

religion, and articulated in its presidential rhetoric, is not going to disappear” (p. 315), Prodromou notes. What matters is how the United States will end up using its material resources to strengthen international law and global governance.

In sum, the volume is a recommended read especially for those who are curious about the new roles religious actors are assuming and what kind of challenges the

inclusion of religious actors into political dialogue brings. Not that we will be able to find the answers to our questions on faith and politics anytime soon, but at least we will enrich the terms of our debates on religious pluralism and we will challenge our long-existing assumptions.

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The Ethos of Europe: Values, Law and Justice in the EU

By Andrew Williams

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Although the analysis offered in this book is not very innovative in its details, the overall project is of some originality. Andrew Williams’s main contention is that the EU project has developed its own institutional ethos, and that this is the product of both the entrenchment in European public discourse of a number of values, and of the way in which the European legal system (and its underlying philosophy) promotes and protects such values. Williams, however, is critical of the particular ethos that to date has supported the EU polity since he finds it partly incoherent in the articulation of its central values, and relatively uncommitted in the way in which it sustains them. The ethos’s incoherence lies, in his view, in the way in which the values at the heart of the EU project are both ambiguous and indeterminate; while the lack of commitment is the product of the half-hearted way in which the institutional framework (in particular European law) supports a public philosophy for Europe,

while functioning more as a prop for European governance.

According to Williams, incoherence and lack of commitment are not insuperable. The aim of the book is indeed to show how this ethos has formed and is operating through a series of narratives of self-understanding and institutional practices; and how it can be reformed in order to develop into a fully-fledged public philosophy capable of inspiring and legitimating the EU polity. The book therefore engages in two operations, one more reconstructive in scope, charting the main values underpinning the European ethos, and its character as a whole; the other operation is of a more propositional kind, offering in outline a proposal for justice in the EU, or, to be more specific, a suggestion of what is needed for turning the EU into a just institution.

Chapters two to seven mainly engage in the reconstructive enterprise. Williams identifies peace (Chapter 2), the rule of law (3), human rights (4), democracy (5),

and liberty (6) as the foundational values around which EU institutions have tried to make sense of the EU project, organize the overall structure of the polity, and make both internal and external policies. The result, according to Williams, and as already suggested, is stronger on rhetoric than in substance. None of these chapters changes fundamentally our understanding of the EU, but they offer some interesting insights in how these values have resonated in the debates on the function and character of the EU (and of the community institutions that have led to the EU) and how they have given institutional and legal substance. Analytically, each chapter tells the story of a partial failure. The dominant theme is how each of the main values has only partially guided European policy making and institution building, while its understanding has been characterized by the market-centered project that has come to dominate the integration process at a European level. Peace, therefore, risks being subordinate to “preserving power and prosperity in Europe” (p. 69); the rule of law, no more than a procedural mechanism for the functioning of the European regime; the human rights discourse, a rhetorical flourishing, but with no meaningful practical application; democracy, a value to pursue effectively in relation to others, but with no internal application; liberty, finally, as the character of a generic, but mainly economic ‘area’ of action, rather than the principle for a political ‘regime’ (p. 240).

Chapter 7 summarizes the institutional ethos analyzed through the operationalization of the different values by suggesting that at the bottom of the EU institutional ethos there is a theory of law that view this as an instrument of ‘interpretation’ rather than an instrument of ‘justice’ (p. 252). This

means that EU law is almost programmed to avoid conflicts by eschewing issues of value, or interpreting them within an economic framework. For Williams, the law is the best way in which the institutional ethos is both revealed and made to work. It is no surprise, therefore, that his more positive suggestions are mainly directly to a philosophy of just and legitimate institutions centered on the legal paradigm. Williams’s own suggestion is to place human rights as the keystone for the reform of the European ethos. He considers this as both a substantive conception of justice and a viable pluralist project, capable of giving purpose to a consensual agreement between different visions (p. 328). In more practical terms, Williams’s vision is focused around a new constitutional settlement at the European level, that, presumably, will revitalize the half-failed constitutional project of the last decade, and that may result in a “consolidated institutional Bill of Rights” (p. 330), inspired more by international and cosmopolitan norms, rather than a Eurocentric vision. Within this scheme, the European Court of Justice will have to play a more purposeful and value-inspired role, so to ensure that EU law will guarantee both the respect and the fulfillment of an expanded notion of human rights, at the basis of a public philosophy finally an animating and legitimating the European integration project and the EU polity.

Such a vision remains subject to the kind of criticisms that are usually moved against over-legalistic and purely cosmopolitan views of the nature and character of the EU but it is perhaps more interesting to raise a different set of questions in the case of this book. Questions may be directed to the more original aspects of Williams’s analysis, and to his use and development

of the idea of an ethos. This is done in the introductory chapter, but, unfortunately, in a rather brief and compressed way so that it is not always clear to understand precisely how Williams defines ethos and how the ethos of an organization, or a 'polity', like the EU, may relate to the ethos of more traditional unitary states. For Williams, an ethos is a set of sentiments and attitudes that define and support a "general pattern of activities", bringing together the character and the customs of a community, as well as ethical values as these coagulate in institutional practices (p. 10). This complex definition has many influences, which would have been interesting to explore in themselves, but in the present context the main question is how such a definition can effectively be interpreted in a way in which institutional practices reflect meaningfully and coherently a vision of well integrated values. For this is what Williams asks of the European ethos and of the underlying philosophy of EU law. In his view, the European ethos fails such a standard. But would any other institutional ethos be capable of meeting the strict standards that Williams sets? A different question is whether a community and its institutions are capable of acting in a way that commands a sense of justice and that is regarded as legitimate by the members of the community itself. Williams asks such a question at different times, and in a way this is the question at the bottom of his search for a European ethos. As he says at the end of the paragraph in which

he outlines his view of what the institutional ethos is about: "As soon as the crisis visits, as the economic depression that began in 2008 might provoke, what hope is there for justice to be the determining factor in making decisions?" (p. 14). This is indeed a crucial issue for the EU today. Can, under the test of a crisis, its decisions carry conviction with the people that are meant to be subjected to them? It can only do this if European citizens in some way recognize that they need to make such decisions, and see them as expressing some sense of justice and commonality. For Williams, in order for this to happen, there is neither the need of an ethos, nor, in the words of Delors and other European politicians, of a 'soul' of Europe. In a more concrete way, Williams thinks that an "institutional ethos" may do the job—but his view of the ethos is more substance than form. It is a substance made up of a cosmopolitan vision of human rights, which can be identified through and by the judgment of a supreme court, and institutionalized through the law. To all intent and purposes, this is an apolitical vision of the institutional ethos that, as Williams himself illustrates in the book, has so far failed to produce a convincing and motivating set of substantive values. It remains unclear how it may eventually arrive at some core shared value in a way that carries the European peoples with it, but without engaging them in some form of politics.

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