

God and the EU

Chapter 7

European Union, Identity and Place

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Introduction

This chapter is an exercise in political theology exploring ways in which European Union citizens might think about political life. The chapter has four sections: first, a discussion of how people, especially Europeans, identify with their places and their politics – this section considers the chief threat to European peace, ethnocentrism; second, a discussion of two key civic tasks regarding the interrelation of European Union member-states, ‘adequate identity’ and ‘sufficient agreement’; third, a conversation between contrasting political analyses of human motivation and civic participation concerning these tasks; fourth and finally, an account of the distinctive contribution of ecclesial identity to European consciousness.

This chapter, while paying due attention to legal, historical, economic and constitutional matters, will operate on the conceptual level supported by concrete illustrations. Concepts will be analysed theologically to raise questions for all citizens and engage in conversation with the ‘secular’ forms of expression proper to political discourse. For the word ‘secular’ signals a Christian belief, that political life is shared by those who, for various reasons, both value the many forms of relatively peaceful social co-existence and communicate with each other as fellow citizens just because they are fellow creatures of God.

Identification, people and place: the threat of ethnocentrism

Many European Union (EU) citizens feel as though their politics operates six feet in the air, detached and perhaps ignorant of citizens' own participation in the places and goods upon which their flourishing depends. Their politics do not seem like the politics of their place but like the politics of no place at all. The political noise and fury appear to go on above the ground level of daily experience, leaving behind bewildered citizens in confused places.

While this has long been a reported experience, it has been peculiarly accentuated in recent years. A chief, though not sole, reason is that the European experience has appeared to portray politics as essentially reducible to financial affairs. Printing money and flickering computer screens seem to be the mode of communication by which nations are interrelated. Decisions about money and debts appear to some European citizens not as the wise counsel of neighbourly friends but as the diktats of far-away bureaucracies. Today's Greek inheritors of the traditions of Athenian democracy who chant slogans against German neighbours exemplify this widely held and deep-seated feeling, a discordant cry amidst the symphonic hopes of post-World War Two Europe. Such discord shapes political life as every politician, local, national and European knows. For it challenges the possibility of a supranational unity of hearts, that 'concord' necessary for an 'ever closer union' – a moral, not just a financial or legal union – to be substantially realised.

At the heart of the challenge is the issue of the identification of people and their leaders with places. Such identification is a practical, political, long-term endeavour and so requires *conceptualisation* lest political activities proceed without an awareness of how identification works.

In what does 'identification' consist? Consider a conceptual distinction between 'place' and 'space'. To identify with a 'place' is to participate in describing, deliberating about and pursuing the welfare of that place's people. Such participation involves defending and developing the place *as* a place lest it become simply 'space'. A space is not a place if it cannot make people feel and act as if there is a common activity in which they share. Space is thus distinguished from place. In a place people share and value together the goods by which they realise an adequately common social identity. The identity must be *common* because, unless people feel they share the burden of life in purposeful activity, hostility emerges. But it need only be *adequately* common because what is required for politics is not maximum cooperation between all citizens but something more modest: cooperation sufficient to enable people peaceably to secure the social roles and vocations they desire.

'Places' are not necessarily very large. To be 'the people of a place' is not reducible to being the body of citizens who share a nation-state. Both nation-states and smaller communities must inspire people's common sharing and valuation of goods in a place. Without a place in which the welfare of people can be sought, achieved and sustained, all activity that might otherwise be called 'political' becomes a mere flailing of limbs, gesturing at a world other than the one in which we are given to live.

Politics' task is to enable peoples' identification with places and to maintain this strenuous vocation's attractiveness to citizens amidst alternative, hostile and incompatible allegiances. As such, making and sustaining places is an intensely practical, political endeavour. It does not have to be grandiose. For example in the United Kingdom, making places will involve ensuring that the large amount of new housing required in the coming years is achieved by conserving and developing the goods which existing residents enjoy rather than degrading

those goods. What is true of housing is also true of public institutions such as health services which are similarly under pressure.

In order to bring politics down to earth and seek harmony instead of the cacophony which alienates many from participative political experience, driving them into the old hatreds from which the EU was supposed to emancipate people, it seems necessary to learn again the importance of place. Place, one observer suggests, “is the social communication of space...Places are the precondition for social communication in material and intellectual goods...a function of our social communications, extending as far as they extend” (O’Donovan, 2005: 255-256). This ‘communication’ in space involves *spoken* conversation about the value of common goods. But ‘communication’ goes beyond conversation to *activities* whereby things talked about as good are actively shared, enjoyed, adapted and preserved.

Places are made by the ‘communications’ of individuals and groups in their varied families, institutions and associations. Through such interactions, traditions and social cultures are created and developed. Places may also be made, in principle, between *peoples*, represented by their leaders but in many other forms of economic and cultural interaction, via that basic feature of the EU, the nation-state. In this sense, the territory of the EU might conceivably be a ‘place’.

But the realisation that a place is *our* place does not automatically follow from treaties or laws. Rather the first person plural ‘our’ by which many share a place must continually be reassessed so that places do not collapse under pressures into internal confusion and external enmities. The spreading battles in the United Kingdom, pressed by UKIP, about access to

‘our’ welfare and ‘our’ housing by citizens from accession states such as Bulgaria and Romania is a signal of just this effect.

The quest that space be liveable as ‘our’ place presents a special challenge for the EU in which the peoples of nation-states increasingly interpenetrate each other’s social communications in innovative economic, military, cultural, legal and political ways. From the seemingly trivial but deeply felt effects of the ban on imperial weights and measures in British fruit and vegetable markets to legal judgments about prisoners’ voting rights and freedom of religion to the shared use of aircraft carriers by France and the United Kingdom to the complexities of a mobile labour force in institutions such as the UK National Health Service, the interrelation of these European nation-states poses deep challenges, not least because of the number of citizens from other nation-states beyond the EU (such as the Commonwealth nations) who also live and work within European borders.

Ethnocentrism and the threat to peace

To talk of a place for *a people* will trouble many. It recalls the European collective memory of the twentieth century, when the notion of a *pre-political* social entity, a *Volksnation*, was turned to the darkest purposes. Accordingly, a foreshortened retrospective on the European journey is needed, taken at the angle from which our enquiry departs. For dreams of a pure *volk*, a people undifferentiated by stock and culture, reigning in millennial splendour over Europe, threatened to overwhelm civilisation in a nightmare of annihilation. Such history places an indelible question mark over the reconcilability of strong national identity with a liveable transnational peace. Ethnocentric nationalism is the extreme which constantly threatens to subvert the entire enterprise and discourse of the EU.¹

For the EU, politics must be not ethnocentric but rather in the business of negotiating disagreements and bringing peaceful resolutions to disputes within and between nation-states. For this to happen, there must be some shared underlying commonality which makes dispute itself intelligible, a first person plural by which a dispute is owned as ‘ours’ inasmuch as it is a disagreement about goods and places in which two parties have a common stake.

Ethnocentrism threatens the possibility of negotiation between nations about goods by displacing the goodness of the world in which all participate in favour of the superiority of one, ethnically uniform nation and a preference for the success of that nation’s participation in the earth’s goods over against all comers. Fuelled by such a bad idea, twentieth century Europe witnessed the negation of the negotiation and compromise politics which are basic to democracy and peace.

However, while recognising that religions, including Christianity, have corruptly sponsored some ethnocentric nightmares, this politics of compromise is arguably native to the best of European *Christian* wisdom. Over against those who see ‘religion’ as “essentially more prone to violence – more absolutist, divisive, and irrational – than [liberalism]” (Cavanaugh, 2009: 6)² and drawing on Europe’s varied traditions concerning churches and civic authorities, Rowan Williams observes that the “distinctively European style of political argument and debate is made possible by the Church’s persistent witness to the fact that states do not have ultimate religious claims on their citizens” (2012: 79). For Williams, the tension which energises negotiation and debate concerns whether ultimate identity is claimed by a political authority appealing to a pre-political *Volksnation* or by the Christian God whose concern is for *every* nation and tribe. On Williams’ thesis it is only when the tension between God and government is vigorously maintained, when both secular national identity and politics itself are reckoned provisional and liable to eclipse by the Kingdom of God, that the ethos of

compromise, debate and discussion *combined with* a proper love of nation may take root and grow, creating the conditions for the development of robust nation-states in peaceful interrelation. On Williams' view, it follows that such an interrelation of politics and ultimate authority is well-suited to ready Europe to oppose the kind of horrors it has witnessed and hopes never, God forbid, to see again. The fact that 'God' *can* be co-opted by devilish ethnocentrism does not entail that religion must be banished from public recognition but rather the opposite.

To sustain a politics which aims at peace between nation-states by negotiation and compromise, much turns on three core questions: what counts as an *adequate* realisation of various political identities – local, national and European; what should be reckoned as *sufficient* agreement about goods; and, extending Williams' observation, what role the *interplay of political identity and religious – especially Christian – faith* has to play. I will explore the contours of these questions in the rest of this section before turning to more extended political and theological responses to them in the third and fourth sections.

Adequate political identity

The notion of an adequate political identity raises the question: adequate for what or for whom? With respect to people and place, political identity is adequate if it enables citizens to conceive of the environment in which they live as their 'place'.

European citizens might reasonably conceive of their environment in a series of more-or-less concentric circles or ellipses, pivoting around themselves, encompassing local, national and European 'places', perhaps incorporating other inflections and demarcations such as 'Mediterranean' (not just, for example, Italian, Spanish or Cypriot), 'British' (not just, for example, Northern Irish or English) or, because place and work are interrelated, 'rural and

agricultural' (as distinct from urban and financial). Politics has the gift of giving structure to elements of these self-conceptions, by no means exhausting their meaning but at least articulating their contours.

For example, politics articulates territorial-legal self-conceptions whereby people know what is required in order to leave the shores of Libya in a boat and arrive in Italy (or Spain) *legally*. It does this through immigration law, border control and other evidences of its authority, supported, if necessary, by coercive force alongside missions of mercy. Politics also bears witness to and sustains constitutional commitments whereby a head of state such as the Queen of the United Kingdom is recognised as the Crown whose government directs the business of Parliament with respect to both England *and* Northern Ireland. Politics also provides ways for the competing interests of rural and urban populations to be brought into disciplined communication, conflict and compromise. Think, to return to a previous example, of government guidance concerning the construction of new homes; or, for a further illustration, the (much-contested policies) on renewable energy, especially on-shore and off-shore wind farms.

In each case, politics enables people to recognise their identities and so organise their actions with regard to their place. This process by which politics enables identity to emerge may be categorised using the headings *differentiation* and *construal*. Libya as non-European is differentiated from Italy and Spain as European but all three are construed together in the common matter of migration in their shared Mediterranean place. Northern Ireland is differentiated from England but construed together in the common affair of continuing cultural identity and shared laws. The rural and urban are differentiated but construed together in finding solutions, however hotly disputed, to changing housing and energy needs.

The *sine qua non* of common construal, in each case, is differentiation of identities based upon the places which people see as ‘their’ places. When those construals become less plausible, contest emerges: for example, Independence movements in Scotland and Catalonia seek what seems to them more plausible construals of their places; the Campaign to Protect Rural England desires to protect cherished landscapes from the effects of climate change and thoughtless housing developments.

It is from within the process of differentiation and construal that representation, debate and persuasion emerges. The recognition of the self through the other quickens the self’s identification with a place but, in so doing, readies the self for a discourse which has the capacity to decentre the self in favour of the common task. For example, when two distinct local council authorities recognise that, while retaining the same pattern of local elected representation, identity and accountability, residents in both areas will be better served by one common structure and shared services across the one shared place, such decentring has taken place. As an elected local councillor in 2011, I observed this challenging process first-hand in the plans for local authority services being shared by St Edmundsbury Borough Council and Forest Heath District Council.

The appeal of differentiated identities is that they sustain the drive to self-determination. The first-person plural ‘our’ depends upon the ‘you’ and the ‘I’ of self-determining individuals and associations, communities and institutions. In domestic politics, such associations might include churches, residents groups, Trade Unions, Local Enterprise Partnerships or ethnically defined associations such as a Turkish, Filipino or Pakistani community network. These associations are many, overlapping, national and local. Sovereign nation-states are the bodies *par excellence* which claim citizens’ loyalty, supporting self-awareness and self-

determination by enabling such associations to flourish alongside national citizenship. In this lies the heart of their continued appeal in Europe and globally today.³

Ethnocentrism, by contrast, offers self-determination without the kind of differentiation and construal about the good which marks discursive relations between and within communities and nation-states. To do better, nation-states must support an identity for individuals adequate for an 'I', a national 'our' and also, in some tense, complementary fashion, a trans-national 'our'. This identity is adequate not totalising, enabling identification with a territory but not encouraging the impression that such identification exhausts the possibilities of human life.⁴

Thus it is national identity which grounds a meaningful cosmopolitanism, the privilege of those who have passports. No one is *in fact* a citizen of the world. Nation-states can claim allegiance because they can provide the self-determination people need. For, under the protection that nation-states provide, the space people occupy in differentiation from their neighbours, near and far, may be conceived of as a place liveable in social peace. Such peace precisely arises only when places are shared through orderly if at times boisterous discussion, compromise and negotiation (see Hordern, 2014). Such an ethos, giving rise to openness to disciplined negotiation with neighbouring peoples, is a chief fruit of an adequate political identity.

Sufficient agreement on goods

To conceive of oneself in a place and yet construe the concerns of one's national and international neighbours as shared requires sufficient agreement on the goodness of goods or, at least, sufficient agreement about how goods are evaluated. To the question 'Sufficient for what?', therefore, comes the reply 'Sufficient for the peaceful communication of neighbours with one another' when 'communication' bears the burden of meaning described above,

incorporating both shared conversation and shared activity. Agreement depends on procedures for discussion whereby goods become commonly reckoned *as* good.

Goods come in at least four forms. A discussion of these forms will shed light on the interrelation of the EU with national identity.

First, there are goods whose value may be discerned in a market such as the EU's Single (Internal) Market. Other chapters develop this theme in more technical ways which draw out this market's strengths and weaknesses. I note here that peoples' communication in marketable goods is basic to a sense of place. Interdependent trade relations between cultivated places can establish social communications which make for peace. As the Danube flows through the nations of continental Europe, including member-states of the European Union, trade communication may help in forming channels of peace, worn into the fabric of land and social relations. As the English Channel and the Thames form a historic trade route between Great Britain and other nation-states so communication is formed by the ebb and flow of trust and distrust, like an inland waterway tidal system circumscribed by steep banks of contract.⁵

Theologically speaking, it is through the goods of *creation*, worked on by humanity, that such communication, trust and peace are achieved and renewed. The notion of such 'goods' depends on the Christian doctrine that goods have their goodness on account of the creative work of God who *is* good. The question of what goods are good *for* invites the process of human practical reasoning as to how, in particular circumstances, such goods are to be enjoyed and what market value, if any, should be placed on them. What is required for the argument here is that sufficient agreement that *these* goods of creation are valuable and that

there is some way of communicating about their value makes possible the process of negotiation, not least about the money value of goods. The Christian doctrine of creation offers a unifying account to interpret the way that the peoples of nation-states in the EU, having an adequate identity through identification with their places, may be bound together in sufficient agreement and negotiated compromise about the goods of the created order.⁶

Second, for these goods to be made available, one good must be in principle recognised, namely the good of labour in the Single Market which makes the created goods of the world accessible to people inside and outside the EU. Good work is at the heart of the identification with place which makes the Union plausible. Work's value is institutionalised variously but perhaps most starkly in the Schengen agreement. Accession to Schengen is a closely guarded crossing-point, whereby neighbours from diverse nation-states recognise one another as those who value the goodness of work and will not abuse open borders by becoming parasitic on fellow EU citizens' labour.

The opt-out exercised by Ireland and the UK signals that such recognition is hard-won among European citizens and governments, but hardly insulates such polities from the question (or problem) of free movement. Indeed, when member-states fear that newcomers joining Schengen may abuse their welcome, as witnessed by the hesitant hand offered by Germany and the United Kingdom towards Bulgaria and Romania, such fear reveals underlying beliefs about national identity. The ethos of work itself stands as a humane vocation above and beyond the Euro or pound sterling.⁷ For it concerns the spirit and heart of each culture's citizen and associations. A nation which sees work as the pinnacle of their identity may look suspiciously at cultures where work has not produced similar levels of prosperity to their own or seems to occupy a lower place in the social ecology, prized but submitted to family,

religion or rest. Such social differences can all too easily become the occasion for sweeping judgments against international neighbours as feckless, lazy or worse, judgments unsupported (or only ambiguously corroborated) by data about actual working hours or productivity, data which itself requires considerable interpretation.⁸

The EU's capacity to allow for significant cultural difference about how and why work is good is a test of its continued appeal. More subtly, there are the various ways in which different cultures adapt to the challenges of a modern economy vis-à-vis the manner of handling created goods. To conceive of the created goods of the world as demanding of us that *we* adapt our work to *them* shows a humility which commonly has the benefit of making nations prosperous, at least in the short-term.

But flexibility is not only the ability to respond to emergent economic trends. Rather, it involves recognising that the costs for non-marketable goods of the adaptability required by economies heavily weighted towards financial services and banking rather than manufacture and technology may itself be a good reason for a culture's non-adaptation. For example, some traditional cultures might refuse adaptation to work which requires a high degree of abstraction from tangible goods. The speedy adaptability which the promise of prosperity in a modern globalised economy elicits *seems* to have been less in evidence in southern European nations, such as Cyprus, Portugal and Greece, than in Germany, the Netherlands or the United Kingdom which have managed to combine financial services with more specialised and high-tech manufacturing. Differences in cultural attitudes towards work must shape the EU's aspiration to become a moral union of trust in which each carries their own load while having the wherewithal to support others who are struggling to carry theirs in a global market.

Third, there are other goods, beyond the good of work and cultural adaptability (or reasoned resistance to adaptation), which are not communicable according to normal market rules but about which sufficient agreement is important. Two examples, marriage and knowledge, will make the point.

Marriage has long been recognised as an important good by Europeans, though its practice has varied. Marriages may bind individuals from separate nations together but are not to be bought and sold. A European Union in which, through European citizenship, the love, friendship and fruitfulness proper to marriage are enabled to grow unhindered by national boundaries is humane. More controversially, where there is disagreement about the nature of ‘marriage’, the negotiation of trans-national cultural change by individual nation-states – regarding, for example, same-sex marriage or adoption rights for same-sex couples – is significantly inflected by obligations real and perceived towards wider European mores. Though marriage itself may not be marketable, the social price of entry into the market may, for some at least, be rather high.⁹

Knowledge is a good which, through the growing trend of Open Access scholarly publishing agreements, is moving out from quasi-market rules into free-to-view patterns of participation. While the research agendas which drive the creation of new knowledge, in national and European research, are quite reasonably linked to member-states’ economic interests, knowledge gained through publicly funded research is losing its price-tag by being made freely available. The European Research Area aims to model to the world a responsible attitude to intellectual goods, especially in science and technology. If it can do so while securing the necessary patents and in the face of nation-states’ own economic interests, it will

boost European hopes for tackling trans-national challenges such as climate change and food security (see Eve, 2014).

In the goods of marriage and knowledge, there are commonalities which cross borders binding peoples together in sufficient agreements to address perceived grand challenges, whether social or scientific. But sufficient agreement is not total agreement. This is indicated, on the one hand, by the consistent and firm resistance of Poland to legal recognition of same-sex unions (The Economist, 2013) and, on the other, by Italy and Spain's sustained opposition to the official European preference for the translation of patents into German, French and English (*Spain v. Council*, 2013). These disagreements indicate that commonalities in goods, which are not reducible to market value or which, like Open Access knowledge, break the mould of markets, provide special opportunities for the deliberative, democratic discourse which makes a European Union conceivable.

The fourth and final good is one which is neither commensurate with the market nor sharable across national boundaries nor easily adaptable to the development of supranational institutions or transcultural mores. It is the good of a place called 'home' from which people go out and to which they return. The goods of marital friendship and knowledge enable people to recognise home as home and to care for it with informed wisdom. A key challenge for the European Union, especially those most mobile within its borders, concerns how motivation for action which supports adequate political identity and sufficient agreement on goods relates to the deep consciousness of this place called home. The *oikonomia* upon which the interrelation of member-states depends and through which flows the trust which strengthens moral union seems dependent on what Roger Scruton (2013) has called *oikophilia*, the basic human motivation to care for and love one's home. Scruton sees in the

great ecological challenges which face humanity a testing of people's capacity to identify with their homes sufficiently so as to act to preserve those homes as liveable places for future generations. This tension between near and far lies at the heart of the crisis of European identity and will occupy much of the rest of this chapter.

Adequate identity and sufficient agreement in theological perspective

As noted above, Williams has claimed that the theological *interplay* of ultimate and penultimate allegiances – towards the Kingdom of God and the state – has been the crucible of the distinctively European democratic vision. For Europeans the question of 'home' was traditionally rooted in being a pilgrim people seeking an eternal home in the age to come while resident in particular places in the here and now. The ancient Hebrew prophet Jeremiah's proclamation to the exiled Israelites in Babylon was to build houses and settle down while waiting for their restoration to the Promised Land (Jeremiah 29:1-23). Home was both near and far, here now but also yet to come.

For such a vision, the tasks of identity and agreement are actually *energised* by being adequate and sufficient, rather than comprehensive and complete. Over against the fear endemic in Europe's twenty-first century economic crisis, a theology which argues that the disclosure of true identity and total consensus is *deferred* until politics is no more, at the second Advent of Christ, frees citizens from fear to work and pray steadily for the peace of their member state and the states of their neighbours. Christian theology expects only *partial* agreement on the value of marketable goods between and within nation-states and only *partial* consensus, if any, about the *quality* of those goods which break the mould of markets, such as marriage and knowledge. The pronouncements of successive Bishops of Rome on this matter illustrate the kind of disagreements we should continue to expect.¹⁰

This theological position may be experienced as an unwelcome cold shower by those who expect steady ‘progress’ towards the ever-closer convergence of European minds. Such hope should properly be called an ‘over-realised epistemology’, inasmuch as it expects the perfectly integrated communion proper only to the Kingdom of God to be worked out in the here and now. But few European visionaries are quite so unrealistic. A chastened Europeanism, with reduced expectations about total agreement across member-states and tolerance of those who reject ‘progressive’ policies, should enable a better quality of debate, especially as regards social institutions such as marriage.

Places to live

The preceding sections have explored the kinds of identity and agreement in political life which seem necessary for a peaceful interrelation between the citizens and governments of European member-states. In these final two sections, two ways of understanding citizen motivation, participation and identity in the EU will be examined and given explicitly theological analysis.¹¹ In this first section, I will discuss further a positive vision of European places for people to live well, beginning, however, with some pressures on those places.

Pressures on places

While large parts of European citizenry have become more mobile in their working practices and more global in their outlook, Europeans at large still hunger for an affective political experience through which natural human desires for place, rather than space, can be met. The interplay of mobility and love of place has contributed to the rise of a new notion of patriotism, developed to support an emerging European consciousness. Jürgen Habermas argues for a ‘constitutional patriotism’ that addresses the “tension between the universalism of an egalitarian legal community and the particularism of a community united by historical

destiny [which] is built into the very concept of the national state” (1998b: 115). For Habermas, European, cosmopolitanism undermines ‘ethnocentric’ self-interpretations and dangerous notions of a *Volksnation*. More controversially, he believes that global political conditions are bringing about the decline of the nation-state and the emergence of post-national forms of political identification (1998b: 105-107). As regards identity and agreement, his positive proposal is that

“constitutional rights and principles...form the fixed point of reference for any constitutional patriotism that situates the system of rights within the historical context of a legal community. These must be enduringly linked with the motivations and convictions of the citizens, for without such a motivational anchoring they could not become the driving force behind the dynamically conceived project of producing an association of individuals who are free and equal” (Habermas, 1994: 134).

For constitutional patriotism, what “unites a nation of citizens, as opposed to a *Volksnation*, is not some primordial substrate but rather an intersubjectively shared context of possible mutual understanding” (Habermas, 1998a: 159). This means that, as Muller puts it, “citizens are asked to reflect critically upon particular traditions and group identities in the name of shared universal principles.” A national consciousness, with its “attachments and loyalties” should be constantly revised through a “critical, highly self-conscious back-and-forth between actually existing traditions and institutions, on the one hand, and the best universal norms and ideas that can be worked out, on the other”, a process which involves “a critical distancing from inherited beliefs” (Muller 2007: 28-29). This is the route to an identity adequate to the twenty-first century and an agreement on goods suitable for global, cosmopolitan life.

This constitutional patriotism, in which universal principles both depend on and criticise traditions, puts pressure on the sense of place we have been considering in two ways. The first is that it requires “a continuous civic self-interrogation and open argument about the past” (Muller 2007: 34). For Muller, the process of “European integration has helped Western European countries to gain some distance from their own pasts, as these pasts ceased to serve the particular post-war function as moral foundations of individual nations; integration lessened the need for national self-assertion, for homogenous narratives of national continuity” (2007: 107). On this reckoning, mindfulness of tradition does not require *commitment* to the traditional forms of life that have depended on settled places. Instead, the course is steered towards a post-national, post-conventional political consciousness.

Second, if political life represents a compromise between a nation-state’s forms of local life and European universal norms, then the nation-state – still less any local community – must not be seen as a sufficient arena for the development of a democratic consciousness. The question such constitutional patriotism presses is how traditions and places relate to the procedures whereby the peoples of nation-states debate and cooperate with each other across national boundaries. The concern that follows is whether attachment to place, whereby people begin to reflect and deliberate about sharing goods in common, can survive and thrive in a politics whose discourse operates on the level of essentially trans-national procedures, themselves drawn from no tradition or place at all.

Oikophilia

Habermas’ core concern is to explain “what will motivate people to engage in the self-critical, other-regarding practice of deliberation in a democratic community” (Laborde, 2002: 595-596). The question of motivation is also Roger Scruton’s, although he answers it rather

differently. He draws on the trans-generational, Burkean notion of *oikophilia* introduced above with respect to sufficient agreement about the good of home. For Scruton, motivation is bound up with the conservation of places in which individuals participate and social life flourishes. In contrast to the mythic social contractarian ‘we’, Scruton appeals to “ways of forming a first-person plural [that] are [not] so conscious” (2006: 6). He suggests that there are “other, more instinctive and more immediate, forms of membership... which have the desired result of making it possible for people to live together in a state of mutual support.” In particular, he describes how in England, the instincts of kinship and religion, under the influence of “home”, that localised “focus of loyalty”, have brought about remarkable cultural achievements (Scruton, 2006: 19). For example, the notion that the land has been held in trust as a place to be cared for and passed on to one’s own descendants has gone deep down into English law shaping the sense of national identity. He cites as evidence in English law the law of trusteeship and the “law of the land”, institutionalised in dispersed courts and the right, in serious cases, to jury trial (Scruton, 2006: 119).

Scruton believes that liberals, while outwardly despising this conservative, localised, trans-generational vision, secretly desire

“an experience of membership that will open the heart, and also close the mind. At a certain point the strain of living without an ‘us’ and a ‘them’ becomes intolerable. On the lonely heights of abstract choice nothing comforts and nothing consoles. The Kantian imperatives seem to blow more freezingly, and the unfed soul eventually flees from them, down into the fertile valleys of attachment” (1990: 326).

These valleys are the places in which adequate identity emerges and sufficient agreement can be sought. While Habermas avoids Scruton's critique to some extent because he argues for a constant movement between the valleys and the heights, the local and the universal, a life *between* facts and norms, Scruton and Habermas are, in the end, irreconcilable. For Scruton insists that every

“political order depends, and ought to depend, upon a non-political idea of membership. And to the extent that it emancipates itself from that idea...to that extent does it lose its motivating force, just as individuals lose their moral identity and will, to the extent that their prejudices, pieties and moral instincts are cancelled by the abstract imperatives of the ‘pure rational chooser’” (1990: 303).

The non-political is especially concerned with the localised rather than the dislocated. By contrast, Habermas' rejection of a pre-political *Volksnation* and recommendation of a post-national consciousness embodied in supra-national, continental institutions together undermine the consciousness and motivation for participation which Scruton calls *oikophilia*, an awareness of being at home in one's place.

Ecology

This difference has significant practical ramifications. For Scruton, motivation to care for a place and participate in its politics comes from this domestic root. He argues that a humane notion of citizenship must be ecologically compelling. One rationale for closer union is that European nations should have sufficient common commitments to act together on global challenges such as climate change. And yet, Scruton argues, the only plausible source for the attitudinal change required is the *oikophilia* that much environmental policy ignores.

Furthermore, Scruton notes that while “we are reluctant these days to provide these [environmental] obligations with... theological backing... for religious believers, unchosen obligations are not only vital to building a durable social order, but also properly owed to God” (2013: 224). Unchosen obligations which incur special local loves are argued for by Nigel Biggar. Over against an indiscriminate, cosmopolitan love, Biggar has described how “an individual should feel special affection for, loyalty toward, and gratitude to those communities, customs, and institutions that have benefited her by inducting her into human goods” (2014: 7).¹² This is no ethnocentric jingoism but an affirmation of a shared created order, allowing for both the universal duties such an order imposes and the fact that enjoyment of that order involves being localised. Recall the earlier emphasis on the goods of creation as basic to adequate identity and sufficient agreement. The created order is always local first. Humans are spatial beings, engaging with creation always in its proximate forms, although they may also participate in more distant relations, especially now through electronic communication in goods. But an attention to locality is what makes trans-national discussion about goods possible since goods must at the beginning and in the end be good *for us*; and we – you and I – are first and last local. The localisation of discussion of what is good is the necessary basis for citizens to engage in wider, even trans-national debates.

As for ecological concerns, Scruton argues that aesthetically toned attachment is what motivates people to care for their place (2013: 383-385). He observes that the assault on aesthetics through initiatives in energy production, such as wind-farms, threaten people’s love of place and therefore their ecological, trans-national consciousness.¹³ For love of place motivates people to take responsibility for their environment and internalise the costs attendant on such responsibility rather than externalising them to others, whether living, yet unborn or of another place.¹⁴ Such a core motivation as *oikophilia* must not be taken for

granted or ridden over roughshod. To do so is to invite precisely the alienated responses which the unrepresented feel. Politics must therefore be *humanely localised* as a protection against ethnocentric nationalism and as the only sure motivational route towards an ecologically just and peaceful life for all. The problem Scruton identifies is that such a politics conflicts with European Union bureaucrats whose “edicts... are propagated without respect for national differences or existing sentiments of legitimacy, and with no real expectation that anyone will be motivated to obey them. The result is a gradual erosion of respect for law” exemplified in the failure of the Common Fisheries Policy which led to the overturning of traditional jurisdictions and the sharp decline in fish-stocks (2013: 312-313).

While this is certainly not an argument against all wind farms (for example), it is an argument for ecological planning which attends to the *oikophilia* which motivates people to care for the world in the first place. Even some off-shore wind farms, when visible from the coast, can destroy a people’s sense of place. Recent contentious examples have included the Navitus Bay wind farm off the Jurassic Coast of Dorset, an area which enjoys UNESCO World Heritage Status. The threat of an insensitive policy is the destruction of the common loves, associations, communities and localities that offer the best hope of a participatory politics and indeed a sustainable ecologically harmonious life.

Christian churches and European consciousness

The preceding argument has juxtaposed two responses to the challenge of adequate identity and sufficient agreement through two different descriptions of citizen motivation – commitment to universal principles anchored in but supervening on national institutions; and *oikophilia*, threatened today by lukewarm affirmations of attachment and bureaucracies insensitive to locality. What is at stake is how humane motivation to seek the common good

is understood, a crucial theme for the consciousness of citizens of the European Union and for the peace and prosperity of its member-states.

As Williams' analysis indicated earlier, politics has not been alone in seeking wisdom on such matters. Although various ethnocentrisms have in fact been sponsored by some churches (e.g. the 'German Christians' or the Serbian Orthodox church during the Balkan wars), Christian churches, shaped by the theology outlined thus far, have often construed local agency and trans-national concerns together in their self-understanding and in their relation to the societies and governments in which they live. As peoples in places, churches are ideally equipped to disclose the humane creaturely life which makes for a local, highly motivated participation which has a trans-national horizon, a consciousness which might make the European Union live and breathe afresh. Other religious communities may also bring their own gifts and, indeed, problematic pasts, to this discussion. But, as Williams suggests, the interplay of political identity and specifically *Christian* faith, properly informed by past excellences and properly chastened by past distortions, provides peculiarly important insight into the interrelation of multiple poles of allegiance. Ecclesial identity affirms the creaturely quality of a trans-national aspiration while interrogating European consciousness, ensuring that it only ever aspires to a provisional place in human hearts. This affirmation and interrogation is motivated both by convictions about human destiny in the new heaven and the new earth, for which no political identity can substitute, and by convictions about what constitutes a humane vocation now. Some concluding reflections about the life of churches will illustrate what this might mean.

The life of the early church, as seen in the New Testament books of Luke and Acts, discloses rival ways of understanding the interrelation of government, law and locality and the

formation of social consciousness.¹⁵ Luke's narrative describes how Roman authorities failed to enact justice in the trials of Jesus and Paul, due in part to the universal, imperial legal structure and political culture which dominated their consciousness. Jesus, an innocent man, was condemned to death by Pilate whereas Paul was wrongly imprisoned and deported without intelligible charges. Imperial authority, being drawn from far-off Rome, failed to do justice at the local level. In some ways, ironically, the Roman Empire attempted to allow for *more* local allegiance and legal variation for prudential purposes (e.g the tetrarchy permitted in first century Palestine) than is allowed for by the margin of appreciation doctrine recognised by the European Court of Justice (ECJ), in judging cases according to the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union under the Lisbon Treaty, and by the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR), in judging cases according to the European Convention on Human Rights.¹⁶

The point at issue with Habermas is that, if a Union of nation-states is to flourish, the ability to ensure continued participation of peoples in the politics of their own places is paramount to the continuation of justice; and the failure of the Roman Empire to enact justice is shown up by the life of the church. Local churches at their best, as traditional communities *par excellence*, may be foci for thoughtful action towards renewing political life in each member-state and across the EU. As communities living that tension between penultimate and ultimate discussed above, they ought to be committed to gathering locally in order to worship God and to preserve and renew 'places', bringing their gifts to the development of *oikophilia*. Since the home for which Christians ultimately hope is already guaranteed in the new heaven and the new earth, they are free for self-donation now in service of their neighbours, both near and far. They are free to make a home while they wait for home. Such an ethos both combats and invites temptation. The dark side of hoping for home is to abandon care for where one is

– this is a constant hazard for Christian faith in Europe or elsewhere. But the way to overcome this temptation is not to take one's eye off the ultimate horizon but to walk towards it *through* the contemporary landscape drawing wisdom and insight from what is to come and working it out in the current moment. The bodily life of the future age compels Christians to be concerned for the humanisation of the localities of the present in order that space become and remain a place to live in social peace, a place not only for churches but for all people. Place is not then about some narrow 'religious freedom' but more broadly about human freedom to enjoy peaceful social relations. The freedom of Christian people, energised ultimately by the incarnate, death and mighty resurrection of Jesus Christ, provides wisdom about what constitutes freedom for all people to love and renew their own places. In short, the life of local churches should issue in that typically European source of civic participation, adequate identity and sufficient agreement on goods.

I note that these Scriptural and contemporary political insights are in tension with Scruton's thought. Scruton's concern for pre-political membership resembles to some extent the freedom of the church and, by extension, the social freedom of people. It seems to track the distinction between political authority and the society that gives political authority its rationale (O'Donovan and O'Donovan, 1999: 109). However, unlike the pre-political dimension of member-states of the EU, which is now inaccessible, being hidden beneath the necessities of coercion and law, churches signal the possibility and in some measure the reality of human emancipation from diverse political identities for life in the kingdom of God. In this sense, the pre-political is dependent on the disclosure of true human freedom beyond coercive politics which will only come about at the second advent of Christ. It is precisely this horizon of freedom which protects the democracy which Europeans rightly value. For it suggests the accountability of political authority both to the citizenry and to God.

Scruton, though he gestures in this direction, does not provide sufficient distinction between church and nation to foster this freedom or this kind of accountability.

Conclusion

The task of all citizens is daily to work for the sustenance and renewal of their places. This is something many do quite unselfconsciously and without the need for recourse to a conceptualisation of place, still less with thought of the influence of Christianity on European political life. However, at the level of local government, national government and local churches, the renewal of place towards the kind of social peace which this life affords is a worthy goal, for which churches are commanded to pray and act. The surprising, powerful logic of Christian faith is that seeing this life in light of the life of the new heaven and the new earth precisely offers *renewal* to a participative, local, national and even European political consciousness.

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¹ For historical analysis of nationalism in Germany in the post-World War Two period, especially the 1980s, see Evans (1987). The article critically assesses questions such as the quasi-mythological deployment in German discourse of ‘the’ Jews and ‘the’ Germans and the problems of national guilt, in relation both to some ‘conservative’ historians’ attempt to recast the Nazi past and to the critiques advanced by Jürgen Habermas (on whom see further below) and others.

² Cavanaugh (2009: 5, italics added) observes how the “myth of religious violence... provides secular social orders with a stock character, the religious fanatic, to serve as *enemy*.”

³ For theological and philosophical reflection on this theme, see Buchanan and Margaret (2003).

⁴ “A people with no relations has no identity, and the government of those with no identity has no legitimacy” (O’Donovan, 2005: 214).

⁵ For recent discussion of ‘capitalist peace’, see Schneider and Gleditsch (2012).

⁶ For theological reasoning concerning such goods, see O'Donovan (1986, esp. Chapters 1-2) and Finnis (2011: 81-99).

⁷ For discussions of work, see Hughes (2007) and Hordern (2010).

⁸ OECD data on this matter require interpretation; long hours do not, of course, necessarily entail greater productivity.

⁹ For analysis see Brewer (2014) and Paternotte and Kollman (2013).

¹⁰ For example, Pope Pius XI's *Casti Connubii* (1930) and Pope Francis, *Lumen Fidei* (2013: Chap. 52).

¹¹ See Hordern (2013: Chap. 4-5). The discussion here resituates and extends that argument with respect to 'place' and ecological considerations.

¹² Biggar (2014: 11-13) further appeals to the affirmation of the *multiplicity* of linguistic communities in the events of Pentecost, to the affirmation of national identity and natural goods in Paul and Jesus, notwithstanding the relativization of such identity and goods (e.g. marriage) in the New Testament (2014: 2-5).

¹³ See Scruton (2013: 274-83) for the general discussion of aesthetics.

¹⁴ For the notion of externalisation, see Scruton (2013: 151-9); offloading the costs on to future generations is deeply contrary to the Burkean beliefs of a conservative like Scruton.

¹⁵ I note that imaginative construals of this sort are not altogether outlandish in contemporary politics. Twice-elected Conservative Mayor of London, Boris Johnson, colleague and rival to David Cameron, has construed current European political life through the lens of the low bureaucracy, high-productivity, sexually adventurous and – to some degree – religiously tolerant *pax Romana*. Johnson (2007) knows about the brutality of the pre-Christian Roman Empire but nonetheless finds its remarkable capacity to attract the allegiance of many millions of people, principally 'Europeans' but also 'Turks' to a single central figure, Caesar, strangely alluring. Johnson's classical and political interests take him into theological terrain.

For Johnson, the Christian story is remarkable in tracking elements of the birth of Augustus Caesar. However, the *contrast* he draws misunderstands the eschatological point, as seen in his comment that the “worship of the emperor Augustus was in itself a political act, an act of loyalty to Rome. The act of Christian worship did not carry any such political implications” (2007: 193). The point, as Williams indicates, is that it is precisely the difference between Christ’s and Augustus’ kingdoms which maintains the tension that gives European political consciousness its characteristic flavour. The political implications of Christian worship are far more extensive than Johnson’s lens of Anglican-lite Christianity allows readers to perceive.

¹⁶ The margin of appreciation doctrine allows for a degree of variation in the application of law according to particular EU member state’s (in the ECJ) or Council of Europe signatory’s (in the ECtHR) local cultural or philosophical commitments. With respect to our earlier analysis of toleration of a range of doctrines of marriage, but this time with respect to the ECtHR and Council of Europe, an interesting analysis of an inconsistency in the use of the doctrine emerges in Paul Johnson: “Since the early 1980s, the Court’s jurisprudence has shown a progressive narrowing of the margin of appreciation afforded to states in respect of sexual orientation issues. Nevertheless, the application of the doctrine remains somewhat inconsistent in respect of complaints brought to the Court by homosexual applicants. A key source of this inconsistency is variability in the importance that the Court attaches to the existence of a European consensus of opinion when determining the relevant margin of appreciation available to a state” (2011: 589). Not only is there uncertainty about the *importance* of an existing consensus but also the nature of any consensus if it exists and consistency in applying any consensus across differing types of cases. Johnson’s interpretation is that the consensus was unwarrantably judged to be different regarding same-

sex adoption and same-sex marriage or at least that the same consensus has been differentially applied but without clear warrant.