

NATIONAL RESEARCH
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ARISTOTELIAN AND CICERONIAN THEORY OF POLITICS
AND GEOFFREY KEATING: CHALLENGING THE DISCOURSE
OF ENGLISH DOMINATION IN IRELAND

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Other in early modern Europe: social contexts and repertoires of interpretation”)*

I. HISTORIOGRAPHY. COLONIAL PARADIGM OF IRISH HISTORY

- **Howard Mumford Jones; David Beers Quinn; Nicholas P. Canny; John P. Montano**

Colonial discourse about Ireland was inspired by the notorious “**Topographia Hibernica**” and “**Expugnatio Hibernica**” by **Giraldus Cambrensis** (12th c.) and by Classical precedents.

Colonial discourse established cultural superiority of everything English over everything Irish. Native populace was portrayed as a primitive society lagging behind England.

Colonial discourse justified violence in Ireland, reformation, colonization and dispossession.

I. HISTORIOGRAPHY. COLONIAL PARADIGM OF IRISH HISTORY

- Discussion about Ireland: conflict between **Aristotelian anthropology** and **Erasmian humanism**
- Protestant reformation borrowed pessimistic **Aristotelian anthropology**. Nature can impede self-reformation and can be subdued only by sword.
- **Erasmian humanists** borrowed from Plato a more optimistic view of the humankind as rational and self-perfectible. Men's anti-social behaviour is the product of ignorance and can be reformed by education.



Brendan Bradshaw

I. HISTORIOGRAPHY. COLONIAL PARADIGM OF IRISH HISTORY

- There was continuity between medieval scholasticism and Renaissance humanism.
- Renaissance humanism was an educational and discursive practice grounded in a limited group of Ciceronian and Aristotelian texts
- After 1560s Irish Protestant and Catholic elite shared to certain extent common political vocabulary derived from Aristotle's theory of politics from *Nicomachean Ethics* and *Politics* and its later Christian adaptations, Cicero's *De Officiis* and theories of natural law, taught by tutors, and in grammar schools and in universities in Ireland, England and the Continent.



Ian Campbell

2. GIRALDUS CAMBRENSIS, TOPOGRAPHIA HIBERNICA. DIS III: 10

*Gens igitur haec gens barbara, et vere barbara...
et omnes eorum mores barbarissimi sunt.*

*Gens ex bestiis solum et bestialiter vivens; gens a primo pastoralis
vitae vivendi modo non recedens. Cum enim a silvis ad agros, ab agris ad
villas, civiumque convictus, humani generis ordo processerit, gens haec,
agriculturae labores aspernans, et civiles gazas parum afiectans, civiumque
jura multum detrectans, in silvis et pascuis vitam quam hactenus assueverat
nec desuescere novit nec descire.*

This people, then, is barbarous, truly barbarous... all their habits are barbarisms.

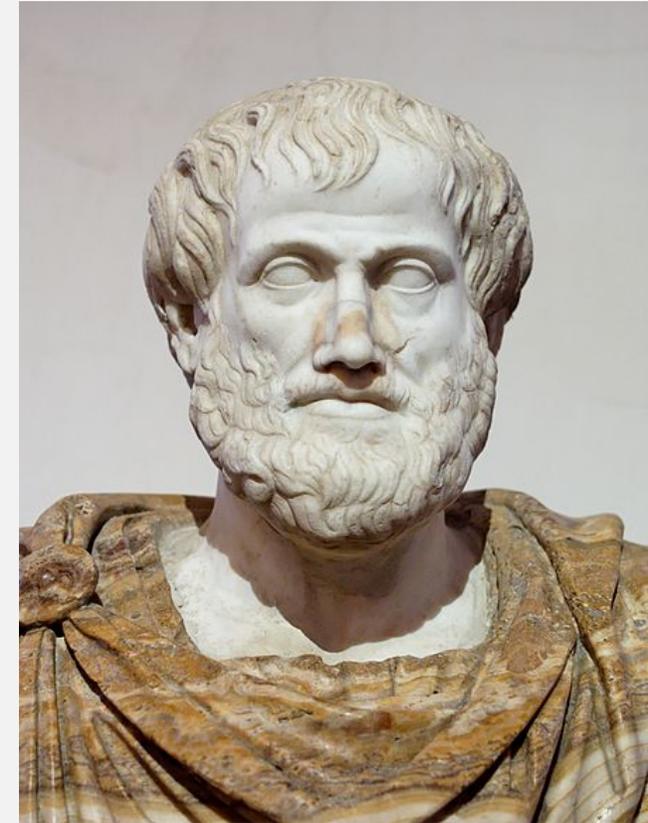
The people is a rude people, subsisting on the produce of their cattle only, and living themselves like beasts – a people that has not yet departed from the primitive habits of pastoral life. In the common course of things, mankind progresses from the forest to the field, from the field to the town, and to the social condition of citizens; but this people, holding agricultural labour in contempt, and little coveting the wealth of towns as well as being exceedingly averse to civil institutions – got used to living in the woods and open pastures, neither willing to abandon their old habits or learn anything new.



Giraldus Cambrensis,
Topographia Hibernica,
British Library Royal MS
13 BVIII, c. 1220

2. ARISTOTLE 'POLITICS'

- A city-state is a product of natural growth (1252a-1253a)
- It is manifest therefore that there are cases of people of whom some are freemen and the others slaves by nature, and for these slavery is an institution both expedient and just (1254b)
- He who is a human being belonging by nature not to himself but to another is by nature a slave. (1254 b)
- Lower animals: slaves and barbarians. The slave is different from the animal only in his ability to apprehend reason; lacks practical wisdom (*phronesis*), necessary for forming the polis.
- Barbarians and slaves tolerate tyrannical government. (1285a). Tyrannical authority is non-political. Tyrant rules the community as master over slaves. Tyrant rules in an oppressive fashion in his own interest, not in the interests of the subjects. Despotism in barbaric societies is natural, and it is based on a passive consent of servile population to such power and on law. (1327a)
- Barbarian governments are not civil constitutions (1266a; 1327b)
- Barbarians and slaves deserve only despotic rule. Greeks are capable of ruling all mankind due to their intelligence.
- The war with barbarians is just: “against wild beasts but also against those human beings who are unwilling to be ruled, but naturally suited for it, as this sort of warfare is naturally just.” (1256b)



2. EARLY MODERN ENGLISH REPRESENTATIONS OF IRELAND

- Aristotelianism and Ciceronianism defined early modern ideologies of domination.
- Giraldian discourse about Ireland was supplemented by the discussion of the extent of Irish barbarity, their political organization, language and their nature.
- The Irish in early modern English representations were classified as barbarians, whose image shifted from monstrous irrational beasts, and solitary, barbarous, sub-human woodsmen to relative barbarians. It resembled the subtype of Northern barbarian: “... the nations inhabiting the cold places and those of Europe are full of spirit but somewhat deficient in intelligence and skill, so that they continue comparatively free, but lacking in political organization and capacity to rule their neighbors” (1327b)

2. EARLY MODERN ENGLISH REPRESENTATIONS OF IRELAND. PRE-POLITICAL CONDITION OF THE IRISH

- Gaelic polity – faulty constitution ruled by tyrants (**Richard Stanihurst, Fynes Moryson and William Camden**)
- Early modern concept of tyranny: the oppressive regime in which the ruler pursues only one's own interests, abuses his own subjects, governs not on the basis of the law, “domesticates” property of the subjects and governs arbitrarily.



John Speed, *The Theatre of the Empire of Great Britaine...*, 1616, British Library

- Hic igitur considerantum est, inter hos Hibernicos esse, primarios tyrannos quorum imperio plures tenentur....

At this point it must be noted that among the Irish there are chief tyrants, under whose imperium people live...

(J. Barry, H. Morgan, eds., *Great Deeds in Ireland: Richard Stanihurst's De rebus in Hibernia gestis* (Cork, 2013), 110-111)

- These foresaid meere Irish Lords of Countryes governe the people under them with such tyranny, as they know no king in respect of them, who challenge all their goods and Cattell to be theirs saying, that their Progenitors did not only giue them lands to till, but also [lawes] [coves] and other goods to possesse /10/ at the lords will and disposall. Neither take they any rent of them for their lands, but at pleasure impose mony vppon them, vppon all occasions of spending, as Iourneyes to Dublin, or into England, paying their debts, intertayning of the lord Deputy, or Tudges, and like occasions, sometymes true, sometymes fayned, taking a great or small portion of their goods, according to the quality of the Cause, and these exactions they doe well call Cuttings, wherewith they doe not only cutt (downe], but deuoure the people

(Graham David Kew, 'Shakespeare's Europe revisited: The unpublished itinerary of Fynes Moryson (1566–1630)' (Unpublished Ph.D. thesis, Birmingham University, 1995): 686)

2. EARLY MODERN ENGLISH REPRESENTATIONS OF IRELAND. THE ROLE OF NATURE

- Aristotelian objective — in order to study anything one has to identify its essence/nature.
- **Richard Stanihurst** and **John Davies**: mostly optimistic view of the nature of the Irish. The Irish are at a more primitive stage than the English but after the completion of the conquest due to education and expansion of the common law they would pursue the same path the English had done. (Ciceronian perspective)
- **Edmund Spenser** and **Fynes Moryson**: pessimistic view of the Irish nature. Spenser and Moryson advocated war on the Irish on account of their barbarity and insisted on different legal regimes in Ireland thus propagating coercion and exclusion of the Irish from the common law.
- “...theire nature in generall rather requires a valiant, Active Deputy, then one that is wise and politicke”
(Kew, ‘Shakespeare’s Europe revisited’: 672, 794-797)

3. GEOFFREY KEATING (1580-1644) AND ARISTOTELIANISM

- **1580-s** – birth in the Catholic family, descendants of Anglo-Norman settlers, in the county Tipperary
- **1590-s** – education in the bardic school of Mac Raith
- **1600-s** – doctorate in the University of Rheims. Keating's curriculum was based on the Jesuit model (*ratio studiorum*) which concentrated on rhetoric, theology of Thomas Aquinas, Aristotle's philosophy, Biblical exegesis and the languages, mainly Latin
- **1600-s** – teaching in the Irish College in Bordeaux
- **1610-s** – working as a priest in the diocese of Lismore
- **1634-1635** – writing *Foras Feasa ar Éirinn*
- **1640-s** – death.

FORAS FEASA AR ÉIRINN AND CLASSICAL AUTHORS

- In the text Keating mentions Classical historians (**Herodotus, Strabo, Pomponius Mela, Solinus, Flavius Josephus**), geographer (**Gaius Julius Solinus**) and philosopher (**Macrobius**)
- Aristotelianism directly or indirectly through Second Scholasticism, Old English constitutionalism and the writings of his opponents influenced Keating's argumentation and political statements

GEOFFREY KEATING VS DISCOURSE OF ENGLISH SUPERIORITY

- **Polemical context**
Confessional controversies ('Annales Ecclesiastici' by Caesar Baronius, the writings of Spanish Jesuit Francisco Suarez or the writings of English recusants). The objective – to demolish the argument of the opponent.
- Truth (fírinne) vs lies (bréag)



GEOFFREY KEATING VS DISCOURSE OF ENGLISH SUPERIORITY

- Aristotelian objective - to “investigate things in the process of development from the beginning (1252a)”
- The **discourse of ancient constitution**: almost continuous history of the ancient Irish kingdom from the times of king Sláinghe.
- Irish kingdom as a typical justice-dispensing commonwealth in which there were learned men who were able to counsel the king. Irish kings were monarchs who ruled in accordance with laws, convened Parliament from time to time, and had their own army.

*Ionann iomorro Feis Teamhrach is ríoghdháil choitcheann, amhail **pharlaimint**, mar a dtigeadh coimhthionól uasal is ollamhan Éireann go Teamhair gacha treas bliadhain um Shamhain, mar a gcleachtaoi leo reachta is dlighthe d'ordughadh is d'athnuadh, is fromhadh do dhéanamh ar annálaibh is ar sheanchus Éireann.*

Now the Feis of Tara was a great general assembly like a **parliament**, in which the nobles and the ollamhs of Ireland used to meet at Tara every third year at Samhain, where they were wont to lay down and to renew rules and laws, and to approve the annals and records of Ireland. (FFÉ, ii, 132)

**NEW POLITICAL VOCABULARY IN FFÉ.
THE WORD 'RÍGACHT'**

<i>Foras Feasa ar Éirinn</i>	<i>Lebor Gabála Éirenn</i>
<i>Do gabh X ríoghacht Éireann</i> X obtained the kingdom of Ireland.	<i>Rogab X ríge hÉirenn</i> X obtained authority over Ireland.

3. KEATING AND OLD ENGLISH CONSTITUTIONALISM. IRELAND AS COMMUNITAS PERFECTA.

- **Jean Gerson (1363-1429):** perfect community is ‘an independent, autonomous corporation, possessing the fullest authority to regulate its own affairs without external interference’.
- **Parliament of Drogheda in 1460**

... the land of Ireland is and at all times has been corporate of itself, by the ancient laws and customs used in the same, freed of the burden of any special law of the realm of England, save only such laws as by the lords spiritual and temporal and the commons of the said land had been in great council or parliament there held...

Edmund Curtis, R. B. McDowell, eds., ‘Declaration of independence of the Irish parliament, 1460’ in *Irish historical documents, 1172-1922* (New York, London, 1968), 174

*Saoilim nachar thuig Stanihurst gurab amhlaidh do bhí Éire 'na **ríoghacht ar leith léi féin**, amhail **domhan mbeag**, agus na huaisle agus na hollamhain do bhí innte i n-allód, gur chumadar breitheamhnas, leigheas, filidheacht agus ceol agus riaghlachaibh cinnte riu do bheith ar bun i n-Éirinn: agus mar sin níor chneasda dhó-san breitheamhnas meardhána do dhéanamh [nó do bhreith] ar cheol na h-Éireann d'á lochtughadh.*

I think Stanihurst has not understood that it is thus Ireland was (being) a **kingdom apart by herself**, like a **little world**, and that the nobles and the learned who were there long ago arranged to have jurisprudence, medicine, poetry, and music established in Ireland with appropriate regulations : and, therefore, it was not seemly for him to have formed and delivered a hasty rash judgment censuring the music of Ireland. (FFÉ, i, 38-40)

✓ Ireland is distinct from England not only constitutionally, but also culturally, historically and linguistically.

*... agus mar sin i dtús na n-aimsear is iad lucht an fheasa agus an dream ba mó fonn don **mhaitheas phuiblidhe** do mhéadughadh do toghthaoi lé fearaibh Éireann ós cionn na gcríoch go dtáinig Pádraig is neart na heagailse ...*

... and thus in the beginning of the ages it was the learned and those who were most zealous for the maintenance of the **commonwealth** that the men of Ireland elected to rule the districts until Patrick came with the power of the Church. (FFÉ, i, 8-10)

KEATING AND SECOND SCHOLASTICISM

- Commonwealth is not so much a product of natural growth but also an artefact of will and consent.
- ‘Translation theory’ emphasized that rulers do not derive their authority directly from God but as mediated through the people. The transfer of power from the commonwealth to the ruler implied alienation of the legislative rights of the former.



FFÉ AND PASSIVE CONSENT

- **Tol (will)**

*I d-Teamhraigh do gairthí gach rí do ríoghaibh Éireann riamh ag a mbíodh ríoghacht Éireann uile, do **thoil** na n-ollamhan is na n-uasal ria gcreideamh, agus do **thoil** eagailse uaisle is ollamhan ó shoin anuas, ar Leic na Ríogh.*

It was at Tara on Leic na Ríogh that every one of the kings of Ireland who possessed the kingdom of all Ireland, by the **consent** of the ollamhs and of the nobles, used to be inaugurated before the Faith, and by the **consent** of the Church and of the ollamhs ever since the Faith. (FFÉ, iii, 12)

- **Togha (choice)**

*... do bhrígh nach léagthar san seanchus go raibhe aoinrí ar Éirinn riamh ó aimsir Shláinghe go Gabhaltas Gall acht rí tháinig lé **togha** an **phobail** agus lé harrachtas a ghníomh is lé neart a láimhe i gceannus Éireann.*

... since we do not read in the seanchus that there was ever any king of Ireland, from the time of Slainghe to the Norman Invasion, but a king who obtained the sovereignty of Ireland by the **choice** of the **people**, by the excellence of his exploits, and by the strength of his hand. (FFÉ, iii, 182-183)

FFÉ AND PASSIVE CONSENT

- ***Deóin* (consent)**

*An tan iomorro adchuala Ruaidhrí Ó Conchubhair, rí Connacht is Éireann, a chúigeadhaigh is an lucht cíosa is cánachais do bhí aige, is an lucht da dtug féin tuilleamh is tuarastal, do dhul ar scáth ríogh Sacsan, do mheas 'n-a mheanmain féin go madh lugha do mhasladh dó umhla do thabairt da **dheoin** ioná da **aimhdheoin** uaidh do rígh Sacsan.*

Now when Ruaidhri O Conchubhair, king of Connaught and of Ireland, heard that his provincial kings and those who paid him rent and tribute, and those to whom he himself gave wages and stipends, had put themselves under the protection of the king of England he judged in his own mind that it would be less an indignity for him to submit to the king of England **voluntarily** than to do so **against his will** (FFÉ, iii, 342-343).

3. KEATING, SECOND SCHOLASTICISM AND ARISTOTLE. THE ISSUE OF TYRANNY

- Will is one of the most important criteria which enables Keating to differentiate between legitimate and illegitimate power.
- **anfhlaithe – tyrant**
*Is urusa a aithne ar an dteist-se do-bheirid na seanchaidhe ar Bhrian nar dhligtheach anfhlaithe do ghairm dhe, óir ní do réir a thoile nó a neirt do rinne follamhnughadh na críche ré linn bheith i bhflaitheas dó, acht do réir reachta is dlighidh na críche. Óir is é is anfhlaithe ann an tí do-ní follamhnughadh nó riaghlughadh do réir neirt is ní do réir **cheirt**; agus ó nach mar sin do rinne Brian, acht do réir **cheirt** is reachta, ní hiontugtha anfhlaithe air.“*
- It is very easy to see from this character which the seanchas give of Brian that it would not be right to call him a tyrant, for it was not according to his will or his strength that he governed the country during his reign, but according to the country's law and custom. For a tyrant is one who governs and rules according to might and not according to the **entitlement**; and since it was not thus Brian acted, but according to **entitlement** and law, he cannot be called a tyrant.”. (FFÉ, iii, 264-265)

ARISTOTLE, *POLITICS*, 1285A

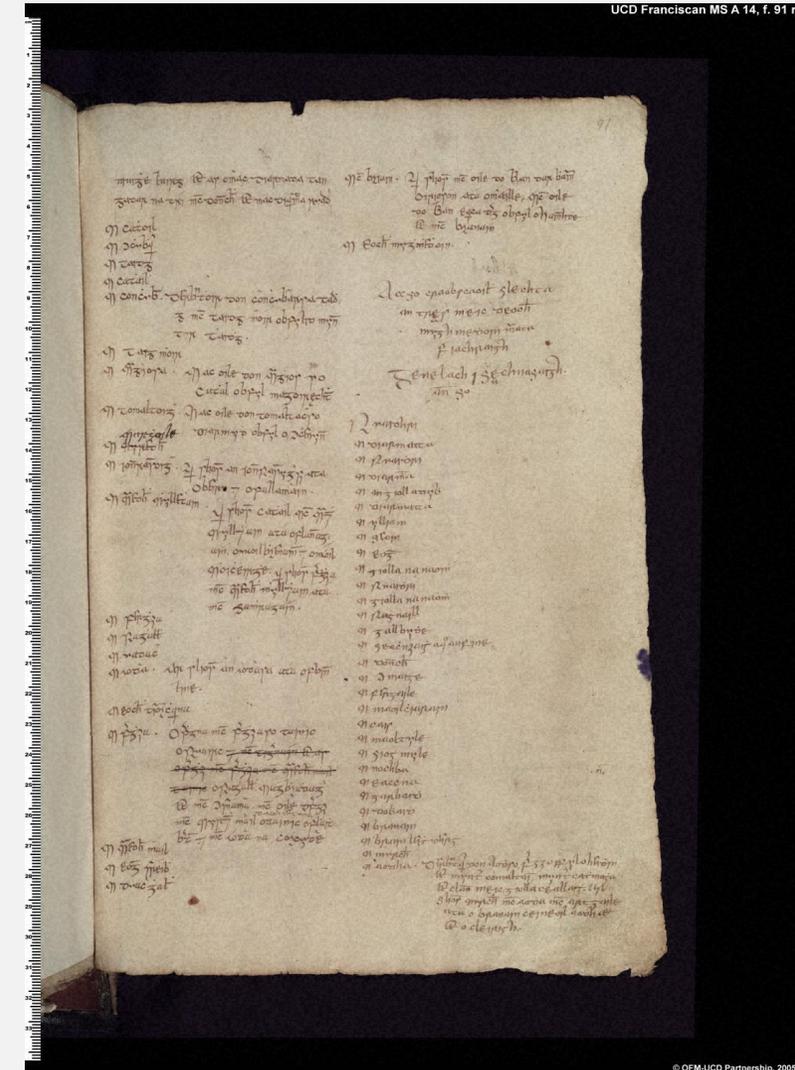
- “... for kings are guarded by the citizens in arms, whereas tyrants have **foreign guards**, for kings rule in accordance with law and over willing subjects, but tyrants rule over **unwilling subjects**, owing to which kings take their guards from among the citizens but tyrants have them to guard against the citizens.”

GEOFFREY KEATING

- Do ghabh an t-anfhlaith Turgesius ón Noruaegia go n-a **fhuirinn d'Fionnlochlonnaibh** barántas Éireann trí bliadhna déag.. (The tyrant Turgesius of Norway with his army of Fionnlochlonnaigh held the supremacy of Ireland thirteen years...) (FFÉ, iii, 173-174)
- Ar mbeith iomorro do Thurgesius san anfhlaitheas fhoiréigneach-so, agus Gaedhil tré **umhlacht aimhdheonaigh** ag gialladh dhó (While Turgesius thus held oppressive sway, and while the Gaels were submissive to him in unwilling obedience) (FFÉ, iii, 176-177)

TYRANNY IN FFÉ

- Tyrants hold people in slavery (*moghsaine*) and in oppression (*anbhroid*).
- Tyranny - involuntary submission and dependence on the will of another; extraordinary taxation and inability to manage one's own property; exclusion from political participation
- Tyrants are overseas foreigners (Scandinavians, Romans, foreigners, Fomoraigh, Picts) and socially inferior people (Cairbre Cinnchait who came from the ignoble tribe of Athachthuaith).
- A lawful claimant to the throne was not only a person who was ordained by God and chosen by political community but a person who had inborn entitlement for this (*ceart*).



- Nó ma's tré theacht fá bhrághaid Maoilsheachlainn i bhflaitheas na críche ar thogha urmhóir uaisle Éireann do gairfidhe anfhlaith dhe, féachadh an léaghthóir cia córa anfhlaith do ghairm dhe ionáid anfhlaith do ghairm d'urmhór a dtáinig do ríoghaibh Éireann do chlannaibh Míleadh. Óir ní tháinig an seachtmhadh fear díobh nach é marbhadh an ríogh roimhe do dhéanadh; agus ó nach gairmthear anfhlaith dhíobh, do bhrígh go dtángadar don fhuil ríoghdha, tré mharbhadh na ríogh táinig rompa, mar an gcéadna, ar mbeith do Bhrian don **fhuil ríoghdha**, ní hiontugtha anfhlaith air tré theacht fá bhrághaid Mhaoilsheachlainn, is nachar mharbh é, agus é ar a chumas, amhail do-nídís cách ris na ríoghaibh do bhíodh rompa i bhflaitheas Éireann, amhail adubhramar. (FFÉ, iii, 264-265)
- Or if he should be called a tyrant for supplanting Maoilseachlainn in the sovereignty of the country, having been chosen by the majority of the Irish nobles, let the reader judge whether it be more just to call him a tyrant than to call the majority of the kings of Ireland who sprang from the children of Milidh tyrants (usurpers). For not one in every seven of them gained the sovereignty who did not do so by killing the king who came before him ; and since they are not called tyrants (usurpers), being of the **royal blood**, for killing the king who came before them, in the same way, since Brian was of the royal blood he should not be called a tyrant for having supplanted Maoilseachlainn, whom, though he was in his power, he did not kill, as other kings killed those who came before them in the sovereignty of Ireland, as we have said.

TYRANNY IN FFÉ

- Discussion of the legitimacy of Brian Boru might be an allusion to the argument against the Irish king expressed by **Lughaidh Ó Cléirigh**, participant of the renowned Contention of the Bards on the side of the seed of Eremon in the poem *Ro chuala ar thagrais a Thaidgh* (I have listened to your argument, Tadhg). There he accused Brian Boru of illegal deposition of the crowned king Máel Sechnaill mac Domnaill.
- Keating's notion of tyranny is a conflation of native perceptions of legitimacy (ceart) with Second Scholasticism's discussions of tyranny.
- There are tyrants who took hold of the kingdom not by just title, but by force and, and who in spite of the absence of descent from kings or from lords took the throne (Francisco Suarez, *Defensio fidei catholicae*, VI, iii, 1)

SO WHAT?

- Ciceronian and Aristotelian theories of human society which were often employed as ideologies of domination, could also be employed in the discourses challenging this domination.
- Keating contested imperial foundations of English rule in Ireland based on the alleged inherent Irish barbarity and demonstrated unfairness of these accusations.
- The English myth established the heredity of Irish barbarity whereas Keating, demonstrated the heredity of Irish civility and hereditary claims of Irish Catholic political community to power grounded in history.

SO WHAT?

- Ancient constitution discourse of FFÉ was anti-imperial. Keating suggested native, insular foundations of the legitimacy of ancient 'Irish' constitution.
- Keating envisaged British composite monarchy not as an imperial polity.
- He envisaged it as the form of union known as *aeque principaliter*. The constituent kingdoms after their union could have been treated as distinct entities. The king was expected to maintain their distinctive identity and status
- Aristotelianism helped Keating to articulate the particularist discourse of protonational nature.