

# **The Legacies of 1945: The Evolutions of European Civic Morality**

**Martin Conway<sup>1</sup>**

This article explores the widespread use of the “lessons” of the era of the Second World War in Europe since 1945. This usage proved to be a resilient element of European cultural values, especially in Western Europe during the era of the Cold War. However, with the emergence of a more diverse and pluralist Europe since 1989, so this form of civic morality has been replaced by new narratives of the war years, and of the twentieth century as a whole. These indicate changes not only in historical perspectives but also in the structures of civic morality.

History and morality have often had a tense relationship. The idea that the irreducible complexity of the past can be simplified to serve as moral tales for the present has long been distrusted by historians concerned to assert the autonomy of their scholarly discipline (e.g. Evans, 1997). However, there have been good reasons why the history of Europe in the twentieth century – and more especially its mid-century decades – has long had a particular association with wider moral issues. In an age when more specifically religious definitions of good and evil receded from public discourse and private behaviour, the events of the mid-twentieth century came to serve as a focus for a wide-ranging civic morality, incorporating issues such as the conscience of the citizen, the limits of obedience to state authority, and the necessary respect for individuals and minority groups. Why that should have initially been the case does not, perhaps, require much explanation. The events of the 1940s, and especially

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Correspondence concerning this article should be addressed to Martin Conway, Balliol College, Oxford, OX1 3BJ, UK. Email: martin.conway@history.ox.ac.uk

the forms of mass killing which developed in that era, were on such a scale that in the decades following the defeat of Nazism, the shadow cast by these events – most obviously the barbed wire and camps of the institutions of the Holocaust – remained an unavoidable point of reference for the cultural critics of the post-war years, perhaps most notably George Steiner (Steiner, 1971). But the shape taken by this discourse, and more especially its simple endurance across the subsequent decades, is a subject that does demand explanation. That we should stand still in the face of what happened then remains a moral duty for all who value the elementary dictates of human solidarity. But the respect owed to past suffering does not in itself explain why it acquired, and maintained, this larger significance. The purpose of this contribution is therefore to explore how and why the war years became over the course of the second half of the twentieth century the basis for a durable civic morality in many areas of Europe, that spoke to the present at least as much as to the past. In doing so, the focus of this paper will be on its durability, but also its evolution over time. Perhaps because we have for so long been accustomed to regard 1945 as the origins of our shadowed present (Clark, 2003), less attention has been paid to how the evolution of this civic morality provides a means of tracing the ways in which moral discourses in Europe have evolved over the final decades of the twentieth century and the opening decades of the twenty-first century.

The contours and content of what I shall term the morality of '45 are too familiar to require any lengthy exposition. Briefly put, in the years following 1945, a dominant interpretation developed that presented the Second World War, and more especially the combination of military fighting, aerial bombing, civil war, and social atomisation, that characterised many areas of Europe during the war, as the nadir of Europe's modern history. Europe – as the photographic images of the era powerfully conveyed – had been reduced to ruins (Conway, 2020, pp. 109-110). Those ruins were physical, political, social, but above all human. The national and local variations in wartime experience (which were, in reality, profound) therefore mattered much less than the pervasive sense that across much of Europe the war had reduced people to a state of nature, and more especially to a primitive and negative version of that state. The social indicators of this Year Zero or *Stunde Null* in German were omnipresent: the destitution of urban populations, the despairing flight of refugees and displaced people, the absence of any recognised source of authority, and the pervasiveness

of an amoral criminality and obsessive individualism – all served to demonstrate how far Europe, and Europeans, had fallen (Mazower, 1998).

This however was only the first element of the diptych. Its pendant was an equally emphatic discourse about Europe's post-war recovery, or (as it was often phrased) rebirth. No matter that the heartlands of eastern and central Europe remained under the control of an oppressive and essentially exploitative occupying power. It was in the new territories of Western Europe that this recovery from the war rapidly gathered momentum. The focus of Europe had in effect moved westward, and it was west of the river Elbe, and more especially around the rivers Rhine and Po and in the territories gathered round the Alps, that the new Europe acquired its definition. This created a new geography, but also a new sense of emotional identity: this was the *Heimat* of the Europe that had emerged from the war, and which was delineated a little too readily from the past and present brutality of the east (Conway, 2018).

The political factors which determined the course of that recovery were many, and included the marginalisation or even criminalisation of the radical political forces that had emerged through the war years, the recapture of communities and populations by state authorities, and the construction of a disciplined order of nation-states under the aegis of the Cold War alliances. But these political choices formed only one part of a rhetoric of reconstruction which had much wider resonances. The rubble was cleared away, ruined buildings were demolished, and in their place were constructed the vast housing projects, and forms of infrastructure provision that almost literally concreted over the visible memories of the war. Populations too recovered their social coherence, as food supplies were restored, communities recreated, and broken families reunited and glued together as the most powerful emotional symbol of a recovered normality (Zahra, 2011). Political life, too, acquired a new centre of stability through the broadly similar systems of political democracy that were created in the nation-states of Western Europe after 1945. The introduction of new constitutions in Italy, Germany, and France, and the careful reconfiguration of the pre-war political systems of other states invested the politics of Europe west of the Iron Curtain with a uniformity which was unprecedented since the Napoleonic era (Conway, 2004). It appeared to be vindicated, too, by economic success. The economic legacies of the war, and of the

preceding period of economic depression, were effaced through an unprecedented period of high economic growth which stretched until the 1970s, and which created the enduring impression of the post-war decades as the *trente glorieuses* or “miracle years” (Fourastié, 1979; Schissler, 2001).

These indicators of recovery, as presented in the pedagogic texts of school and university courses on “Europe since 1945”, often took the form of an unremitting digest of statistics and graphs, all of which pointed ever upwards (e.g. Fulbrook, 2001). But at the heart of this teleological historical interpretation of the origins of the present there always remained a strong moral core. Western Europe had recovered so successfully from the nadir of 1945 because Europeans had turned their back on false gods in order to adopt a trinity of apparently complementary values: a humanist Christianity, liberal intellectual norms, and a European identity. The many national variants of fascism had not merely been defeated and overthrown; they had been categorically rejected, as the very public exhibition of the horrors they had committed – the camps, the massacres of civilians, and the machinery of racial extermination – served to remind. Communism, too, was a victim of this reorientation of Europe’s moral compass. Whereas Communism had formerly held a strong appeal for many Europeans as the vehicle of an essentially liberatory message of collective and personal freedom, after 1945 it was defined as the antithesis of the morality of modern western societies. Communism provided the totalitarian other against Western Europe defined itself, as displayed through the Stalinist show trials of the post-war years, and the brutal repression of those demanding their freedom on the streets of Budapest in 1956 (Crossman et al., 1950; Feinberg, 2017).

The civic morality that emerged during the post-war years therefore took the form of a careful melding of themes old and new. Much of this was expressed in terms which might be described as a soft Christianity. The language of rechristianisation was never far from the surface in Western Europe after 1945. The explanation of the success of fascism, as presented in the post-war years, lay not simply in the political crises of the 1920s and 1930s and the material sufferings of specific social groups, but in the way in which too many Europeans had lost contact with the values of their Christian heritage, rendering them vulnerable to the appeal of essentially pagan forms of modernity (Mitchell, 1995). After 1945, however, the

heightened visibility of the Christian Churches – and above all of Catholicism – in the landscapes, social institutions, and democratic politics of Western Europe encouraged a recentring of populations around the moral and spiritual truths of Christianity (Chappel, 2018). This was less a matter of belief than an adoption of the values associated with Christianity. An uncompromising atheism went out of fashion; instead, the apparent rapprochement between a more less rigid Christianity and the inheritance of progressive values derived from Europe's modern development appeared to offer a self-consciously moderate balance between present and past (Müller, 2011).

This was facilitated by a new, and notably less anticlerical, definition of liberalism. The pursuit of the chimera of collective freedom, so it was argued by a spectrum of post-war writers from Isaiah Berlin to Jacques Maritain, had led from the Terror of the French Revolution to the horrors of the first half of the twentieth century (Talmon, 1952; Doering, 1983). The moral recovery of Europe therefore depended on the universal acceptance of a constellation of rights regarded as fundamental. These were more individual than collective, more liberal than social, and focused on the personal freedoms of belief, of expression, and of opportunity. Newly elevated as human rights (and embodied in post-war documents such as the European Convention on Human Rights), these became a badge of the new West European civilisation, and a means by which Europeans could denounce the absence of equivalent rights in the Socialist regimes of eastern Europe as well as in the states of post-colonial Africa and Asia (Moyn, 2015; Duranti, 2017).

Implicit in this discourse was always a strong sense of a European identity. Europe was one of the most unlikely victors of the Second World War. The continent which had done more than any other to bring oppression, conquest, warfare, and mass murder to all areas of the globe over the previous century was celebrated after 1945 as the home of a distinctive civilisation. The Europe which had provided the glories of the Renaissance, the millennial Christian *Abendland* of provincial Central Europe, and the turbulent creativity of its major modern cities, was explicitly segregated from the evils to which Europe had also given birth, many of which were conveniently located on the other side of the Iron Curtain. The new Western Europe of the post-1945 era was therefore a sanitised and implicitly frontieraed Europe, reduced to manageable and human proportions, and the location of institutions of

European co-operation, which suffocated the national antipathies of the recent past in a new symbolism and language of transnational co-operation and shared values (Kaiser, 2007). This encouraged, in turn, a Europeanization of memory: the memory of the war did not exist within national silos – though there remained of course strong nuances of difference. Instead, the dominant narrative was that Europe had experienced a collective trauma, from which the recovery was demonstrated by the adoption of a new set of values, that were simultaneously both democratic and European (Conway and Depkat, 2010).

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Placed in this context, the centrality of the memory of 1945 to the civic morality of the immediate post-war decades seems comprehensible, and indeed over-determined. West Europeans found in a somewhat caricatured memory of the Third Reich everything they were determined not to be. This was a testimony of experience: of survivors who had witnessed, and often experienced all too directly, the consequences of totalitarian dictatorship, and of a brutalised world. To define Europe against that legacy was the means of climbing back up the slope, and of re-civilising the Germans, and implicitly other Europeans (Jarausch, 2006; Depkat, 2007). However, what is perhaps less easy to explain is why this morality of '45 endured. Though much had already changed in the politics, society, and culture of Western Europe by the end of the 1960s, this dominant morality proved able to outlive by some considerable distance the circumstances of its creation. Once launched as a story that (West) Europeans told each other about their recent past, this discourse remained an obstinate survivor in the rapidly changing landscapes of late twentieth-century Europe. The emergence of the movements of cultural contestation during the later 1960s, the return of economic crises in the 1970s, the subsequent emergence of new political movements of the populist right, and the re-unification of Europe which followed 1989, were all momentous changes. But somehow none of them destroyed the ascendancy of the morality of '45.

Much of its resilience lay in its ability to adapt to new circumstances. Thus, a morality created to meet the functional needs of immediate post-war Western Europe proved capable of ingesting and incorporating new social and cultural debates. Indeed, one of the most striking features of the culture wars that developed in Western Europe from the 1960s

onwards was the degree to which they found an outlet in debates about the war: the responsibility of older generations for the horrors of Nazism, the legacies of authoritarian mentalities in the state structures of a supposedly democratic Europe, and the complicity of state authorities and others outside Germany – notably in Vichy France – in the crimes of the Third Reich (e.g. Conan & Roussio, 1998). At the same time, too, the war was repackaged to reflect new moral and societal preoccupations. Thus, the sufferings of the Second World War were relocated and generalised from the soldiers of Europe's national armies to the pain inflicted on civilians, especially women and children, by modern industrial warfare. The Holocaust was similarly recast from the enactment of specifically Nazi projects of racial purging to the expression of the anti-Semitism and many other forms of prejudice – racial, imperial, and sexual – long present in European societies. And, after 1989, a specifically West European account of the lessons of the war was expanded to incorporate – or, indeed, in some sense to colonise – the territories of post-Communist Europe, which were rather patronisingly assumed to be ready to “come to terms” with the legacies of their long-frozen wartime past.

Above all, the morality of '45 still had powerful friends on its side. The legitimisation of the nation-states of Europe, and more especially of the trans-national institutions that united them, continued to rest on the historical narratives, and moral lessons, that had emerged from the experiences of the war. As a number of nation-states in eastern Europe had to learn after 1989, there was no space in this memory of the Second World War for victors and losers, or still less for right and wrong. Instead the morality of '45 imposed a common – European – learning experience on all participants, embracing former agents of fascism such as Germany and Italy, on a level with the victims of their projects of brutal expansion (Judt, 2000). The primary guardians of this universal morality were the institutions of the European Union, which reached the full pomp of their new-found power in the final years of the century, as well as the centrist alliances of political forces, ranging from Christian Democracy to Social Democracy, who remained the dominant political forces at the national and European levels.

In addition, the morality of '45 had established itself within the pedagogic content of mass education. The oppression perpetrated by fascist regimes, the sufferings of the war years, and the post-war recovery of Europe formed the dominant arc of the teaching of

History, broadly defined, within most school curricula across Europe, thereby socialising new generations of Europeans who had no direct experience of the war in its centrality for the origins of their society. The embeddedness of a certain teaching about the war and its moral lessons also extended well beyond the classrooms and university lecture halls. In large areas of civil society, the dominance of the morality of '45 remained unquestioned. This owed much to the ways in which Catholicism remained an influential presence in a number of European societies. The marked falls in church attendance, and a broader obedience to clerical teachings, which occurred in most areas of Europe from the 1960s onwards did not lead to the predicted terminus of secularization. In part this was the consequence of the reunification of Europe in 1989, which brought a number of more Christian-minded cultures back into the European mainstream. But it also reflected the new role that Catholicism assumed as the articulator of moral and human values to an ever more diverse society. The war served, in this respect, as a powerful point of reference. The election of a Polish Pope refocused Catholic minds on the horrors of the mid-twentieth century, turning even Auschwitz into a place of Catholic pilgrimage and presence. Above all, the turn to the Third World which had reshaped so many European minds from the 1970s onwards appeared to invest the lessons of the war with a new relevance. Having learnt from bitter experience the sufferings generated by abusive state power, mass warfare, and racial discrimination, the Europeans of the late twentieth century had the empathy, and the skills, necessary to address equivalent horrors elsewhere in the world. The practices of genocide and ethnic cleansing, and more especially the consciousness of them, were in effect transferred from the heart of central Europe to Cambodia, Rwanda, and Syria.

In this way, one might argue, with a certain touch of exaggeration, that the morality of '45 was one of the few things that continued to unite Europeans at the end of the twentieth century. Amidst an increasingly volatile politics, both national and European, and the social conflicts generated by the impact of globalisation and neo-liberal economic policies, the morality of '45 remained in some sense above the fray. Of course, there were some vocal heretics. The emergence of the populist right in Europe from the 1980s onwards gave an opportunity to certain neo-fascist voices, as well as more profoundly to an immediate politics of the present day, which was starkly irreverent (or crudely instrumental) in its approach to Europe's recent history. Moreover, there was an increased awareness of the shortcomings

and silences which lurked within the morality of '45. There was something simply too European, too white, and too male, about this account of Europe's mid-century crisis and subsequent recovery to command universal acceptance. At the turn of the century, there was consequently a new-found awareness of the imperialist mentalities, the constrained agenda of liberal rights, and the institutionalised structures of gendered and ethnic discrimination which had remained present within the new world that emerged after the Second World War. Yet, even this critical perspective, it seemed, served to reinforce the importance of 1945. If it no longer seemed possible to argue that the end of the war had marked a decisive moment of transition to a pluralist and democratic society, an awareness of the inequalities that remained to be addressed served to invest the events of the war with a new contemporaneity. Indeed, the multiplication of Holocaust museums, and other forms of Holocaust commemoration, across the continent from the 1990s onwards in the aftermath of the ethnic cleansing and violence perpetrated in the former Yugoslavia in front of European peace-keeping forces – and television cameras – gave a new energy to civic projects intended to draw on the events of the mid-century past to discuss the issues of the present (Naimark, 2001).

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However, over the course of the first two decades of the twenty-first century, there have been indications that the morality of '45 is finally approaching its own mortality. The pre-eminence of 1945 as the starting-point of Europe's present day has been challenged by other events, including the remarkable resurgence in awareness of the First World War, prompted in part by the centenary commemorations. The lessons of the First World War have remained, at least in public debate, very different from those of the Second. Historians have done much to uncover the manifold forms of civil war and ethnic killing which occurred across Europe (and beyond) during the First World War, and more especially its prolonged aftermath (Gerwarth, 2008; Gerwarth, 2016). But little of this complexity has filtered into a perception of the war which remains focused on the military front lines, and more especially the sacrifice of unquestioning conscript soldiers giving their lives in the service of a national or imperial cause. That image has made the First World War an easier place of memory for many European societies than the subsequent conflict. It provides a space of commemoration

where rulers and ruled can come together in honouring the sacrifice of the fallen and re-committing themselves to the cause of peace, while quietly celebrating the national unity and social discipline that made that warfare possible.

This resurgence of the First World War forms part of the wider multiplication of narratives of the twentieth century which has occurred in the larger and more fractured Europe of the twenty-first century. The optimism evident immediately after 1989 that Europe had finally been reunified has been replaced by a realisation that the populations of Europe no longer have as much in common as they used to. This is especially so in terms of a shared understanding of Europe's recent past. The centrality of the year 1945 as the origin of the present-day made sense within the smaller western-oriented Europe that emerged from the Second World War and the territorial divisions of the early Cold War. A Europe which stretched from Norway to Sicily, and from the Atlantic to the Iron Curtain found its centre of gravity in a particular German-centred historical narrative, and what one might rather glibly term the four wars of German unification (1870-71, 1914-18, 1939-45 and 1989-91). But these reference points lost their salience once what Eric Hobsbawm termed Europe's Short Twentieth Century drew to a close after 1989 (Hobsbawm, 1994). The year 1945 has no particular centrality in the twentieth-century history of the states of Europe's eastern borderlands, as well as those on the southern and eastern shores of the Mediterranean. Their histories have different chronologies, and also different structures of civic memory. Thus, since the 1990s, the project of a common European history has become increasingly difficult to achieve. Dissonant historical memories have come to the fore, relating to the civil wars in Ireland, Greece, Spain, Finland, and (more controversially) Italy, but also as a consequence of the actions of political forces in Poland, Slovakia, and Hungary – as well as less explicitly in Austria – who have set about rewriting (or, as they would put it, correcting) the narratives of their modern history.

The consequence has been a much more polyphonic history of the European twentieth century. The periphery has fought back, destabilising a history of Europe that for much of the twentieth century was often very German-centred in its narratives and preoccupations. This has also changed the nature of the war itself. The established narrative of the Second World War – in itself a remarkably empty title – as a conflict driven by Nazi

expansionism that was inaugurated by the German invasion of Poland in September 1939, and which concluded with the arrival of the Red Army in Berlin in May 1945 has been replaced by a much more amorphous perception of the war years. It is now understood that Europe's mid-century conflict had many agents, and that the violence which developed – for example, in the killing fields of the Balkans, eastern Poland and Ukraine – had complex local, ethnic and ideological motors, many of which long preceded the Third Reich (see, e.g., Snyder). Responsibility was also consequently more diffuse, and included the large number of allied, fellow-travelling and frankly collaborationist regimes that developed under the aegis of the Third Reich from the mid-1930s onwards. Moreover, even the single greatest crime of Nazism – the attempted extermination of the Jewish populations – had a series of dynamics, in which many actors had a hand. This change in focus has many strengths, most notably the way in which it provides a necessary corrective to old intentionalist arguments that had displaced the collective responsibility for the horrors of the war onto the leaders of the Third Reich put on trial at Nuremberg. But it has also complicated the relevance of the conflict to contemporary morality. In place of being defined within chronological and geographical frontiers of good and evil, the war has become a much more amorphous phenomenon within which responsibility for particular actions is less easily attributed and much more widely shared.

These changes in perceptions of the history of the twentieth century have also eroded the historical legitimacy of the European Union. The multiple difficulties which have beset the European institutions since the early years of the twenty-first century are of course very familiar; but we should not forget that they have also been challenged, so to speak, from behind. The founding narrative of the Union as a response to the inter-national conflicts of the war years no longer commands universal assent. All of this has been well demonstrated by the criticisms levelled by the Polish government and others at the House of European History, the new super-museum of Europe's contemporary development established by the European Parliament in Brussels (<https://historia-europa.ep.eu>). It is a magnificent achievement, which owes much to the skills of its multinational team of curators; but it is difficult for a historian not to think of it as twenty-five years behind the time. The narrative it tells is emphatically focused on the twentieth century, on Germany, on the war, and on its associated horrors, from which Europe – and visitors walking through the galleries of the

museum – emerged into the material reconstruction and political unification of the second half of the twentieth century. This is the pedagogic morality of '45 given physical expression, so to speak; the material pendant to the narrative which made Tony Judt's *Postwar* both the most successful narrative of Europe's history since 1945, and even at the moment of its publication in 2005 something of a monument to what we all used to think (Judt, 2005).

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Europe therefore needs a new history. The end of the twentieth century – with its echoes of Huizinga's famous account of the waning of the Middle Ages (Huizinga, 1924) – is a process that historians, more than most, have cause to regret (Conway, 2019). But, for new generations – by which one must mean essentially anybody born after 1980 – their relationship to their European past is very different. The morality of '45 that they imbibed through their education, cultural formation, and the discourses of older generations, is at odds with their own formative experiences, and the very different nature of the societies they inhabit. Theirs is a post-European Europe, much more open to global influences, to multiple faiths, to the highly diverse populations of its major cities, and to electronic means of communication that have effaced the conventional frontiers of time and distance. This new civilisation has generated highly stimulating forms of cosmopolitanism, but it has also created more mobile, more technological, and more present-minded societies, for whom the narratives, and lessons, of the twentieth century have little evident relevance.

Within these new societies, forms of civic morality also have a different and much more amorphous character. Seen in retrospect, it is the disciplined and unitary nature of the European societies of the post-45 era which now appears to constitute their most distinctive feature. Of course there was much more diversity – social, ethnic, sexual, confessional – than was at first apparent, but the state-oriented development of European societies of west and east in the decades following 1945 always served to reinforce their essential homogeneity. Within those unitary vessels, civic morality acquired a specific shape. Structures of mass education, modelled on the housing projects which developed with such speed on the edges of Europe's cities and towns in the post-war years to house its new families, conveyed unitary discourses of morality, which were reinforced through political and civic associations, local

government, the churches, and the all-conquering reach of the media of radio, cinema, and subsequently television. This framework provided the supportive context within which civic morality flourished in the post-1945 era. The new-found preoccupation with politeness, the re-imposition of assumptions about gender and family, and the rejection of violence, all formed part of the standards of civilised behaviour that pervaded Europe in the post-war decades (Moeller, 1993; Biess, 2010; van Rahden, 2016).

But those vessels of civic morality have largely disappeared. The homogenising institutions of the post-'45 era have been dismantled or replaced by much more diverse and market-orientated societies, within which the opportunity to articulate a dominant moral message is much diminished. Above all, Europeans have moved beyond a sense of the bonds that unite – national, cultural, or purely social – to a preoccupation with the markers of difference and of identity. The honeycombed societies of twenty-first-century Europe eschew forms of unity except at moments of high drama (or sporting achievement) in favour of celebrating and protecting the human and personal rights of individuals and groups. None of this of course prevents the development of discourses of civic morality; they find their origin, however, not in the past but in a preoccupation with the present, the global, the ethical, and the environmental. They emphasise mutual respect for the multiple markers of personal identity, the rejection of prejudice and xenophobia, concern for the environment and for nature, and the achievement of the self-made communities of emotion and affinity.

Attempts to re-insert the lessons of the twentieth century, and more especially of 1945, into the contemporary fabric of Europe will always be a rather contrived enterprise. The broader reality is that the caravan has moved on from the Second World War to other historical eras. The morality of '45 no longer possesses the same ability to speak to large sections of European society; and attention has turned to other areas of history, most notably the relationship between Europe and other areas of the world. The impacts of European crusades, of the Atlantic slave trade, and of imperial conquest and colonial rule in Africa and Asia, are the fields where the historical past now has the power to provoke wider debate and controversy, through their evident connection with contemporary concerns about human rights, economic exploitation, and racial prejudice.

Yet it is also tempting to detect in these trends a larger change in the relationship between Europe and its past. European culture has, since the late nineteenth century, had a markedly historical orientation. Disputes over the Reformation, the Revolution of 1789, the origins of the world wars, and the political upheavals of the early decades of the twentieth century, as well as any number of more national controversies, have all been characteristic of the tendency of European societies to speak about their identity through the language of history. That still remains so, more especially in those areas of Europe – Germany, Ireland, and Poland, to cite three obvious cases – where the legacies of recent history remain a very present reality. But, more generally, the role of history as the focus for these larger civil debates, and through that as the building blocks of civic morality, has diminished over recent decades. Europe, it seems, has largely got beyond its history wars, and has found other languages – environmental, global, and psychological – through which to conduct those larger civic debates. If the more negative aspects of this process are evident in the lack of historical awareness demonstrated by populations and leaders alike in contemporary Europe, it might also offer the prospect of finally liberating history from the moral burdens of the present.

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