treated as questions rather than simply as history. The social and political thought of Saunders Lewis thus provides an interesting account of national and cultural continuance as being necessarily part of the 'Idea of Europe' and central to its identity. His thought was ahead of its time in many ways, and whilst not directly applicable in its day due to context, is of value in terms of its theoretical content in the contemporary 'new Middle Ages'.

---

<sup>606</sup> Ibid. P.34.

<sup>607</sup> Ibid. P.34.

Saunders Lewis' conception of cultural and linguistic identity finds its articulation within the framework of a 'neo-medievalist' or multi-level pluralist governance Europe. His thought regarding multi-level governance and his commitment to its principle, both in Europe and globally, has a legacy in Welsh nationalism. Indeed the idea of a Welsh government within the context of the European Union is one which has firmly taken root within Welsh nationalism over its development during the 20<sup>th</sup> century and into the 21<sup>st</sup>.

Although his neo-medievalism is grounded in a moral philosophical sense in his Catholicism, and informs his world view regarding his interpretation of European history with regard to nations, sovereignty and culture, it is still possible to separate those political ideas that, in a secular setting, have proved remarkably appealing.

In addition his thought on the matter and its surrounding issues, i.e state sovereignty provide the student of nationalism with an intriguing reversal of the conceived wisdom of such theorising regarding nationalism and the state (see Vincent). Indeed, in contemporary theoretical terms, the political implications of his standpoint look remarkably like those of the political structures favoured by cosmopolitans.

### **The Paradigms of Nationalism: An Analysis of Saunders Lewis' Thought.**

This chapter will seek to analyse Saunders Lewis' thought utilising the primary conceptual frameworks for nationalism analysis. This is done in order to locate Saunders Lewis' nationalism and therefore better understand and explain it. In addition to doing this, Saunders Lewis' nationalism, acting as a theory of nationalism in itself is then utilised in order to analyse and critique the schools of thought within nationalism analysis. In doing so, the result is not only a clearer understanding of the social processes driving Saunders Lewis' nationalism and of the social effect it has, but also a critique of the schools of nationalism analysis that ultimately reaffirms the Ethno-symbolist understanding of nationalism.

'Nations and nationalism' have been a matter of academic inquiry since the latter half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, and interest in the field intensified due to the secession and inauguration of multiple states in the late 1980s and 1990s. Many theories of nationalism are offered, and all of them aid in seeking to understand it. However, due to the protean and fluid nature of nations and nationalism, it is difficult to achieve an overarching or 'Grand Narrative' of nations and nationalism. Such is the variety of shape and form of the phenomenon, that in trying to pin down exact causes and effects, examples may always be found that do not comply with such an overarching explanation/conclusion.

Nonetheless, several prominent schools of thought exist regarding the analysis and explanation of the causes of nations and nationalism. It is therefore appropriate that the (self-proclaimed) nationalist thought of Saunders Lewis be examined with these main paradigms of nationalism employed as analytical tools. Although it is often far too simplistic to compartmentalise and label complex thinkers with such distinct and defined typologies, the intention is that it will aid in the analysis of Saunders Lewis' thought, and thus benefit this study. The main paradigms of nations and nationalism analysis are employed here to facilitate analysis of Saunders Lewis' political thought,



both in order to identify his own thought (his self-understood nationalism), as well as to describe his nationalism from an 'outside' point of analysis, i.e. paradigms that place the nationalism in the context of a super-structure, (where the nationalist is not aware of his/her position in the larger structure or function).

Saunders Lewis' conception of Wales as a 'nation', in a historical and future political sense, occupies a position which straddles the four principal paradigms of academic theory regarding the phenomenon of 'nationalism', these being 'modernism', 'primordialism', 'perennialism', and 'ethno-symbolism'. All give differing accounts of nationalism from an academic perspective. It is difficult to place Saunders Lewis firmly within one school of thought. Rather than falling neatly into one of these four main 'schools of thought' regarding nations and nationalism, his nationalism combines aspects of each 'school' within his narrative on Welsh 'national' history. Obviously, this is not self-acknowledged, but when his work is read closely, it is possible to identify these strands. Without engaging directly in the academic discourse, he nonetheless proffers his own thesis on nations and nationalism, offering opinion as to what a nation is, where and when it comes about, and the related phenomenon of *nationalism*.

Essential for any national project is the appropriation of history with a view to conferring authenticity and dignity upon the nation-to-be. What the various paradigms of nationalism seek to identify and analyse is the idea of the history of the nation, and ultimately ask, 'When is the nation?' The answer offered by each school of thought gives them their title, i.e. the idea that the nation is 'modern', 'perennial', 'primordial' / 'outside time', or a synthesis of the first two whereby the nation is a combination of a pre-modern precursor and its 'modern' definition (ethno-symbolism). Saunders Lewis definitively seeks to appropriate history in order to justify his thought on the Welsh nation and subsequently his own culturally-informed political nationalism. This is evident in his analysis both of Welsh history, as outlined in *Principles of Nationalism*,

and in the theories of Welsh history that he aligned himself with in Wade-Evans' *The Historical Basis of Welsh Nationalism* (1950).<sup>608</sup>

### 10.1. Modernism.

In a broad sense, the modernist (or historicist) paradigm considers nations, and thus nationalism, to be a relatively recent and novel phenomenon. The modernist school links the emergence of nationalism to wider changes in society and politics to a specific period and juncture in time. The most notable of these is the 'Age of Revolutions' in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>609</sup> As the name of the grouping would also suggest, it sees the rise of nations and thus nationalism as being inseparable from the Modern Age, with its associated industrial revolution, technological progress, and mass literacy all placed in contrast with the agricultural-feudal age that preceded it. The modernist school views the history of the West as being marked by certain novel processes and ideas that appeared with the advent of the Modern Age and created the conditions that were favourable for the rise of nationalisms. The modernist school views these conditions as being ideal for enabling elites to construct nations. 'Nations' and thus 'nationalism', according to modernists, did not exist before modernity and are thus by-products of all the associated social and political changes and formations that define modernity. These include the formation of 'nation-states' in Europe post-Treaty of Westphalia, industrial revolutions and subsequent population migrations. The rise of the state is seen as pivotal to the Modern Age and, as a consequence, modernists view state 'elites' as being central in constructing the idea of the nation, hence producing the phenomenon of nationalism. The various processes that brought about the Modern Age can be placed in a chronological framework, to create a convincing account of the genesis of nations and nationalism, first in the West and later spreading to other parts of the world. It is both interesting and highly pertinent therefore, that Saunders Lewis seeks to highlight in *Principles of Nationalism* that the cause of contemporary Welsh national-cultural erosion begins with the Modern Age in England and the rise of the English state.

---

<sup>608</sup> Wade-Evans, A.W. (1950) *The Historical Basis of Welsh Nationalism*. Cardiff. Plaid Cymru.

<sup>609</sup> Included within this 'Age of Revolutions' are the political upheaval occasioned by the French Revolution and the social upheaval occasioned by the Industrial Revolution.

Key texts within the modernist analysis of nationalism are Ernest Gellner's seminal *Nations and Nationalism*<sup>610</sup>, and Benedict Anderson's *Imagined Communities*<sup>611</sup>. Both maintain that nations and nationalism are products of modernity and have been created or 'constructed' to serve political and economic ends. Gellner explores this notion and the way in which elites are integral in propagating this 'construction', whereas Anderson's study focuses on the specific role of an 'imagined community', again propagated by an elite in a form of social constructionism that perpetuates the idea of the nation amongst its constituent members. He sees this as being attributable primarily to the advent of 'press capitalism' where 'national-print languages' arose as the need for a mass literate workforce was engendered by the Industrial Revolution.

Gellner viewed nationalism as being "primarily a political principle that holds that the political and the national unit should be congruent"<sup>612</sup>. According to him, nationalism only appeared in the modern world. It became a sociological necessity as the need arose for impersonal, context-free communication and a high degree of cultural standardisation. Before the advent of modernity, there had been little incentive to impose cultural homogeneity upon populations as agricultural work did not require mass literacy. Crucially however, in modern society, work becomes technical. Individuals and populations must learn and be educated, in order to operate machinery. Growth of economy means that, on a territorial level, competition arises for the overlapping catchment areas. In order to maintain its grip on resources (territorial and human), and its survival and progress, the state and culture must for these reasons be congruent. In addition, elites, through the apparatus of the state, seek to ensure that the political (the state) and the cultural are congruent by propagating and, if necessary, enforcing cultural homogeneity. Nationalism in this sense is therefore a modern necessity, as the national 'cultural' unit must be made to 'fit' the political unit, according to Gellner.

---

<sup>610</sup> Gellner, Ernest. (1983) *Nations and Nationalism*. Oxford. Blackwell.

<sup>611</sup> Anderson, Benedict. (1983) *Imagined Communities: reflections on the origin and spread of nationalism*. London. Verso.

<sup>612</sup> Gellner, Ernest. (1983) *Nations and Nationalism*. Oxford. Blackwell. P.1.

Here, Gellner's reading of nationalism is very much in line with that of Saunders Lewis as propogated in *Principles of Nationalism*. With regard to the specifics of Wales and Welsh national history, Saunders Lewis views the denigration of Welsh culture as having occurred with the rise of state sovereignty at the advent of the Modern Era in the 16<sup>th</sup> century, "the age of Luther in Germany, Machiavelli in Italy and the Tudors in Britain"<sup>613</sup>. Saunders Lewis, much like the modernist thesis, views nationalism to be the cause of this enforced cultural homogeneity within a state's territory, thus "the universal moral law unity (was broken) ... and... another principle came to rule, which was nationalism"<sup>614</sup>. Saunders Lewis places a pejorative normative value on this type of nationalism and views the drive for cultural homogeneity under the English state, which sought to eradicate the Welsh language, as being the idea that, "there had to be uniformity under one head, one law, one language, monotony"<sup>615</sup>. Crucially, with regard to this aspect of nationalism, Saunders Lewis' analysis closely resembles the modernist thesis that before the advent of modernity there had been little incentive to impose cultural homogeneity upon populations as agricultural work did not require mass literacy. Wales was conquered several centuries earlier (in 1282)<sup>616</sup> and, for Saunders Lewis, remained culturally 'free' until the 16<sup>th</sup> century. What differs between Saunders Lewis' and the modernist premise is the actual timing of modernity. Saunders Lewis identifies it with the period when the political principle of state sovereignty arose in Europe, which he defines as having sought to break with the 'universalism' of the Medieval Church, i.e. in the 16<sup>th</sup> century. In contrast, the modernist school, with its emphasis on functionalism, views modernisation as occurring much later, at the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century / beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

However, Saunders Lewis' analysis and the modernist thesis do still share common ground, but differ on which aspect of modernity to focus. Both acknowledge that it is industrialisation driving the need to enforce cultural homogeneity upon populations,

---

<sup>613</sup> Saunders Lewis, John. (1926) *Principles of Nationalism*. Machynlleth. Evan Jones. P.3.

<sup>614</sup> Ibid. P.2.

<sup>615</sup> Ibid. P.3.

<sup>616</sup> It is generally accepted that Wales was conquered by England in 1282 with the death of Llywelyn 'The Last' at the hands of Edward I's forces. See Davies, John. (1990) *A History of Wales*. London. Allen Lane. Penguin Press. P.160

and posit this as nationalism, whilst at the same time acknowledging that this was not the case previously in agricultural-feudal society. Saunders Lewis acknowledges that post-16<sup>th</sup> century, under agricultural forms of production, the vast majority of Welsh people spoke Welsh, and that it was not until the advent of industrialisation that people began to become English-speaking due to economic factors, combined with the political factor of Wales being part of, and under, the English state. For Saunders Lewis, the root cause of this is the modern process of sovereignty, rather than the industrialisation process itself (although he is less than enthusiastic about it). Thus, with the need for the (English) state and the cultural unit to be congruent, the state propagated and enforced cultural homogeneity when needed, in order that the 'political and national unit should be congruent', i.e. the English state, and the English language. Saunders Lewis, rather than focusing on the functional aspect of industrialisation, sought to focus on the aspect of cultural diversity before the advent of state sovereignty in the Modern Era and thus defined his 'new' nationalism as seeking, "...to return to the principle of the Middle Ages. To renounce political uniformity, and... to argue instead for the principle of unity and diversity".<sup>617</sup> The local aspect of political power (subsidiarity) in the Middle Ages, characteristic of agricultural society, was recognised and admired by Saunders Lewis and which he sought to recreate in his political vision, is in marked contrast to the 'mass society' characteristic of modernity.<sup>618</sup>

Benedict Anderson seeks to elaborate upon Gellner's modernist analysis of nations and nationalism and defines a nation (and, as a consequence, nationalism) as "...an imagined political community that is imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign".<sup>619</sup> An imagined community differs from an actual community in that it is not, and *cannot* be, based on face-to-face interaction and contact between its constituent members.<sup>620</sup> Rather, the constituent members of the 'nation', hold in their minds a mental image of their affinity. This mental image defines the individual's identity and

---

<sup>617</sup> Saunders Lewis, John. (1926) *Principles of Nationalism*. Machynlleth. Evan Jones Printers. P.3.

<sup>618</sup> Saunders Lewis' preference for local culture and community is also the premise and tenet upon which his distributist principles and ideas form much of his social and political thought.

<sup>619</sup> Anderson, Benedict. (1983). *Imagined Communities: reflections on the origin and spread of nationalism*. London. Verso. P.6.

<sup>620</sup> It is important to state here that Anderson maintains that whilst nations are imagined communities, they are certainly not imaginary communities.

self-conception, as well as defining their communal identity, by highlighting common bonds. Anderson maintains that a nation is comprised of an imagined community “...because the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion”.<sup>621</sup>

Anderson states that the creation of imagined communities became possible because of what he terms “print-capitalism”.<sup>622</sup> Capitalist entrepreneurs printed their books and media in the vernacular, instead of exclusive script languages, such as Latin, in order to maximise circulation. A result of this was that a ‘national print-language’ was created as readers speaking various local dialects needed to be able to understand each other, and have a common discourse. This was also a means to an end: that of economic advance. Thus, elites ensured that populations were homogenised culturally under the ‘national print-language’. For Anderson, the first European nation-states were formed around their national print-languages, and this is why nations have “finite, if elastic boundaries, beyond which lie other nations”.<sup>623</sup>

Anderson sought to explain why nations aspire to have their own states, thus ensuring that ‘the political and the cultural are congruent’, by stating that,

“The nation is imagined as sovereign because the concept was born in an age in which Enlightenment and Revolution were destroying the legitimacy of the divinely-ordained, hierarchical dynastic realm. Coming to maturity at a stage of human history when even the most devout adherents of any universal religion were inescapably confronted with the living pluralism of such religions, and the (direct relationship) between each faith's ontological claims and territorial stretch, nations dream of being free, and, if under God, directly so. The gage and emblem of this freedom is the sovereign state.”<sup>624</sup>

---

<sup>621</sup> Anderson, Benedict. (1983) *Imagined Communities: reflections on the origin and spread of nationalism*. London. Verso. P.6.

<sup>622</sup> Ibid. P.44.

<sup>623</sup> Ibid. P.44.

<sup>624</sup> Ibid. P.6-7.

According to Anderson, a nation is imagined as a community, because regardless of the actual exploitation and inequality that may exist within it, the nation is always conceived as a deep, all-encompassing comradeship. Ultimately, it is this fraternity that makes it possible for people to willingly die for such an imagining, as well as to kill for the same principle.

Anderson views the main causes of the nationalism that derives from the existence of an imagined community as being synonymous with mass vernacular literacy, the movement to abolish the ideas of rule by divine right and hereditary monarchy, and the emergence of printing-press capitalism. For him, the starting point for all these social phenomena occurs at one juncture: the Industrial Revolution.

Anderson's modernist theory of the imagined community is highly intriguing when compared with Saunders Lewis' own account of the Welsh nation and the 'English state'. For Saunders Lewis, the nation is not something imagined, rather it is a concrete reality due to one fact: language. Those who speak and share a common language constitute a nation, according to him. Saunders Lewis views the 'nation' as something conceived, and existing, prior to the industrialisation process, whereas the modernist school sees nations as arising out of the processes associated with the Modern Era. With regard to the point made by Anderson on the imagined community being synonymous with mass vernacular literacy (in turn linked to the industrialisation process), Saunders Lewis would point to the fact that mass vernacular literacy came about in Wales with the introduction of the Bible in Welsh in 1588, thus pre-dating industrialisation and the drive for mass vernacular literacy in the (English) state's national culture. This goes some way to explain Saunders Lewis' Christian nationalism.<sup>625</sup> However, it would appear that Saunders Lewis would concede that the industrialisation process effected the need for cultural homogeneity (although enabled

---

<sup>625</sup> The introduction of the Bible in Welsh is often viewed as being one of the most momentous events in the history of the Welsh language, as it provided a unified codification of the language, and thus enabled religion to be practised in the vernacular. Its presence occasioned the prevalence of Non-conformism in Wales, where the Anglican Church (the state church), with its liturgy in the medium of English, found little sway amongst the Welsh population. The historical presence of the Welsh-language Bible is therefore accredited with being one of the primary reasons why the Welsh language did not suffer a decline in the number of speakers with such rapidity as had Irish Gaelic and Cornish. See Davies, John. (1990) *A History of Wales*. London. Allen Lane. Penguin Press. P.245.

by state sovereignty) as it was the Welsh speakers of the industrial areas of Wales that were losing the Welsh language, rather than those of the rural areas. This is evident in Saunders Lewis' admiration of, and bias towards, the rural agricultural section of the Welsh population as it was Welsh-speaking and embodied the *Gemeinschaft* ideal. 'Printing-press capitalism', symptomatic of large unfettered capitalism, was to blame for the increasing Anglicisation of industrial South Wales, in the mind of Saunders Lewis.

In contrast to modernism, Saunders Lewis defines the nation (as a cultural community) as pre-dating the advent of modernity. The outcome of this different perception of what constitutes that nation is that Anderson views the nation as a community imagining itself as sovereign, and thus seeking its freedom in the 'gage and emblem' of the sovereign state. In this respect, it is the antithesis of how Saunders Lewis analyses the situation, and how he then seeks to argue for, and set out, the political goals of his own nationalism. For him, nations are prior to states, and it is the culturally homogenising aspect of states that needed to be avoided. To avoid this, his nationalism seeks the principle of governance applied in the Middle Ages, i.e. subsidiarity, before the advent of the Modern Age, so that each cultural community may be 'free'. Thus for Saunders Lewis, the 'gage and emblem' of freedom is culture, and not the sovereign state. He eventually ends up advocating 'self-government' despite its vague connotations.<sup>626</sup>

The above distinction is set out by Saunders Lewis in *Principles of Nationalism*. This argument provides further intrigue and ambiguity when his attitude to the English language in Wales, and his vision of making the Welsh language the *One Language for Wales*, is considered. Conventional wisdom would suggest that sovereign statehood is instrumental in ensuring a wholly Welsh-speaking Wales. The fact that the apparatus of the state would then be used to make Wales monolingual does not sit easily with Saunders Lewis' earlier subscription to the principle of unity in cultural diversity.<sup>627</sup>

---

<sup>626</sup> In real terms 'self-government' meant Dominion Status for Wales, yet whether this was a realpolitik compromise, rather than the true representation of high ideals, is debatable. In this study, see the chapter entitled 'A Neo-medieval Europe'.

<sup>627</sup> It is clear that Saunders Lewis' conception of cultural diversity is a 'patchwork-quilt' conception rather than a contemporary definition of a multicultural / multilingual society.



Although he may wish to justify it as some ‘post-colonial justice’ of sorts, it nonetheless remains that a state would be needed as a means to secure the end (i.e. cultural continuity). The reality is that, in a global system of states, a community needs its own state to effect its own future and cultural continuity. This is what the modernists posit, and this was also a criticism of Saunders Lewis by assorted Welsh republicans, in that to argue for self-government, or ‘Dominion Status’ is simply not enough. It is in fact statehood that should be argued for. It is not until recently that Saunders Lewis’ political vision gained plausibility with the advent of supranational government in Europe, multi-level plural governance, and the federative principle of subsidiarity that appears to be eclipsing the format of ‘nation-state’. Of course, in the 1920s, this was viewed as fantasy.

The defining difference between the modernist school and Saunders Lewis’ nationalism is in the definition of ‘the nation’. The modernist school identifies the nation, almost synonymously, with the state. For Saunders Lewis the nation is a cultural community, quite distinct from the state. Modernism’s definition of nationalism is that of a state nationalism, whilst Saunders Lewis’ nationalism is that of a cultural nationalism. Whilst state nationalism is recognised as being a nationalism by Saunders Lewis, it is dismissed as being normatively undesirable, ‘bad’ material nationalism, which the English state perpetrates, as he defines it in *Principles of Nationalism*. Bearing in mind this distinction between state nationalism and cultural nationalism, it is useful to consider Chaim Gans’ distinction of the two, “... within statist nationalism, the national culture is the means, and the values of the state are the aims. Within cultural nationalism, however, the national culture is the aim and the state the means.”<sup>628</sup> Despite Saunders Lewis not explicitly seeking statehood as a means to secure the national culture, he does seek the apparatus of the state, education system, etc. in order to affect the national culture.

Whilst Saunders Lewis would ultimately not define himself as a modernist under the terms set out by this school of thought, it is certain that the modernist school of thought would seek to define his nationalism as modernist. Under the modernist analysis,

---

<sup>628</sup> Gans, Chaim. (2003) *The Limits of Nationalism*. Cambridge. Cambridge University Press. P.7.

Saunders Lewis' culturally-informed political nationalism can be viewed as itself a response to the industrialisation process, and as the logical outcome of the threat posed by enforced cultural homogeneity under the English state's attempt to ensure that the political unit be congruent with the cultural (English-language culture) unit. Thus, Saunders Lewis' nationalism is something recent and novel, specific to its time, and defined by the industrialisation process. Even though his nationalism may wish to avoid 'sovereignty', he will ultimately require it in order to achieve the aim of cultural continuity so that the Welsh state can then ensure that its 'cultural unit' is congruent with its 'political unit'.

### **10.2. Primordialism.**

Primordialism views nations and nationality as constituting basic forms of human association. Not only this, but it views nations and nationality to be intrinsic features of human nature and the human condition. Within the primordial definition, nations cannot be regarded as either ancient or modern, for they are regarded as operating outside historical time, and as being an essence of humanity itself. Primordialists generally regard nations as natural, and possessed of essences and organic qualities. Primordialism takes several forms. The term primordial is often employed by contemporary analysts and theorists in a pejorative sense to describe nationalism that carries negative connotations of biologically preordained superiority and that see the nation as being comprised solely of this biological composite 'outside time'. Of course, this is not to say that all primordialist theories contain this element.

Early beliefs in the primordial nature of nations and nationality centred on their god-given status and role in the 'Divine Plan'. Thus the presence of nations, and the placing of people into distinct cultural and linguistic groups was 'God's will'. An example of this thought was that of Herder, for whom nations were natural in the sense that they constituted an essential part of 'God's plan' for humanity. (However, Herder was careful to refrain from applying any sort of hierarchy of status to these groupings, as outlined in his *Humanität* theory).<sup>629</sup> In the later secular version of this belief, nations

---

<sup>629</sup> See section on Herder in

came to be regarded by some nationalists as directly comparable to organisms present in the natural world. As a consequence, the same laws of growth and decay and rebirth were thus applicable. This was complemented and informed by thought of a society, and thus a nation, to be organic. This kind of organic nationalism, in which individuals bore the indelible stamp of their birth community throughout life arose in the late 18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>630</sup> Later, more modern forms of nationalism still embraced this idea of the nation, as demonstrated by the liberal-democratic nationalism of Mazzini and similar such radicals, who viewed nations as the products of human endeavour as well as being their sources and vehicles.<sup>631</sup>

With the above aspect of primordialism in mind, it is fitting to consider Saunders Lewis' approach to thought on nationhood. His Christianity undoubtedly informed his belief that cultural and linguistic groups, which he defined as a nation, were in a sense 'God's will'. Of course, when transcribed into secular terms regarding 'the nation', Saunders Lewis' thought reveals admiration and preference for the 'organic society'. This is evident in his social thought vis-à-vis rurality, and its tendency to sustain cultural life, as well as being set out in his statement of political intent in *Ten Points of Policy* with its obvious use of the *Gemeinschaft* vision and terminology as a political and social ideal.

Various forms of Darwinian 'socio-biology' theory seek to explain 'the nation and nationalism' in primordial fashion. They employ Darwinian biological terminology in

---

Haddock, Bruce. (2005) *History of Political Thought: 1789 To The Present*. Cambridge. Polity Press. P.64-79.

Clark, Robert T. Jr. (1955) *Herder: His life and thought*. Berkeley. University of California Press.

<sup>630</sup> An example of such a conception is Johann Gottlieb Fichte in his *Addresses to the German Nation* (1806)

"The first, original, and truly natural boundaries of states are beyond doubt their internal boundaries. Those who speak the same language are joined to each other by a multitude of invisible bonds by nature herself, long before any human art begins, they understand each other and have the power of continuing to make themselves understood more and more clearly; they belong together and are by nature one and an inseparable whole."

Fichte, Johann Gottlieb. (Ed. Kelly, George A.) (1968) *Thirteenth Address, Addresses to the German Nation*. New York. Harper Torch Books. P.190-91.

<sup>631</sup> See section on Mazzini in

Haddock, Bruce. (2005) *History of Political Thought: 1789 To The Present*. Cambridge. Polity Press. P.64-79.

the social sphere, describing the nation as an 'inclusive fitness group'. Within these, myths of descent are vital for ethnic and nationalist claims and beliefs, hence the potent belief present in such nationalisms that 'we are all of one blood' and such 'blood and soil' ideologies. Such theories lack credibility as they are contradicted by historical research on the origins and ethnic composition of nations. A further criticism of such theories is that they firmly equate the ethnic with the nation, rather than seeing the ethnic as a grouping from which the nation developed as a consequence of history and social process. Under these theories, frameworks of sequential events become irrelevant as nations and nationalism do not become questions for history to pose or politics to analyse: they are a matter of biology and 'nature'.

Whilst use of Darwinian terminology had become widespread in the interwar period in describing racial and biological characteristics in order to discern and place in hierarchical order various groups, this is not encountered in the social and political thought of Saunders Lewis. It was, of course, common for Nazi ideologists to employ a Darwinian vocabulary in seeking to define such characteristics alongside the racial myth of common descent (the 'Aryan Myth'). These were combined with a virulent and extreme militaristic nationalism and developed into 'blood and soil' ideologies.<sup>632</sup>

Saunders Lewis, however, did not employ any 'Celtic Myth' of common descent, nor did he employ any racial or biological definition of the nation with a view to espousing a virulent and vitriolic nationalism. His definition of the nation was cultural, and as such it was open for individuals from other linguistic-cultural groups to assimilate into the Welsh nation.<sup>633</sup> Whilst Saunders Lewis does conceive of the origins of modern

---

<sup>632</sup> An example of a blending of such Aryan myths of descent into a 'blood and soil' ideology is that of the Nazi ideologist Alfred Rosenberg's *The Myth of the Twentieth Century (Der Mythos der 20. Jahrhunderts)*. (1936).

Rosenberg, Alfred. (1936) *Der Mythos der 20. Jahrhunderts*. München. Hoheneichen-Verlag.

Rosenberg himself was influenced by Houston Stewart Chamberlain's *The Foundations of the Nineteenth Century*, to which he intended his above title to be a sequel.

Chamberlain, Houston Stewart. (1913) *The Foundations of the Nineteenth Century*. London. Bodley Head.

<sup>633</sup> "We have to turn the foreigners ... into Welshmen, and give to them the Welsh mindset, the Welsh culture, and the Welsh language."

Saunders Lewis, John. (1926) *Principles of Nationalism*. Machynlleth. Evan Jones Printers. P.6

Wales in historical terms as a cultural group with a tradition<sup>634</sup>, this is not linked to any racial grouping. Indeed, myths of a shared common past and ‘national (his)story’ are typical and an intrinsic element of even the most benign nationalisms. This had led analysts and commentators on nationalism to describe its often ‘banal’ presence in political discourse and everyday activities within polities.<sup>635</sup>

Other forms of primordialism view cultural attachments as being prior to, and overriding, other civil and political ties. Attempts to build a polity and society based on rational, civil ties are threatened by primordial attachments such as custom, religion and language, according to some critics. The defining of primordial attachment as a stumbling bloc to ‘progressive’ or ‘enlightened’ nationalism, whereby nationalism and nation-building are an attempt to create a rational civil order and state, was established by academics such as Clifford Geertz. Within this analysis, primordialism is seen as pejorative, nations are relatively novel and constructed, and are threatened by primordial attachment.<sup>636</sup> Proponents of the above claim that such ties ‘mystify’ the social order, and give priority to ‘emotion’ over the rational calculation of means and ends. Critics of labelling of such ‘primordial’ attachments in pejorative terms (such as Steven Grosby: see footnote) seek to highlight how such kinship or collective ties in effect underpin societies, indeed constitute identity among participants, and are prior and ‘basic’ in a way that the state can never be.<sup>637</sup>

This view of primordial cultural attachments being a barrier and distraction from the ‘rational’ and ‘civil’ ties of nation-building nationalism does receive consideration from Saunders Lewis. Rather than viewing cultural attachments as a barrier to the ‘rational’

---

<sup>634</sup> Saunders Lewis traces the origins of Wales as being a “country that was at one stage part of the Roman Empire, and inherited the civilisation of Latin Europe, and after the fall of Rome set upon building its life on the foundation of that tradition”.

Saunders Lewis, John. *Lloegr ac Ewrop a Chymru (England and Europe and Wales)* In (1938) *Canlyn Arthur (In the Footsteps of Arthur)*. Aberystwyth. Gwasg Aberystwyth. P.27

<sup>635</sup> See

Billig, Michael. (1995) *Banal Nationalism*. London. Thousand Oaks.

<sup>636</sup> Geertz, Clifford. (1963) *The Integrative Revolution in Old Societies and New States*. New York. Free Press.

<sup>637</sup> Grosby, Steven. *Territoriality: the transcendental, primordial feature of modern societies*. Nations and Nationalism 1 (2). P.143-162

and 'civil' ties of nation-building nationalism, he views them as being integral to their project. 'Rational' and 'civil' ties would be devoid of all perceived meaning and use if they did not interact with cultural attachment. For Saunders Lewis this meant that Welsh government, i.e. a Welsh democracy (rational - civil) should be through its language (cultural attachment). Thus Saunders Lewis' approach to this matter is more in line with that of Grosby: collective ties, i.e. language, are the linchpin of Welsh society, and constitute its identity and history. This bond exists 'outside the state' in effect, as it exists with or without state presence (although of course, Saunders Lewis recognises the effect the state can have upon it through its 'sovereign' political power). This issue also highlights the tendency in positions such as Geertz's that the assumed cultural attachment underpinning the 'rational and civil' ties is often viewed as being 'neutral' or banal to the point of not knowingly being present, (i.e. the English language in the English state)

### **10.3 Perennialism.**

In contrast to the modernist school, the perennialist paradigm maintains that nations are continuous, recurrent, or both. This is evident, so its proponents aim to demonstrate, throughout recorded history. They seek to link the emergence of nations, if not nationalism, to more general processes of human activity and politics. Therefore, in contrast to the modernist school, which says that nations and nationalism occur specifically in modernity, perennialists argue that nations and nationalism can already be identified in even the earliest civilisations. The chronological framework envisaged in perennialism is therefore wider in scope than modernism, as it encompasses the ancient and medieval epochs of history. It links the appearance of nations to cultural community and state formation in all continents and in all historical periods. Nations are viewed as age-old communities, which generate their specific national sentiments and nationalist ideologies, and not as 'constructs' of modern nationalists, or 'elites'. Obviously, there is much that distinguishes the paradigms of modernism and perennialism. However, they both place nations and nationalism in wider frameworks of social change and historical periods, and tie them to particular sequences of events.

Perennialism differs from modernism, but finds the primordialist account to be lacking as it tends to ignore the superstructure of history in the making of nations and nationalism. For perennialists, collective ties and essential characteristics are not constitutive of the nation. Nations are instead 'fluid', in contrast to the 'fixed' nature of a nation in primordialist theory. Nations have the ability to form, change their character, as well as dissolve or be absorbed into other human communities, as with other forms of identity and community. Under the perennialist analysis, nations are not tied to a certain period of history and can therefore appear wherever the conditions are fit for them, and nations can and do appear in every historical period and geographic location. The concept and idea of the nation is thus perennial. Ancient civilisations, and pre-modern societies or communities also constitute nations under perennialist analysis.

Saunders Lewis' nationalism, as well as his analysis of the historical development of nations, finds some common ground with the perennialist position. His position is sophisticated, unlike the primordialist stance, as it is concerned with the superstructure of history. This is evident in his highlighting of the rise of state sovereignty in Europe as creating state 'materialist' nationalism. He also shares ground with perennialism in the sense that he views the nation as not being tied to a certain period of history. However, he does see the Welsh nation as a cultural community with its foundations (its cultural traditions) laid at the fall of the Roman Empire in the British Isles (a specific time of 'beginning'). The contemporary Welsh nation is thus seen as an 'unbroken' pre-modern cultural inheritance from that period. Unlike the Romantic primordialist 'mystical' myths of common origin, such as an Aryan or Celtic myth, whereby a people or nation are conceived of outside of time and history, there is a 'fixed' timeline to his conception of the Welsh nation. Rather it is defined as a cultural community with certain traditions prevalent within that culture, i.e. that of 'Latin Europe'.

Saunders Lewis definitely differs from the perennialist position in relation to the nation's fluidity. Whilst Saunders Lewis accepts that it can occur, he does not view the 'dissolving' or 'absorbing' of nations into others as a 'natural' or desirable occurrence

when it happens through force. A 'dissolving' or 'absorption' of a nation is equated with the 'death' of a culture, hence his preoccupation with the possible death of the Welsh language and the need to have it 'institutionalised' as the medium of government in Wales. The perennialist 'neutral' counterpoint to Saunders Lewis' position here is, of course, that the Welsh nation itself was formed out of the 'fusion' and 'absorbing' of a Celtic Briton community with the remains of the Roman imperial presence in the British Isles, whereupon the Welsh nation 'began'.

As with the other analytical paradigms, there are a variety of forms of perennialism. John Armstrong<sup>638</sup> defines the idea of the nation as a recurrent form of community, with particular nations emerging and disappearing in all periods of history. He maintains that whilst modern nations can be, and often are, inspired by nationalism, which acts as a blueprint for nation-building, there is in fact no fundamental difference between modern and pre-modern nations, hence a recurrent perennialism. Armstrong highlights how all nations share the properties of collective ties; shared sentiment, attitudes, values, and perceptions, as well as the myths and symbols that define them as an entity within a demarcated territory.<sup>639</sup>

Other perennialist approaches state that cultures distinguish human groupings from each other. These cultures are defined by myths, memories, values and traditions that can persist over multiple generations, only gradually changing form and content in a 'continuous perennialism'.<sup>640</sup> Hugh Seton-Watson emphasises the continuity of modern nations with their medieval origins.<sup>641</sup> As a consequence of this, medieval historians have sought to demonstrate the existence of some nations in the medieval

---

<sup>638</sup> Armstrong, John. (1982) *Nations before Nationalism*. Chapel Hill. University of North Carolina Press.

<sup>639</sup> Armstrong gives attention to the emergence and dissolution of ethnic communities into religious or class allegiances and communities in pre-modern historical periods in Europe and the Middle East. He also seeks to demonstrate how at least some of these communities persisted into Modernity and emerged as fully-fledged modern nations and subsequent states.

<sup>640</sup> 'Continuous Perennialism' is Anthony Smith's term. See

Smith, Anthony. (2000) *The Nation in History: Historiographical Debates about Ethnicity and Nationalism*. Hanover. University Press of New England. P.35.

<sup>641</sup> Seton-Watson, Hugh. (1977) *Nations and States*. London. Methuen.



historical period, an assertion that puts them in conflict with the modernist analysis.<sup>642</sup> This analysis sees national continuity as being provided by cultural factors such as religion, language, myth, literature, and historical memory, as opposed to political, social or economic factors. Modernists identify the subsequent massive changes to society as flowing from the Industrial Revolution and the advent of the modern state. They define the 'discontinuity' between the medieval and modern historical periods and highlight the novelty of the 'imagined community' and its territorial state. In contrast, 'continuous perennialists' point to the continuities in the realm of culture and religion despite these changes.<sup>643</sup> Despite increasing secularisation, religion remained a decisive influence long after the inception of the modern state. 'Continuous perennialists' point out that vernaculars have evolved from their medieval usage, and that symbols, values and traditions have persisted and adapted to different conditions.

Saunders Lewis undoubtedly shares theoretical space with continuous perennialism, as he conceives of the Welsh nation not in political or economic terms, but in terms of language, literature and historical memory. The processes of modernity impact upon his concept of nation in terms of statehood and its homogenising ability, but how he conceives of the nation itself remains 'continuous'. For Saunders Lewis, therefore, the nation in its pre-modern conception runs continuously into modernity. Accordingly, the Welsh nation is deemed to have remained continuous in the realm of religion (in its Christianity<sup>644</sup>) and culture (the Welsh language) despite the inception of the 'English state' under which it was politically governed.

Hastings' position that asserts the European and Christian origin of nations is of theoretical importance when considering the nationalism of Saunders Lewis. For

---

<sup>642</sup> Reynolds, Susan. (1984) *Kingdoms and Communities in Western Europe, 900 – 1300*. Oxford. Clarendon Press.

<sup>643</sup> Hastings, Adrian. (1997) *The Construction of Nationhood: Ethnicity, Religion and Nationalism*. Cambridge. Cambridge University Press.

<sup>644</sup> Saunders Lewis, conceived of Wales as a European nation under the notion of a Medieval Catholic Europe where there was '(political) unity in (linguistic-cultural) diversity'. Wales continued in its Christianity, but not in its Catholicism; however Non-conformism was hugely popular in Wales precisely because it was operated through the medium of Welsh rather than the state church which conducted services in the English language. Non-conformism came to be viewed as inherently 'Welsh' and thus contributed to, and constituted part of, the Welsh national identity in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries.

Hastings, the key transition to nationhood occurs after the introduction of a version of the vernacular available for all to read.<sup>645</sup> According to his thesis, nations only emerge when their vernaculars have been secured by emerging as a written language, which fixes a population of readers who then become the emergent nation. For Hastings, the core text in these vernaculars was the Bible in Europe, and the translations into the vernaculars were sanctioned by Christianity. According to Hastings, the Old Testament held aloft the model of Israel as a national polity, that fused 'the people', language, land and kingdom, something which the New Testament failed to do.<sup>646</sup> (Hastings also points out that other religions failed to sanction translations into the vernacular and thus nations and nationalism are of an exclusively European origin, imported much later elsewhere.) Interestingly for the case of Wales and Saunders Lewis, Hastings views it as being only in England and her neighbours, Scotland, Wales and Ireland (and later in France, Spain and Sweden), that the national form became continuous and analogous with the idea of the modern nation. Under this analysis, it is highly applicable that the Bible was translated into the Welsh language and thus 'sanctioned' it and crucially, underpinned its survival as a language into the modern era. However, it appears that Saunders Lewis would agree with Hastings' assertion that the Old Testament model of Israel inspired the idea of 'sovereignty' in England and led to the English state.<sup>647</sup> Saunders Lewis' own thought disagreed with 'sovereignty' fundamentally and

---

<sup>645</sup> "For the development of nationhood from one or more ethnicities, by far the most important and widely present factor is that of an extensively used vernacular literature."

Hastings, Adrian. (1997) *The Construction of Nationhood: Ethnicity, Religion and Nationalism*. Cambridge. Cambridge University Press. P.2-3.

<sup>646</sup> "The Bible provided, for the Christian world at least, the original model of the nation. Without it and its Christian interpretation and implementation, it is arguable that nations and nationalism, as we know them, could never have existed. Moreover, religion has produced the dominant character of some state-shaped nations and of some nationalisms. Biblical Christianity both undergirds (sic) the cultural and political world out of which the phenomena of nationhood and nationalism as a whole developed and in a number of important cases provided the crucial ingredient for the particular history of both nations and nationalisms."

Hastings, Adrian. (1997) *The Construction of Nationhood: Ethnicity, Religion and Nationalism*. Cambridge. Cambridge University Press. P.4.

<sup>647</sup> "England presents the prototype of both a nation and a nation-state in the fullest sense, that its national development, while not wholly comparable with that of other Atlantic coastal societies - and does precede every other, both in the date at which it can fairly be detected and in the roundness that it achieved centuries before the eighteenth."

Hastings, Adrian. (1997) *The Construction of Nationhood: Ethnicity, Religion and Nationalism*. Cambridge. Cambridge University Press. P.4.

preferred the New Testament Catholic conception of 'subsidiarity' with regard to political authority.

According to Hastings, it was first England, as a medieval nation, that developed nationalism and turned into a modern nation. In contrast to the modernists, for whom nationalism precedes the nation, Hastings argues that it is a defensive response of threatened nations, and in any case, a theory or ideology of nationalism is secondary. What matters is the national sentiment (which he calls 'nationalism') of the nation under threat, a sentiment that is found frequently in medieval sources.<sup>648</sup> Hastings' analysis questions how far back the model of the nation can be traced, or whether it is only possible to speak of 'cultural communities' in historical periods pre-dating the modern age. Indeed the question that does arise is that of where the nation ends and the state begins, and what therefore is to be made of, and how to classify, stateless nations and their nationalisms. Interestingly, Hastings' analysis sits well with Saunders Lewis' analysis of national history and the commencement of modernity. Saunders Lewis indeed defines English nationalism (16<sup>th</sup> century state nationalism) as the beginning of modernity (defined as states imposing cultural homogeneity). In historical terms, Wales is the first nation to suffer at the hands of nationalism. Nations clearly precede nationalism in Saunders Lewis' mind, yet it is English state nationalism that generates the 'British' nation from the 16<sup>th</sup> century onwards.

Saunders Lewis' assertion of the nation as a cultural community emanating in continuous fashion out of the early medieval period is inherent in his definition of the Welsh language and nation existing in an unbroken line since the fall of the Roman Empire. Saunders Lewis sees the Welsh nation as being traceable to when the Cambro-Britons absorbed, and kept as their own, the traditions and values of *Romanitas*, including Christianity, before the arrival of the Anglo-Saxons. This is evident also in his definition of Wales as the cultural 'heir' in the British Isles of 'Latin Europe'. This is a result of his agreement with Wade-Evans' historical analysis of the roots and

---

<sup>648</sup> Ibid. P.4.

beginnings of the Welsh nation in *The Historical Basis of Welsh Nationalism*<sup>649</sup>, as well as a more religious understanding of Welsh national history. As stated earlier this is not a 'mystical' Romantic assertion of some Aryan or Celtic myth of origin, rather a seeking to confer historical legitimacy upon the idea of a 'Welsh nation' in order to secure authenticity, and is a feature of even the most benign nationalisms. The obvious problem that is encountered with this assertion of Welsh national history is that it places the roots of the Welsh nation in a period of immense academic and historical disagreement and, to some extent, confusion: the so-called 'Dark Ages'. The Dark Ages is itself an ambiguous term, but generally refers to that period of European history running from the fall of the Roman Empire to the beginnings of the Carolingian Empire in around 800 A.D., although it can be expanded to include the very early Middle Ages. What marks the Dark Ages is the lack of written history or documentation of what was occurring at the time.

Nationalist myths that place the origins of their nations in the Dark Ages have been the object of critique by modernist analysts of nationalism. Patrick Geary seeks to demonstrate how such origin myths created the intellectually devoid virulence of ethnic nationalism which served as the basis for the multiple horrors of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>650</sup> Geary deconstructs shadowy Celtic or Germanic tribal myths, and sees them as being primarily to blame for the outcomes of 20<sup>th</sup> century Nazism and Fascism and the subsequent genocide. There is no 'racial' or biological myth of origin in the defining of Welsh nationhood in Saunders Lewis' thought. There is no mysticism or irrationalism in Saunders Lewis' own tracing of the lineal history of the Welsh nation. 'Shadowy' myths of origin that seek to exclude the Other, or fuel vitriol or claims to superiority, should indeed be debunked. It is clear that such 'debunking' does not apply to Saunders Lewis and that critics who seek to do so ignore how even benign nationalisms embrace a national history in order to confer authenticity and purpose.

---

<sup>649</sup> Wade-Evans, A.W. (1950) *The Historical Basis of Welsh Nationalism*. Cardiff. Plaid Cymru.

<sup>650</sup> Geary, Patrick. (2002) *The Myths of Nations: The Medieval Origins of Nations*. Princeton, New Jersey. Princeton University Press.

There is no doubt that a fanatical minority of virulent nationalists embraced the origin myths, which Geary seeks to whole-heartedly debunk, and combined them with 'blood and land' ideologies. However, for most people these 'myths of origin' were secondary, if not highly peripheral. Historically, belief in Celtic or Germanic tribal myths, was not, and is not, a prerequisite for a sense of national identity and antiquity. The immense flux of groups and peoples after the decline of the Roman Empire is not a period in which many people would confidently locate their national origins, even though Saunders Lewis seeks to do this with a history of the Welsh nation. Critiques of Dark Age national origin myths by modernists serve to highlight the insecure foundation upon which such nationalisms base their ideologies, but in fact miss the point as to how nations evolve and form through history. Nonetheless, it would appear that Geary's ultimate conclusions, that nations evolve and form on cultural identities due to military and political factors, are consistent with the historical thesis put forward by Wade-Evans in *The Historical Basis of Welsh Nationalism*<sup>651</sup>, with which Saunders Lewis aligned himself.

#### **10.4. A Critique of the Modernist Paradigm.**

It is the assertion that both nations and nationalism are the product of modernisation and the conditions of modernity that underpin the modernist analysis. It places nations, like nationalism, specifically in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries (emanating in the aftermath of the French and American Revolutions). It asserts that they are particular to the unique condition of modern industrial society with its associated concepts and ideals of mobility, equality, secularism and individualism. Essential to this sharp distinction between modern and pre-modern societies is that of the division between the *Gemeinschaft* and *Gesellschaft* types of society, and that there is an inevitable progression from the former to the latter. Indeed, the modernist analysis of Saunders Lewis' nationalism would maintain that it itself was a reaction to modernity with its extolling of the value of *Gemeinschaft* (and seeking to recreate it).

---

<sup>651</sup> Wade-Evans, A.W. (1950) *The Historical Basis of Welsh Nationalism*. Cardiff. Plaid Cymru.

Potent and valid points of critique regarding the modernist analysis are that it foreshortens the history of a nation by placing it solely in the modern era, overemphasises the role of elite action and manipulation, and consequently ignores enduring popular sources of national identity. The modernist analysis therefore cannot sufficiently explain the appeal of nationalism in terms of its ability to arouse great passion and sacrifice and its role in the self-identity of individuals and collective group identities.<sup>652</sup> In contrast to the modernist analysis, Saunders Lewis emphasises the medieval history of the nation, long before the Modern Era, and this ultimately derives from his differing conception of the nation. His concept of the nation is of a cultural community, whereas ultimately the modernists' conception is of a state or statehood. For Saunders Lewis, there is no seeking to explain elite action in determining the nation, although he does implicitly acknowledge that an elite, when combined with the political power of sovereignty, can enforce a state nationalism drive for cultural homogeneity (implicit in his critique of English state efforts for cultural homogeneity). Where the modernist position falters, Saunders Lewis' nationalism aids comprehension. His thought explains nationalism's appeal and ability to arouse passion and sacrifice, its essential role in the composition of the self-identity of individuals and collective group identities, as well as the enduring nature of popular sources of national identity.

Anthony Smith articulates the critique of the modernist paradigm by criticising it for conceiving of the nation as essentially political as well as 'modern'. In essence, modernism confuses nation with political nationhood or statehood and thus falls into the trap of using modern markers to define a nation. He states that the nation, under the modernist analysis, is a form of human association that is:-

1. "Territorial - it has a definite territory of its own with a centre of authority and fixed borders.
2. Legal-political - it forms a specific legal and political type of community, with common rights and duties for all members.

---

<sup>652</sup> It often appears as though the idea of the modern nation takes on the 'mythical' nature of the nationalist theories the modernist analysis seeks to debunk.

3. Participatory - its members are citizens able to participate in its political and social affairs.
4. Culturally homogeneous - it possesses a distinctive, uniform, public culture disseminated through a mass education system.
5. Sovereign - it has complete autonomy and is the fount of authority, and possessed of a state of its own.
6. Inter-national - it is part of a wider inter-national system of 'nation-states', of which it is a sovereign member.
7. Nationalist - it is conceived and legitimated (sic) by the ideology of nationalism.<sup>653</sup>

As a consequence, a nation as outlined above could only emerge in the modern era. All the markers that modernists employ as criteria are reflective of its inception and location - Western Europe. The concept of the nation in these terms is therefore seen as the product of a nationalist or national ideology, and that ideas of the 'civic', 'rational' and legal-political character were thus secondary developments, located in the specific history of the period (late 18<sup>th</sup>, early 19<sup>th</sup> century). Under the modernist paradigm, the nation is a product of its time, and so there is only one kind of nationalism and only one kind of nation. Hence there is the problem of trying to produce a 'grand-narrative' of nationalism which the modernist school attempts to do.

The result is that it is limited in relation to understanding pre-modern nations, and thus Welsh history and the nationalism of Saunders Lewis. In legal-political terms, one cannot talk of an entity of Wales (at least until relatively recently), as a clearly bordered sovereign territory, a civic community, or of the mass participation of citizens in a specifically Welsh national political enterprise. However, it is possible to identify other traits such as a distinctive Welsh culture and other pre-modern aspects, such as Wales being a principality (a remnant of the pre-modern epoch although wholly without consequence in modernity). Modernism, according to its criteria, does not locate Wales as a nation. Was it a nation in the pre-modern era, the Middle Ages, and ceased to be one thereafter? The obvious question arises, 'what if Wales became sovereign in the

---

<sup>653</sup> Smith, Anthony. (2004) *The Antiquity of Nations*. Cambridge. Polity Press. P.15.

future?’ Only then, under the criteria of the modernist school, would it be a ‘nation’. For the modernists, therefore, it would appear that it is statehood that is equated with, and makes, the nation. The modernist analysis thus encounters severe difficulties in terming or labelling a nation as such until it gains independence and becomes a sovereign ‘nation-state’.<sup>654</sup>

If Saunders Lewis’ conception of the Welsh nation is applied to Smith’s summary of the modernist analysis of the nation, it is possible to deduce that Saunders Lewis conceived of the nation as a form of human association that is:

1. Territorial - there is a definite territory although, as yet, there is no specific authority for it, and this should not be centralised. Nor should there be ‘fixed’ borders in the context of supranational authority (although there are of course physical borders as to where the territory begins and ends).
2. Legal-political - he does not conceive of the nation in these terms, although Saunders Lewis’ nationalism seeks to enshrine this in self-government for the nation.
3. Participatory - members should be citizens (Saunders Lewis doesn’t use this term as it implies fully-fledged statehood) able to participate in social and political affairs, although they are currently obstructed, and so are properly without self-government.
4. Cultural homogeneity - it will be linguistically homogenous, disseminated through a mass education system (however, as noted, this is ambiguous within the political thought of Saunders Lewis. i.e. the conflict of the principle of *One Language for Wales* with that of decentralism and ‘unity in diversity’)
5. Sovereignty - crucially, Saunders Lewis is opposed to state sovereignty as set out in *Principles of Nationalism*, however, the criticism levelled is that Wales would have to

---

<sup>654</sup> Smith, in his criticism of the Modernist analysis, by highlighting the example of Poland, notes how the criterion for a ‘nation’ does not apply outside Western Europe. (The case of Wales would suggest that it also encounters difficulty within Western Europe). “In a dismembered 19th-century Poland, one could not begin to speak of a clearly bordered territory of ‘Poland’, or of a legal-political community, or of mass participation of citizens, let alone sovereignty or membership of an international community, but only of an elite Polish nationalism and elements of a distinctive public culture. Was Poland, then, not a nation? Had it been a nation before 1772, ceased to be one thereafter, and become a nation once again in 1918? Is it only the state that makes a nation?”

Smith, Anthony. (2004) *The Antiquity of Nations*. Cambridge. Polity Press. P.16.



be under an international system of sovereign states. (This leads to the thought that his idea of Welsh 'freedom' may be more suited to an era of decreasing nation-state sovereignty and the increasing occurrence of multi-level governance.)

6. Inter-national - it is part of a wider system of nations, but should not in any sense be 'sovereign' as formerly conceived.
7. Nationalist - nationalism will bring about political self-government, but the nation has existed prior to any nationalism.

The modernist approach fundamentally conceives of nationalism as being the cause of the nation as it equates the nation with the state. However, it can generate a 'what came first, the chicken or the egg?' argument depending on the specific definition of a nation. Modernists argue that nationalism came before the nation (as the state), however, any nationalism would need some idea of the nation (cultural) before embarking on a nationalist project. Saunders Lewis seeks to assert that nations (cultural communities) came before nationalism (state nationalism, and subsequently minority stateless nationalism as a response to this).

Outside of the modernist definition, there remain characteristics that define nationhood even if statehood is not achieved, i.e. the existence of a Welsh cultural-linguistic community with an aspiration to political nationhood. The nation can instead be viewed as something that is continually being developed, and that its characteristics are the result of the combined processes of the cultural, social and political spheres.

#### **10.5. The Ethno-Symbolist Paradigm.<sup>655</sup>**

Anthony Smith concludes that, in formulation of his ethno-symbolist paradigm, it is possible, and indeed desirable, to move away from the modernist approach that

---

<sup>655</sup> Whilst presenting papers at conferences / seminars, the confusion surrounding the word ethno became apparent. Its popularisation in terms such as 'ethnic cleansing' link it in the minds of many, not only to atrocities, but firmly in racial / biological terms. For Smith's definition of ethnic (which does not define it as such), please see below for his defining characteristics within the modern era. It is clear that in academic terminology, popular terms such as 'ethnic cleansing', define the thought motivating such actions as racial / biological and a virulent primordialism.

convolutes the nation with state. He instead seeks to define the nation under other terms:

1. "Self-definition - the growth of a sense of 'we' as opposed to 'them', those around us versus outsiders.
2. Myth and memory cultivation - the growth and cultivation of a fund of shared myths, symbols, traditions and memories of one or more culture communities.
3. Development of a uniform public culture - that is, the spread of a distinctive public culture forged from this common heritage to all the members of a community.
4. Territorialisation - the possession of particular historic lands, or ancestral homelands, within recognised borders, and the development of collective attachments to them.
5. Legal standardisation - the spread of common customs and laws and their observance by all members of the community."<sup>656</sup>

Anthony Smith's ethno-symbolist paradigm would therefore appear to be more apt for an analysis of Saunders Lewis' nationalism, as this paradigm does not encounter the problems that the modernist analysis does with regard to equating nationhood with statehood. Regarding the definition of the ethno-symbolist account of the nation and nationalism, Smith notes of the listed characteristics,

"These appear to be the main processes at work in the creation of communities that would approximate to the ideal-type of the nation. When we can demonstrate that a particular community manifests these processes to a sufficient degree and in mutually reinforcing combination, then there is a *prima facie* case for designating it a 'nation'. On this account, we may define the nation as a named and self-defined human community whose members cultivate common myths, memories and symbols, possess a distinctive public culture, occupy a historic homeland, and observe common laws and shared customs."<sup>657</sup>

---

<sup>656</sup> Smith, Anthony (2004) *The Antiquity of Nations*. Cambridge. Polity Press. P.17

<sup>657</sup> Ibid. P.17.

Essentially, Anthony Smith's ethno-symbolist approach is a critique of the modernist analysis and arrives at a synthesis. He developed this approach to illustrate that analysis of nations and nationalism "involves the development over long time-spans of symbolic elements associated with culture communities of imputed descent."<sup>658</sup> Ethno-symbolism criticises modernism for having too little to say about ethnicity and for rejecting the theoretical connection between ethnic identity and nationalism, whereas the ethno-symbolist approach emphasises the link between nation and a core ethnic community. However, unlike certain aspects of primordialist and perennialist thought, it does not equate ethnicity with nationhood and vice versa. This approach recognises that a core ethnic community does not necessarily entail a subsequent nation, rather that the concept of an ethnic community and its model are crucial in the development of the idea of the nation. It seeks to highlight the overlap between what is an ethnic community and what is nation in conceptual terms of their features, but is simultaneously highly aware that there is a difference between the two.

In seeking to highlight the similarities present in an 'ethno-cultural community' before the jump to 'nation' is made, Smith demonstrates the key markers that define an 'ethno-cultural community' before going on to outline the key characteristics of a nation:

#### "Ethnic

1. Self-definition, including a collective proper name.
2. A shared myth of common origins and ancestry.
3. Shared memories of past communal events, places and personages.
4. One or more elements of solidarity, at least among the elites.

(Note that Smith does not define ethnic in racial or biological terms)

#### Nation

1. Self-definition, including a collective proper name.

---

<sup>658</sup> Ibid. P.17.

2. Shared myths and memories of origins, election, etc.
3. A distinctive common public culture.
4. Possession/occupation of a historic homeland.
5. Common rights and duties for all members.”<sup>659</sup>

Despite an overlap, the major difference is that the nation develops with a civic public culture, rather than just shared cultural characteristics. Members of a nation occupy a historic homeland, which an ethnic community does not have. In the nation, there are common rights and duties for all members, as well as common law.<sup>660</sup> Ethno-symbolism views nations as having developed the self-definitions and the myths, symbols, and values, and memories of their pre-existing ethnic community core, and that it is this that defines the nation’s immemorial character. The ethno-symbolist approach maintains that the nation necessarily moves and develops beyond the ethnic community core with its territorialisation, dissemination of public culture, and legal standardisation with observance by all members (including members who do not claim to be of the ‘ethnic core’). It is this aspect that is the recent and novel development. For Saunders Lewis, Wales is defined as a nation by the characteristics 1-4. However it is his nationalism that seeks to elicit point 5, in attempting to secure self-government for Wales.

The ethno-symbolist school is therefore concerned with tracing the ethnic myths and symbols with a view to establishing claims to nationhood. These myths and symbols are viewed as forming the main elements of collective continuity and cultural distinctiveness. This approach recognises that economic change and political action can cause rupture, discontinuity and disruption to a community, but that certain elements of continuity can be identified despite conquest, colonisation, immigration, industrialisation, etc. For Saunders Lewis, that ‘rupture’ is the rise of ‘sovereignty’ in Europe, and in Britain under the English state it meant the attempt to enforce cultural homogeneity. Ethno-symbolism maintains that the spheres of culture and religion must

---

<sup>659</sup> Ibid. P.18.

<sup>660</sup> For a discussion of this please see Chapter 4 of Smith, Anthony. (2001) *Nationalism: Theory, Ideology, History*. Cambridge. Polity Press.

be investigated in order to see how far nationalist claims of continuous nationhood can be qualified, and to discern traditions and resources that nationalists, and others with political projects in mind, can employ and build upon. This is precisely why Saunders Lewis seeks to justify Welsh claims to nationhood in view of historical (a specific history of Wales) and cultural (a specifically Welsh language) definition. The ethno-symbolist school also recognises the fact that the multifaceted meaning of symbols, and their flexibility of interpretation in successive generations, enables them to be the enduring elements of ethnic continuity. Myths and memories are included amongst these symbols and assist in ensuring the mutual recognition of the members, as well as guarding the symbolic boundary with outsiders. This is, of course, not simply applicable to Saunders Lewis, but reflects the fact that all nationalist and nation-building projects employ symbols with a view to establishing their projected vision of the nation.

As a nations and nationalism analysis paradigm, ethno-symbolism seeks to analyse such phenomena by investigating historical background. It seeks to chart the development of these human associations from ethno-cultural communities into nations. It does this by distinguishing between three types of ethno-cultural community, and therefore three routes to nation formation. One of these is that of immigrant part-ethnic groups that evolved into nations such as the U.S.A. and is therefore not entirely applicable in the case of Wales and the nationalism of Saunders Lewis. More relevant and intriguing to this study are the other two routes.<sup>661</sup> Ethno-symbolism highlights 'bureaucratic incorporation' as being the process involved with nation formation in Western and Northern Europe, specifically in England, Scotland, Ireland and, of great relevance to this study, Wales. Ethnicity is closely linked to aristocratic class, and the notion that ruling elites forge strong centralised and increasingly bureaucratic states that spread their aristocratic culture to the other classes and outlying regions around their core ethnic community.<sup>662</sup> This would appear to be Saunders Lewis' reading of

---

<sup>661</sup> Interestingly, 'Ethno-Symbolism' according to its criteria as set out by Anthony Smith, allows for the conception of nation and nationhood in ancient civilisations, something which is anathema to the 'Modernist' school.

<sup>662</sup> Please see Chapter 2 of

Welsh history, as after the 16<sup>th</sup> century, the Welsh aristocracy became incorporated into the English governing aristocratic elite, and from there on took little interest in being patrons of Welsh literature and poetry as they had done in the 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> centuries. For Saunders Lewis, this explains why it was left to the *gwerin*, the Welsh peasant class, to carry on the Welsh cultural tradition, but who were later subject to the homogenising efforts of the English state as a consequence of increasing industrialisation and mass education, etc. For Saunders Lewis, under the English state, Wales was merely seen as one of these 'outlying regions'.

The second route to nation formation, which Smith describes, sees an ethnic community as possessing a single culture that permeates all classes, and that has been incorporated into a far-flung empire, and that is then mobilised by an intelligentsia that seeks to return it to its 'roots' by rediscovering its history and culture. The 'education' of 'the people' in their particular myths memories, and vernacular, results in the mobilisation and politicisation of an ethnic community into claiming political independence. Whilst Smith's first description of transition from ethno-cultural community to nation fits with and complements Saunders Lewis' description of Welsh incorporation into the English 'nation' state, this second approach describes exactly the aims of Saunders Lewis' nationalism. That 'single culture', the Welsh language, does not 'permeate all classes', but this is seen as the result of the destructive processes of the first approach. Saunders Lewis is thus part of that 'intelligentsia' that seeks to return Wales to its 'roots' of the Welsh language, its vernacular, as well as embarking on an educational movement to educate the prospective nation and 'the people' as to their 'common history' denied to them by the homogenising efforts of the state which is that of another nation, namely England. However, the vagaries of Saunders Lewis' nationalism, as mentioned before, mean he stops short of claiming political independence although he does seek mobilisation and politicisation of the community into claiming political 'self-government'.

Under the ethno-symbolist approach, therefore, nationalism is placed against a much more long-term background than with the modernist analysis. Nationalism, as a modern ideological movement and 'political religion', does not 'invent' the nation. According to ethno-symbolism, the ethno-cultural community has influenced the nationalist into "creating a uniform, flowing history out of the many strands that form the traditions of the community".<sup>663</sup> Nationalism and nationalists thus provide a set of goals and legitimise a collective political struggle. This is precisely applicable in the case of Saunders Lewis, his thinking on the Welsh nation, and his subsequent culturally-informed political nationalism. For ethno-symbolism, nationalism's importance lies in its ability to provide a blueprint of nationhood for aspiring communities. It criticises primordialists and perennialists for ignoring this altogether. It also criticises modernists, who exaggerate it and see in nationalism (the ideology and the movement), the primary source and cause, along with the state, of modern nations.

As Anthony Smith concludes:

"Nationalism may be defined as an ideological movement that seeks to attain and maintain autonomy, unity and identity for a population some of whose members believe it to constitute an actual or potential 'nation'. In this sense, nationalism is more than a collective sentiment or a discourse. It combines an ideology with a political movement with clear goals of national autonomy, unity and identity. To this end, it posits a nation that is continuous, developing over time, and rooted in a specific terrain. The self-appointed task of the nationalist is to rediscover that past, and to sift and reinterpret its traditions, so as to mobilise the people and regenerate the community. But to do this, he or she must dig down to the 'authentic past' of the community, like some political archaeologist, so that the nation can be built in its ancestral homeland on its true foundations."<sup>664</sup>

---

<sup>663</sup> Smith, Anthony. (2004) *The Antiquity of Nations*. Cambridge. Polity Press. P.22.

<sup>664</sup> Ibid. P.23.

This analysis describes Saunders Lewis' nationalism in an apt and succinct way. Saunders Lewis' constant employment of the idea of tradition is ably described by this analysis. 'The authentic past' which Smith describes is used to confer authenticity upon any nationalist project, and thus Saunders Lewis from the outset is keen to highlight Welsh culture and history, as well as the idealisation of a 'golden age' to act as a blueprint for future national political projects.

One of the most valid points Smith makes with regard to the inadequacies of the modernist school of thought is that regarding Romanticism and nationalism in the late 18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. He argues, under the auspices of the ethno-symbolist school that it is "autonomy, unity, national identity, authenticity, the ethnic past, the ancestral homeland"<sup>665</sup> that were the recurrent symbols of the cultural heritage of distinct communities that the Romantics popularised and that nationalists propagated. The Romantic movement occurred at the onset of the modern epoch, and forms the 'roots' of nationalist ideologies for ethno-symbolists. The myths, memories and symbols that the Romantics uncovered and disseminated were crucial for the nationalist mobilisation of 'the people', and meant drawing on the ethno-symbolic heritage of the populations that the nationalists wished to liberate. Thus the 'romantic' themes of nature and homeland, authenticity and self-expression, 'history', 'destiny', autonomy and self-sacrifice, disseminated through all the arts, gave palpable substance and meaning to the sense of national identity among various peoples, according to ethno-symbolists.

Ultimately, the ethno-symbolist school seeks to argue that sociologically the members of even the most 'modern' nations seek to return to their 'roots'. These roots are celebrated to serve vital social and cultural needs. What this entails is sanctioning of 'authentic' myths and memories that will encapsulate the 'origins' and 'essence' and thus legitimise the national identity. In many cases, it is this quality of 'rediscovering' an authentic past that can serve as the foundation of national identity and thus resonates with the designated population of long-established communities. The nation is therefore

---

<sup>665</sup> Ibid. P.23.



viewed as an amalgam of the modern and the ancient. Ethno-symbolists treat the two aspects as equally important for creating and sustaining a sense of national identity in what is almost always a heterogeneous population. Essentially, ethno-symbolism criticises the modernist analysis for focusing on the modern aspects and for considering pre-modern aspects as 'backward looking' in a normative-pejorative sense.

The ethno-symbolist analysis therefore is indispensable when considering the nationalist thought of Saunders Lewis, as its own genesis is a careful and measured synthesis of preceding schools of nationalism analysis. It avoids normatively 'judging' nationalism as the modernist analysis invariably does, and in doing so, provides a much more comprehensive explanation. It is also clear that Saunders Lewis' nationalist thought is in clear agreement with many of the premises set out in the ethno-symbolist paradigm, the clear difference being that Smith's paradigm approaches the matter of nationality with apolitical impartiality, whereas Saunders Lewis' is politically motivated. For the wider academic study of nationalism, Saunders Lewis' thought acts as a fascinating test case and a valid contribution to nationalism discourse as an example of a thinker who was at pains to define the nation and nationhood.

Saunders Lewis' nationalism does not therefore 'fit' easily within any of the main schools of thought regarding nationalism analysis, yet they act as analytical tools with which to better understand Saunders Lewis' nationalism, as well as other nationalisms. Crucially, Saunders Lewis' nationalism provides a useful and interesting interjection into the academic discourse regarding nationalism, as well as the historicist discourse regarding the beginning of Modernity. Ultimately, Saunders Lewis is seeking to answer the question 'when is the nation?'<sup>666</sup> Taken both as a body of thought, and a historical action, it is also

---

<sup>666</sup> 'When is the nation?' is a question asked consistently by all nations as well as 'nationalists'. See Williams, Gwyn A. (1985) *When was Wales? : A History of the Welsh*. Harmondsworth. Penguin Press. Conferring legitimacy upon the existing nation or nation-to-be is a goal of all nationalisms, benign or otherwise. As a result, history must always be engaged with in order to locate a past, a root and therefore identity.

**extremely useful in acting as a critique of the Modernist paradigm and reinforcing the Ethno-symbolist paradigm conception of nationalism.**

## Conclusion

This thesis argues that contemporary Wales requires a deeper understanding and study of those political ideas which consider matters that are not only of continuing relevance, but that have been influential in shaping political life in Wales. The political thought of Saunders Lewis is therefore of great significance. His ideas, and the questions they pose, are of immense value when considering society and politics in Wales. Beyond Wales, his work also poses normative questions in a wider sense with regard to language rights, national minorities, and minority nationalism. His thought makes a contribution to historical enquiry from a contemporary perspective on discourses such as liberalism and communitarianism, universalism and particularism, and adds to those discourses on secession and supranational governance. It also provides insight in the area of nationalism analysis, in terms of typology and theory regarding its origins. The nationalist portion of his thought, and inherent ideas regarding the origins of nationalism and what constitutes it, act as a critique of the Modernist stance, and effectively consolidate the Ethno-symbolist account of nationalism. His ideas also provide insight into, and add to, thinking on matters regarding state theory, sovereignty and to federal theory regarding subsidiarity.

This thesis has sought to identify and analyse those ideas advanced by Saunders Lewis in his political writings. In doing so it has analysed and explored how he conceived society and political order, and how he conceived the state and its interrelation with society. It has also explored and analysed his definition of a nation, both within his conception of culture and use of history. It examines how this definition goes on to inform his understanding of a wider system of nations, and a conception of a just order in the intra affairs of nations. It has demonstrated how the ideological component of his thought interacted with the nationalist element, and how, through contrast with other thinkers of differing ideological or national affiliation, this underlines the author's assertion of nationalism being a fluid concept that interacts and interfaces with ideologies. The universalism which Saunders Lewis defends in his moral philosophical grounding and which underpins his political thought has been identified and explored. Those ideas considered by the author to be the

most pertinent and relevant have been considered in the context of contemporary theory, with a view to locating Saunders Lewis' thought within such discourses. The construction of his nationalism, and how this is to be analysed utilising theories of nationalism analysis, has been explored in this study. In addition, Saunders Lewis' nationalism (as well as the broader experience of Welsh nationalism) has been utilised to critique nationalism theory.

On reflection, Saunders Lewis' solutions to the political problems he identified were in most cases not practical. It is the author's assertion that Saunders Lewis' political thought serves in its primary function as a highly perceptive critique, and those prescriptions that he did propose are more relevant in an age where the international system of rigid state sovereignty has been eroded (decentralism, multi level plural governance, etc.).

This thesis argues that Saunders Lewis' Catholicism had a major impact on his political ideas, especially in the interwar period. His resolutely middle-class background in Liverpool, despite his protestations of being wholly Welsh, combined with his experience in World War I, undoubtedly provided him with a quest for identity, which he found spurred his reading of Barres and Ap Iwan, and alerted him to a need for a call for rootedness.

Saunders Lewis's political ideas were undoubtedly influenced by a certain school of thought that included thinkers such as Eliot, Leavis, and Hulme. Separate from the Welsh nationalist element of his thought, such ideas formed an understanding of the world and underpinned his ideological stance. Saunders Lewis' thought is a synthesis of a neo-Thomist Catholic moral philosophy, with a Modernist school assertion of the value of language as culture. He articulated this in the Welsh context via a close reading of Emrys ap Iwan's thought. It is this synthesis that propels Saunders Lewis from what is primarily a concern for a cultural matter, that a language is a valuable means of human expression, into a necessary engagement with politics to free it of the domination that bears upon it.

Saunders Lewis ultimately derived his political conclusions from this deep moral foundation, to the detriment of his success as a practical politician. Distributism and Guild Socialism were of course highly compatible and sat well with his neo-Thomist Catholic moral philosophical grounding. As with much of Saunders Lewis' thought regarding a social vision for Wales, it served better as a critique rather than as a realistic programme for practical implementation in its social and political context. Its prescription for the problem of urban rootlessness, moral and physical poverty: a 'back to the land' ideal based on the assertion of the normative value of the organic community, ultimately fails as a practical solution to the problems of mass urban industrialised society, even within the (relatively) small dimensions of Welsh society. The ideal of Christian co-operativism however, has persisted within Welsh political thought, and in particular within Welsh nationalist thought. Saunders Lewis Lewis can be deemed an adherent to such an ideal, yet other thinkers, both his contemporaries and successors, appear to have interpreted it in much more practical terms.<sup>667</sup>

Saunders Lewis' rejection of the principle of sovereignty, which he defines as a result of moral absolutism and a precursor to particularity and imperialism, presents an interesting conundrum for the student of nationalism. He sees the state, or self-government, as instead a means for cultural (language) ends. He is careful to clarify that a language is not merely an end in itself, but as a vehicle for the transmission of a particular experience, and also as a means to human flourishing. Yet he links this in to a moral universalism that is tolerant of linguistic plurality and opposed to efforts to impose uniformity. Due to his rejection of moral absolutism, criticism aimed at Saunders Lewis by a cosmopolitan argument (such as that of Vincent) stumbles. However, this criticism is revitalised to a large extent on an examination of his 'official monolingualism'. A degree of sovereignty is crucial to a conception of 'official monolingualism', thereby necessarily employing a moral absolutism and again driving uniformity through state power (by a 'self-governing' government). A cosmopolitan critique is therefore enlivened by the concept of sovereignty, which is the crux of its criticism of particularity / nationalism. In terms of its aims, Saunders Lewis'

---

<sup>667</sup> The policies and ideas argued for by D.J. Davies were far more practical, and inclusive with regard to English-speaking Wales. Christian co-operativism persisted in the ideas of Gwynfor Evans.

nationalism maintained a resolutely 19<sup>th</sup> century nation-building aim of achieving language revitalisation through official monolingualism. It is the author's belief that Saunders Lewis to a large extent provides the correction to his position with the move to a 'linguistic rights for the individual' argument as put forward in *Fate of the Language*.

A counter critique to the above process is that within Saunders Lewis' 'sovereign' pursuit of 'official monolingualism', there is still a yielding to a supranational authority in governmental terms. However, in terms of the normative grounding of a moral universalism upon which Saunders Lewis defends in the context of 'official monolingualism', the two are not compatible. A further counter-critique is that Saunders Lewis' thought required a sea-change in international affairs and power relations in order for his vision to be realised with regard to a European Union and a 'Society of Nations', and that 'official monolingualism' is a correction to a historical wrong (the denigration of the Welsh language) brought about by cultural and political domination (by England).

Saunders Lewis' over-idealisation of the Medieval period, combined with his over-rejection of Modernity is an area that comes in for criticism. There is normative value in his critique of the principle of sovereignty. He, however, equates it with Modernity, the two being inextricably linked in his mind. Criticism comes at him primarily from an Enlightenment angle. All ideologies employ an idealisation of a perceived historical age, national or otherwise, with a view to forging a future that takes as its template an idealised historical age. His defence of the normative value of Medieval governing structures, that they permitted cultural diversity whilst maintaining a spiritual unity, fail to address criticisms of the Medieval age that centre upon the Catholic church's corruption and withholding of knowledge and education from the masses. The Church achieved by preventing the translation of the Bible into the vernaculars of Europe. Whilst Saunders Lewis equates the 'age of Luther' and the Reformation with the beginning of the age of moral absolutism and thus Modernity, there is a failure to recognise that political and cultural domination existed in the Medieval period. War occurred frequently, and the desire to eradicate one's enemy was ever present, albeit the Modern means of a state with all its coercive power and levers of mass control did not yet exist. The economic need for a

culturally homogenous population brought about by the Industrial Revolution was a distant prospect. Saunders Lewis' sought to answer the problems of the Modern age with principles that existed in the Medieval period and also to apply principles derived from his moral philosophical foundation, neo-Thomist Catholic social doctrine i.e. the idea that Thomist Catholic social doctrine held the answers to the problems of Modernity. However, the 'unit-ideas' that he seeks to apply are all plausible within an Enlightenment derived secular framework, without the need for Thomism or Catholic social doctrine. Political ideas such as a 'third way' (between laissez-faire capitalism and state socialism), decentralism, federalism, subsidiarity, multi-level plural governance, an assertion of the normative value of community, and legal recognition of minority linguistic rights are all applicable without a need for Saunders Lewis' foundation, even in the period in which he was writing.

Saunders Lewis' understanding of Welsh history, indeed his theory of history, is by its definition a political history, as it is a contest to a dominant state ideology: state nationalism. In this respect, Saunders Lewis' nationalism could be conceived of as an anti-nationalist culturalism, as he asserts an anti-statist position. He subscribes to the idea of a nation, and asserts the value of community, but on a local level, and detests the centralising, dominating potential of the state to eradicate this. Language, as an experience of life and a means for human flourishing, are attributed high normative value, and the whole ethos of his thought is against the centralising tendency of the state which has the potential eradicated power over such a good. The counterpoint to this is that the state has the power to ensure a language can be revitalised through its employment as a sole official state language, and Saunders Lewis engages with this possibility. However, he encounters an uneasy conflict with his own normative framework of a universal moral objectivism, in contrast to the particularist moral absolutism of state sovereignty. This moral objectivism is borne out of a Thomist Catholic understanding of natural law.

Saunders Lewis implicitly recognises in *Fate of the Language* that for a language to be revitalised in line with a normative framework that distances itself from coercive state power, the ability for a language's continuation rests in the hands of the individual. In this

regard, a language, regarded as something valuable, is a matter that is decided upon by the individual and that the state (in whatever guise), provides communication through the appropriate means (English or Welsh in the case of Wales). The direct legacy of *Fate of the Language* was the creation of the Welsh Language Society, which, as a result of its campaigning brought about the Welsh Language Acts of 1967 and 1993. If history is the result of a collaborative effort of various ideas and social pressures, then it is a legacy of Saunders Lewis that further Welsh language rights legislation awaits the Welsh Assembly Government's policy programme, itself a result of further devolutionary powers ceded to Wales.

It is evident that a belief in God is central to Saunders Lewis' moral philosophy which directly leads him to an objective moral universalism, a concept of natural law embedded in Thomism. For a secular audience, this does not mean that the political implications of his thought must be dismissed based on a rejection of his foundation. This thesis defends the secular implications of Saunders Lewis' political thought i.e. official bilingualism, decentralism, federation, European economic and political union. His critique of sovereignty remains cogent despite a glossing of history with regard to the idealisation of medieval theory. His preference for political federation as a means to international cooperation, remains valid, as historical sovereignty has too often been employed as a means of moral justification for external domination (imperialism) and internal domination (of minorities). Indeed, contemporary conceptions of these political conclusions are advanced within a liberal rights-based conceptual framework. Yet to reject ideas such as those of Saunders Lewis on the basis of their foundation (a belief in God) is to ignore the origins and historical development of many contemporary ideas.

Had Saunders Lewis been a continental European (a prospect which would have undoubtedly have delighted him), he would have been a Christian Democrat, embracing a dimension quite different from that of a British Conservative despite similarities with 'One Nation' Conservatism. Would Saunders Lewis have approved of today's European Union or of contemporary Welsh devolution, or steps to secure rights for Welsh speakers? It is difficult to say. He was a critic in the purest sense. It is clear, however, that he was



committed to the principles involved in such developments. Those engaged with such political processes today, they may or may not have engaged with Saunders Lewis' thought yet his thought remains a crucial tool in understanding political life in Wales. The clearest legacy of his thought in Welsh political nationalism, is the commitment to Europe as a political ideal (despite Plaid Cymru opposition to E.E.C. membership in 1975). Notwithstanding Saunders Lewis' opposition to the term 'independence', the Plaid Cymru aim of 'independence in Europe'<sup>668</sup> is for all intents and purposes, what he articulates, namely a loosening of the binding ties to England, whilst strengthening ties to a European political and economic union.

It is the author's hope that Welsh political thought progresses as a body of knowledge, and that this thesis contributes in some measure to the development of it. There is a plethora of other thinkers who warrant attention. However, it is thought that Saunders Lewis' legacy is such that he is deserving of a central standing within 20<sup>th</sup> century Welsh political thought. His legacy is obvious in campaigns for Welsh language rights campaigning. Elsewhere, his imprint has been left upon public life in Wales in several areas: political and cultural. What remains clear throughout an examination of Saunders Lewis' thought, and not solely the all encompassing 'nationalist' element of it, is its depth, clarity and perceptiveness. Any study within the field of 20<sup>th</sup> century Welsh history, politics, or society, is the poorer for not having considered the indelible impact of Saunders Lewis' intellectual legacy.

---

<sup>668</sup> The 2005 Plaid Cymru manifesto states "independence in Europe" as its ambition for Wales  
Plaid Cymru publication (2005) *We can build a better Wales: Westminster election manifesto 2005*. Cardiff.  
Plaid Cymru. P.8

The current Plaid Cymru website states amongst its aims "to promote the constitutional advancement of Wales with a view to attaining Full National Status for Wales within the European Union"

[www.plaidcymru.org/content.php?nID=743;lID=1](http://www.plaidcymru.org/content.php?nID=743;lID=1)

Date entered: 2009-05-06

## Bibliography.

### Primary Source Material.

During the 1920s and 1930s Saunders Lewis edited the Plaid Cymru newspaper, *Y Ddraig Goch* (Welsh language) and, for a brief spell of a year or so, *Welsh Nationalist* (Plaid Cymru English language newspaper).

Outside of these two party political newspapers, Saunders Lewis' main political texts are as follows:

Saunders Lewis, John. (1926) *Egwyddorion Cenedlaetholdeb (Principles of Nationalism)*. Machynlleth. Evan Jones Printers.

Saunders Lewis, John. Article entitled *A Letter Concerning Catholicism (Llythyr Ynghylch Catholigaeth)*. In *Y Llenor*. Vol. 6. (1927) Wrexham. Hughes and Son.

Saunders Lewis, John. (1930) *The Banned Wireless Talk on Welsh Nationalism*. Caernarfon. The Office of the Nationalist Party.

Saunders Lewis, John. (1933) *The Case for a Welsh National Development Council*. Caernarfon. The Office of the Nationalist Party.

Saunders Lewis, John. (1934) *The Local Authorities and Welsh Industries*. Caernarfon. The Office of the Nationalist Party.

Saunders Lewis, John. (1935) *Y Frywdr Dros Rhyddid (The Struggle for Freedom)*. Caernarfon. The Office of the Nationalist Party.

Saunders Lewis, John. (1936) *Caernarfon Court Speech*. In Eds. Jones, Alun R. & Thomas, Gwyn. (1983) *Presenting Saunders Lewis*. Cardiff. University of Wales Press.

Saunders Lewis, John. (1938) *Canlyn Arthur*. Aberystwyth. Gwasg Aberystwyth.

Although published in 1938, the specific chapters had been written at different stages in the 1930s and appeared in *Y Ddraig Goch*:

Saunders Lewis, John. (1926) *Nationalism and Capital*.

Saunders Lewis, John. (1926) *Tragedy*.

Saunders Lewis, John. (1927) *England and Europe and Wales*.

Saunders Lewis, John. (1930) *The Family*.

Saunders Lewis, John. (1930) *Weblai and St. Emilion*.

Saunders Lewis, John. (1930) *The Confession of Mr. Lloyd George*.

Saunders Lewis, John. (1932) *Labour Unions*.

Saunders Lewis, John. (1930) *Masaryk*.

Saunders Lewis, John. (1933) *One Language for Wales*.

Saunders Lewis, John. (1934) *Nationalism and The Industries I*.

Saunders Lewis, John. (1934) *Nationalism and The Industries II*.

Saunders Lewis, John. (1934) *The Small Capitalists*.

Saunders Lewis, John. (1934) *The 'Bath and West'*.

Saunders Lewis, John. (1936) *Yr Ysgol Fomio yn Llŷn (The Bombing School in Llŷn)*.

Saunders Lewis, John. (1936) *H.R. Jones Ysgol Fomio yn Llŷn*.

Saunders Lewis, John. (1942) *Cymru Wedi'r Rhyfel (Wales After the War)*. Caernarfon. The Office of the Nationalist Party.

Saunders Lewis, John. (1942) *The Party for Wales*. Caernarfon. Nationalist Offices.

Saunders Lewis, John. (1943) *Y Newyn yn Ewrop (The Famine in Europe)*. Gwasg Gee. Denbigh.

Saunders Lewis, John. (1962) *Fate of the Language*. (Translation by Williams, Aled G.) In Eds. Jones, Alun R. & Thomas, Gwyn. (1973) *Presenting Saunders Lewis*. Cardiff. University of Wales Press.

Posthumously, an entire collection of correspondence between Saunders Lewis and Kate Roberts, an early Plaid Cymru member and literary figure, was published. This gave added insight into Saunders Lewis thoughts throughout his life.

Saunders Lewis, John. In (Ed.) Ifans, Dafydd. (1992) *Annwyl Kate, Annwyl Saunders. (Dear Kate, Dear Saunders). Correspondence 1923-1983*. Aberystwyth. National Library Wales Press.

Also published posthumously was a collection of Saunders Lewis' 'way of the world' column, where he gave his views on WWII and its aftermath.

Saunders Lewis, John. (Ed. Gwyn, Robin.) (2000) *Cwrs Y Byd – Detholiad o Ysgrifau Newyddiadurol Saunders Lewis 1939-1950. (The Way of the World – A Collection of News Articles by Saunders Lewis 1939-1950)*. Cardiff. University of Wales Press.

## **Secondary Source Material.**

Griffiths, Bruce. (1979) *Saunders Lewis*. Cardiff. University of Wales Press.

Jones, Alun. R. & Thomas, Gwyn.(Eds.) (1973) *Presenting Saunders Lewis*. Cardiff. University of Wales Press.

Jones, Dafydd Glyn. *His Politics* in (Eds.) Jones, Alun R. & Thomas, Gwyn. (1973) *Presenting Saunders Lewis*. Cardiff. University of Wales Press.

Lloyd, D. Tecwyn. (1988) *John Saunders Lewis*. Denbigh. Gwasg Gee.

Miles, Gareth. *A Personal View*. In (Eds.) Jones, Alun R. & Thomas, Gwyn. (1973) *Presenting Saunders Lewis*. Cardiff. University of Wales Press.

Williams, D.J. *Saunders Lewis - A Man of Destiny*. In (Eds.) Jones, Alun R. & Thomas, Gwyn. (1973) *Presenting Saunders Lewis*. Cardiff. University of Wales Press.

## Wider Material

Anderson, Benedict. (1983) *Imagined Communities: reflections on the origin and spread of nationalism*. London. Verso.

ap Iwan, Emrys. (1937-1940) *A Collection of Articles and Books by Emrys ap Iwan. Vol. 1. Patriotic, Social and Historic writings*. Aberystwyth. Clwb Llyfrau Cymraeg (Welsh Book Club).

ap Iwan, Emrys. (1937-1940) *A Collection of Articles and Books by Emrys ap Iwan. Vol. 2 Literature and Language*. Aberystwyth. Clwb Llyfrau Cymraeg (Welsh Book Club).

ap Iwan, Emrys. (1937-1940) *A Collection of Articles and Books by Emrys ap Iwan. Vol. 3 Religion*. Aberystwyth. Clwb Llyfrau Cymraeg (Welsh Book Club).

Aristotle. (2000) *Nicomachean Ethics*. Cambridge. Cambridge University Press.

Aristotle. (1998) *Politics*. Oxford. Oxford University Press.

Armstrong, John. (1982) *Nations before Nationalism*. Chapel Hill. University of North Carolina Press.

Aull, C. (1989) *Welsh Nationalism in the Twentieth Century: The Ethnic Option and the Modern State*. New York. Praeger.

Bache, Ian & Flinders, Matthew. (Eds.) (2004) *Multi-level Governance*. Oxford. Oxford University Press.

Balsom, Denis. *The Three-Wales Model*. In Ed. Osmond, John. (1985) *The National Question Again*. Gomer Press. Llandysul.

Barnard, F.M. (1965) *Herder's Social and Political Thought: From Enlightenment to Nationalism*. Oxford. Clarendon Press.

Barres, Maurice. (1980) *Le Cult du Moi*. Nantes. Le Temps Singulier.

Le Cultue du Moi is a trilogy that consists of *Sous l'œil des barbares* (1888), *Un Homme libre* (1889), and *Le Jardin de Bérénice* (1891).

Bartelson, Jens. (1995) *The Genealogy of Sovereignty*. Cambridge. Cambridge University Press.

Bauböck, Rainer. *Political Community Beyond the Sovereign State, Supranational Federalism, and Transnational Minorities*. In Vertovec, Steven & Cohen, Robin.

- (2002) *Conceiving Cosmopolitanism: Theory, Context and Practice*. Oxford. Oxford University Press.
- Beer, Max. (2002) *A History of British Socialism*. London. Routledge.
- Belloc, Hilaire. (1913) *The Servile State*. London and Edinburgh. T.N. Foulis. (1977 edition. Indianapolis. Liberty Fund.)
- Belloc, Hilaire. (1931) *Essays of a Catholic Layman in England*. London. Sheed & Ward.
- Ben Rees, D. (1997) *The Welsh of Merseyside (Vol. 1)* Liverpool. Modern Welsh Publications.
- Ben Rees, D. (2001) *The Welsh of Merseyside in the Twentieth Century. (Vol. 2)* Liverpool. Modern Welsh Publications.
- Berlin, Isaiah. (1976) *Vico and Herder*. London. Hogarth Press.
- Billig, Michael. (1995) *Banal Nationalism*. London. Thousand Oaks.
- Black, Anthony. (1984) *Guilds and Civil Society*. London. Methuen.
- Boucher, David. (1998) *Political Theories of International Relations*. Oxford. Clarendon Press.
- Brooks, S. (2004) *O Dan Lygaid y Gestapo*. Caerdydd. Gwasg Prifysgol Cymru.
- Brown, C. (Ed.) (1994). *Political Restructuring in Europe: Ethical Perspectives*. London. Routledge.
- Chamberlain, Houston Stewart. (1913) *The Foundations of the Nineteenth Century*. London. Bodley Head.
- Chapman, R. (2006) *Un bywyd o blith nifer, cofiant Saunders Lewis*. Llandysul. Gwasg Gomer.
- Chesterton, G.K. *The Free Family*. In (1910) *What's Wrong with the World*. Leipzig. Bernhard Tauchnitz.
- Chesterton, G.K. *On Peasant Proprietorship*. In (1910) *What's Wrong with the World*. Leipzig. Bernhard Tauchnitz.
- Chesterton, G.K. (1910) *What's Wrong with the World*. Leipzig. Bernhard Tauchnitz.
- Clark Jnr, Robert T. (1955) *Herder: His Life and Thought*. Berkeley. University of California Press Commission of Inquiry into the State of Education in Wales. (1847-8)

- Reports of the Commissioners of Inquiry into the State of Education in Wales appointed by the Committee of Council on Education.* London. H.M.S.O.
- Coudenhove-Kalergi, R.N. (1926) *Pan-Europe*. New York. A.A. Knopf.
- Corrin, Jay P. (1991) *G.K. Chesterton & Hilaire Belloc: The Battle Against Modernity*. Athens & London..Ohio University Press.
- Coupland, Reginald. (1954) *Welsh and Scottish Nationalism: a study*. London. Collins.
- Daniel, J.E. (1937) *Welsh Nationalism: What it Stands For*. Foyle's Welsh CO. Ltd.
- Davies, D. Hywel. (1983) *The Welsh Nationalist Party 1925-1945: A Call to Nationhood*. Cardiff. University of Wales Press.
- Davies, D.J. (1931) *The Economics of Welsh Self Government* Caernarfon. Welsh Nationalist Party.
- Davies, D.J. & Davies, Noelle. (1939) *Can Wales Afford Self-Government?* Caernarfon. Welsh Nationalist Party.
- Davies, G. (2000) 'Rhagfur a Rhagfarn: gwrth-semietaeth yng ngwaith Saunders Lewis, T.S. Eliot a Simone Weil'. *Taliesin*, No. 100.
- Davies, John. (1990) *A History of Wales*. Middlesex. Allen Lane Penguin Press.
- Davies, John. *Introduction*. In: Jenkins, Dafydd. (1998) *A Nation on Trial: Penyborth 1936*. Caernarfon. Welsh Academic Press.
- Davies, John. (2007) *A History of Wales*. Middlesex. Allen Lane Penguin Press.
- De Wilde, Jaap & Wiberg, Håkan. (Eds.) (1996) *Organised Anarchy in Europe: The Role of Intergovernmental Organisations*. London. I.B. Tauris.
- Delaney, F. (1993) *The Celts*. Harper Collins. London.
- Denney, D. Borland, J.A. & Fevre, R. *The Social Construction of Nationalism: Racism and Conflict in Wales*. Contemporary Wales. Vol.4. (1994)
- Eliot, T.S. (1948) *Notes Towards a Definition of Culture*. London. Faber and Faber.
- Eliot, T.S. (1940) *The Idea of a Christian Society*. London. Faber and Faber.
- Evans, Hugh. *Cadw'r Iaith yn Fyw (Keeping the Language Alive)* In Williams, Peter. (1922) *Damhegion y Maen Llog (Parables of the Centre Stone)*. Liverpool. Hugh Evans.
- Evans, Rh. (2005) *Gwynfor: Rhag Pob Brad*. Talybont. Y Lolfa.
- Evans, Rh. (2008) *Gwynfor Evans: Portrait of a Patriot*. Talybont. Y Lolfa.



- Fichte, Johann Gottlieb. (Ed. Kelly, George A.) (1968) *Thirteenth Address, Addresses to the German Nation*. New York. Harper Torch Books.
- Gans, Chaim. (2003) *The Limits of Nationalism*. Cambridge. Cambridge University Press.
- Geary, Patrick. (2002) *The Myths of Nations: The Medieval Origins of Nations*. Princeton, New Jersey. Princeton University Press.
- Geertz, Clifford. (1963) *The Integrative Revolution in Old Societies and New States*. New York. Free Press.
- Gehler, Michael & Kaiser, Wolfram (Eds.) (2004) *Christian Democracy in Europe since 1945*. London. Routledge.
- Gellner, Ernest. (1983) *Nations and Nationalism*. Oxford. Blackwell Publishing.
- Geremek, Bronislaw. (1996) *The Common Roots of Europe*. Cambridge. Polity Press.
- Gierke, Otto von. Translated by Maitland, F.W. (1900) *Political Theories of the Middle Ages*. Cambridge. Cambridge University Press.
- Gilbert, Paul. (2000) *Peoples, Cultures and Nations in Political Philosophy*. Edinburgh. Edinburgh University Press.
- Goodwin, Barbara. (2004) (1<sup>st</sup> ed. 1982) *Using Political Ideas*. West Sussex. John Wiley and Sons.
- The Government of Wales Act 2006*. (2006) London. The Stationary Office.
- Grosby, Steven. *Territoriality: the transcendental, primordial feature of modern societies*. Nations and Nationalism 1 (2).
- Gruffydd, Moses. (1937) *Amaethyddiaeth Cymru (Welsh Agriculture)*. Caernarfon. Office of the Welsh Nationalist Party (Pamphlet).
- Gruffudd, Pyrs. *Back to the Land: Historiography, Rurality and the Nation in Interwar Wales*. Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers. Vol. 19, No. 1 (1994).
- Haddock, B.A. (2005) *A History of Political Thought 1789 to the Present*. Cambridge. Polity Press.
- Haesly, Richard. *Identifying Scotland and Wales: Types of Scottish and Welsh national identities*. Nations and Nationalism Volume 11. Issue 2. (2005) P. 243–263
- Hayman, Ronald. (1976) *Leavis*. London. Heinemann.
- Henderson, Willie. (2000) *John Ruskin's Political Economy*. London. Routledge.

- Haseler, Stephen. (2004) *Super-state: The New Europe and Its Challenge to America*. London. I.B. Tauris.
- Hastings, Adrian. (1997) *The Construction of Nationhood: Ethnicity, Religion and Nationalism*. Cambridge. Cambridge University Press.
- Hulme, T.E. (1924) *Speculations. Essays on Humanism and the Philosophy of Art*. London. Routledge and Kegan Paul Ltd.
- Ifans, Dafydd (Ed.) (1992) *Annwyl Kate, Annwyl Saunders. Gohebiaeth 1923-1983 (Dear Kate, Dear Saunders. Correspondence 1923-1983)*. Aberystwyth. National Library of Wales Press.
- Jenkins, Dafydd. (1998) *A Nation on Trial: Penyberth 1936*. Caernarfon. Welsh Academic Press.
- Jenkins, Geraint H. (Ed.) (2001) *A Social History of the Welsh Language*. Cardiff. University of Wales Press.
- Jenkins, R.T. (1930) *Yr Apel at Hanes (The Appeal to History)*. Wrexham. Hughes and Son.
- Jenkins, R.T. *The Development of Nationalism in Wales*. The Sociological Review. April 1935.
- Jessop, Bob. *Multi-level Governance and Multi-level Metagovernance*. In Bache, Ian & Flinders, Matthew. (Eds.) (2004) *Multi-level Governance*. Oxford. Oxford University Press.
- Jones, T. Gwynn. (1912) *Emrys ap Iwan: dysgawdr, llenor, cenedlgarwr (Emrys ap Iwan: teacher, author, patriot.)* Caernarfon. Cwmni'r Cyhoeddwyr Cymreig.
- Jones, Dafydd Glyn. *His Politics* in Eds Jones, Alun R. & Thomas, Gwyn. (1973) *Presenting Saunders Lewis*. Cardiff. University of Wales Press.
- Jones, R.M. (1998) *Ysbryd y Cwlwm: Delwedd y Genedl yn Ein Llenyddiaeth*. Cardiff. University of Wales Press.
- Jones, R.W. (2007) *Rhoi Cymru'n Gyntaf: Syniadaeth Plaid Cymru. Cyfrol 1*. Cardiff. University of Wales Press.
- Kedourie, Elie. (1993 (1<sup>st</sup> edition 1960)) *Nationalism*. Oxford. Blackwell.
- Kempshall, M.S. (1999) *The Common Good in Late Medieval Political Thought*. Oxford. Oxford University Press.

- Kropotkin, Peter. (1906) *The Conquest of Bread*. Chapman and Hall.
- Kymlicka, Will & Patten, Alan (Eds). (2003) *Language Rights and Political Theory*. Oxford. Oxford University Press.
- Kymlicka, Will. (2001) *Politics in the Vernacular. Nationalism, Multiculturalism and Citizenship*. Oxford. Oxford University Press.
- Leavis, F.R. & Thompson, D. (1933) *Culture and Environment*. London. Chatto & Windus.
- Leavis, F.R. (1972) *Nor Shall My Sword*. London. Chatto & Windus. P.23
- Lehning, Percy B. (1998) *Theories of Secession*. London. Routledge.
- Lyon, Ann. (2003) *Constitutional History of the U.K*. London. Routledge Cavendish.
- Machiavelli, Niccolo. (2005) *The Prince*. Oxford. Oxford University Press.
- MacCormick, N. (1982) *Legal Rights and Social Democracy: Essays in Legal and Political Philosophy*. Oxford. Clarendon Press.
- Maitland, F.W. (Ed. Fisher, H.A.L.) (1908) *The Constitutional History of England*. Cambridge. Cambridge University Press.
- Mahoney, Daniel J. (2000) *De Gaulle: Statesmanship, Grandeur, and Modern Democracy*. London. Transaction Publishers.
- Maritain, Jacques. (1943) *The Rights of Man and Natural Law*. New York. Gordian Press.
- Maritain, Jacques. (1950) *True Humanism (Humanisme Intégral)*. London. Geoffrey Bless.
- Maritain, Jacques. (1951) *Man and State*. Chicago. University of Chicago Press.
- Maritain, Jacques. *On Knowledge Through Connaturality*. In (1952) *The Range of Reason*. New York. Scribner.
- Maritain, Jacques. (1952) *The Range of Reason*. New York. Scribner.
- Maritain, Jacques. *The End of Machiavellianism*. In (1953) *The Range of Reason*. London. Geoffrey Bless.
- Marx, Karl. & Engels, Friedrich. (2002) *The Communist Manifesto*. London. Penguin Classics.
- McAllister, Laura. (2001) *Plaid Cymru: The Emergence of a Political Party*. Bridgend. Seren.

- McCool, Gerald A. (1989) *From Unity to Pluralism: The Internal Evolution of Thomism*. New York. Fordham University Press.
- Miller, David. (1987). *Blackwell Encyclopaedia of Political Thought*. Oxford. Blackwell Publishing.
- Miller, David. *The Nation-State: A Modest Defence*. In Brown, C. (Ed.) (1994). *Political Restructuring in Europe: Ethical Perspectives*. London. Routledge.
- Miller, David. (1995) *On Nationality*. Oxford. Oxford University Press.
- Milward, Alan. (1993) *The European Rescue of the Nation-State*. London. Routledge.
- Moore, Margaret. (2001) *The Ethics of Nationalism*. Oxford. Oxford University Press.
- Morgan, Kevin & Mungham, Geoff. (2000) *Redesigning Democracy: The Making of the Welsh Assembly*. Bridgend. Seren.
- Morris, William. (1973) *Political Writings of William Morris*. London. Lawrence & Wishart.
- Morris, William. (1993) *News from Nowhere (and Other Writings)*. London. Penguin Press. (Original edition: 1890)
- Mulhall, Stephen & Swift, Adam. (1992) *Liberals and Communitarians*. Oxford. Blackwell.
- Myrddin Lloyd, D. (1979) *Emrys ap Iwan*. Cardiff. University of Wales Press.
- Nairn, Tom. (1977) *The Break-Up of Britain*. London. Verso.
- Nairn, Tom. (1997) *Faces of Nationalism. Janus Revisited*. London. Verso.
- O'Neill, Michael. (1996) *The Politics of European Integration. A Reader*. London. Routledge.
- Orage, A.R. (1914) *National Guilds: An inquiry into the wage system and the way out*. London. G. Bell & Sons.
- Orage, A.R. (1917) *An alphabet of economics*. London. T. Fisher Unwin.
- Osmond, John. (1995) *Welsh Europeans*. Bridgend. Seren.
- Pagden, Anthony. (Ed.) (2002) *The Idea of Europe: From Antiquity to the European Union*. Cambridge. Cambridge University Press. P.192
- Penty, A.J. (1906) *The Restoration of the Gild System*. London. Swan Sonnenschein.
- Penty, A.J. (1919) *Guilds and the Social Crisis*. London. George Allen & Unwin.
- Penty, A.J. (1920) *A Guildsman's Interpretation of History*. London. Allen & Unwin.

- Penty, A.J. (1923) *Towards a Christian Sociology*. London. George Allen & Unwin.
- Plaid Cymru. (1979) *Archives of Plaid Cymru (microfilm)*. London. World Microfilms.
- Pope Leo XIII. (1940) *Rerum Novarum: The Papal Encyclical of Pope Leo XIII on the Conditions of Labour*. New York. The Paulist Press.
- Pope Pius XI. (1939) *Quadragesimo Anno. (Reconstructing the Social Order)*. New York. The Paulist Press.
- Pufendorf, Samuel Freiherr von. (1682) *On the Duties of Man and Citizen*. Cambridge. Cambridge University Press.
- Reynolds, Susan. (1984) *Kingdoms and Communities in Western Europe, 900 – 1300*. Oxford. Clarendon Press.
- Richard Commission. (2004) *The Report of the Richard Commission: Commission on the Powers and Electoral Arrangements of the National Assembly for Wales, Spring 2004*. London. The Stationary Office.
- Roberts, Kate. In Ifans, Dafydd. (Ed.) (1992) *Annwyl Kate, Annwyl Saunders (Dear Kate, Dear Saunders) Correspondence 1923-1983*. Aberystwyth. National Library of Wales Press. *Letter No.180 9<sup>th</sup> May 1963*.
- Roberts, Michael. (1982). *T.E. Hulme*. Manchester. Carcanet New Press. (1<sup>st</sup> edition: (1938) London. Faber and Faber.)
- Rosamond, Ben. (2000) *Theories of European Integration*. London. Macmillan Press.
- Rosenberg, Alfred. (1936) *Der Mythos der 20. Jahrhunderts*. München. Hoheneichen-Verlag.
- Ruggie, John. (1993) *Multilateralism Matters: The Theory and Praxis of an Institutional Form*. New York. Columbia University Press.
- Ruggie, John. (1998) *Constructing the World Polity: Essays on International Institutionalisation*. London. Routledge.
- Ruskin, John. (1872) *Munera Pulveris: Essays on Political Economy*. Elder Smith Press.
- Ruskin, John. (1985) *Unto This Last (and Other Writings)*. London. Penguin Press.
- Schall, James V. (1998). *Jacques Maritain: The Philosopher in Society*. Oxford. Rowman and Littlefield Publishers Inc.
- Seton-Watson, Hugh. (1977) *Nations and States*. London. Methuen.

- Smith, Anthony D. (1986) *The Ethnic Origins of Nations*. Oxford. Blackwell
- Smith, Anthony D. (1991) *National Identity*. London. Penguin.
- Smith, Anthony. (1995) *Nations and Nationalism in a Global Era*. Cambridge. Polity Press.
- Smith, Anthony D. & Hutchinson. (2000) *Nationalism: Critical Concepts in Political Science*. London Routledge.
- Smith, Anthony. (2000) *The Nation in History: Historiographical Debates about Ethnicity and Nationalism*. Hanover. University Press of New England.
- Smith, Anthony. (2001) *Nationalism: Theory, Ideology, History*. Cambridge. Polity Press.
- Smith, Anthony. (2004) *The Antiquity of Nations*. Cambridge. Polity Press.
- Spengler, Oswald. (1928) *The Decline of the West*. London. Allen & Unwin.
- Suphan, Bernhard (Ed.) (1877-1913) *Sammtliche Werke*. (Volume: Xvii) Berlin. Weidmann.
- Tamir, Yael (1993) *Liberal Nationalism*. Princeton, New Jersey. Princeton University Press.
- Taylor, Charles. (1995) *The Importance of Herder*. In *Philosophical Arguments*. London. Harvard University Press.
- Taylor, Charles. (1995) *Philosophical Arguments*. London. Harvard University Press.
- Thatcher, Margaret. (1993) *The Downing Street Years*. London. Harper Collins.
- Thomas, Brinley. *The Migration of Labour into the Glamorganshire Coalfield (1861-1911)*. Economica. London. (1930)
- Thomas, Brinley. (1954) *Migration and Economic Growth: a study of Great Britain and the Atlantic Economy*. Cambridge. Cambridge University Press.
- Thomas, Brinley. (1962) *The Welsh Economy*. Cardiff. University of Wales Press.
- Thomas, Ned. (1971) *The Welsh Extremist: A Culture in Crisis*. London. Gollancz.
- Thomas Aquinas. (1964) *Summa Theologiae (Latin text and English translation)*. London. Blackwell.
- Treaty on European Union (Maastricht Treaty)*. (1992) Luxembourg. Office for Official Publications of the European Communities.

- Tully, James. (Ed.) (1991) *On the Duties of Man and Citizen*. Cambridge. Cambridge University Press.
- Ullman, Walter. (1975) *Medieval Political Thought*. Middlesex. Penguin.
- Vertovec, Steven & Cohen, Robin. (2002) *Conceiving Cosmopolitanism: Theory, Context and Practice*. Oxford. Oxford University Press.
- Vincent, Andrew. (2002) *Nationalism and Particularity*. Cambridge. Cambridge University Press.
- Wade-Evans, A.W. et al (1950). *The Historical Basis of Welsh Nationalism*. Cardiff. Plaid Cymru Publications.
- Wæver, Ole. *Europe Since 1945: Crisis to Renewal*. In Wilson, Kevin & van der Dussen, Jan. (Eds.) (1993) *The History of the Idea of Europe*. London and New York. Routledge
- Wæver, Ole. *Europe, State and Nation in the New Middle Ages*. In De Wilde, Jaap & Wiberg, Håkan. (Eds.) (1996) *Organised Anarchy in Europe: The Role of Intergovernmental Organisations*. London. I.B. Tauris.
- Watkin, Morgan. *Polisi Ieithyddol I Gymru (A Language Policy for Wales)*. Y Geninen. May (1923).
- Williams, C.H. (1977) 'Non-Violence and the Development of the Welsh Language Society'. *The Welsh History Review*. Vol. 8. No.4 P.426-455.
- Williams, C.H. (ed.) (1982) *National Separatism*. Cardiff. University of Wales Press.
- Williams, C.H. (1996) *Christian Witness and Non-Violent Principles of Nationalism*. In K. Gerner, R. Johannsson, K-G. Karlsson, K. Nystrom and K. Salomon (eds.) *Stat, Nation, Konflikt*. Lund. Bra Bocker. P.343-394.
- Williams, D.J. (1954) *Mazzini: Cenedlaetholwr, Gweledydd, Gwleidydd. (Mazzini: Nationalist, Visionary, Politician.)* Cardiff. Plaid Cymru Publication.
- Williams, Gwyn, Alf. (1985) *When was Wales? A History of the Welsh*. Harmondsworth. Penguin.
- Williams, Peter. (1922) *Damhegion y Maen Llog (Parables of the Centre Stone)*. Liverpool. Hugh Evans.
- Wilson, Kevin & van der Dussen, Jan. (Eds.) (1993) *The History of the Idea of Europe*. London and New York. Routledge

Wilson, Woodrow. (1918) *Fourteen Points*. In Neiburg, Michael. (2006) *World War I Reader*. New York. New York University Press.

