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Solidarity through National Pride: The Future of Catholic Politics in the 21st Century

Abstract

This paper raises the Pragmatist concepts of solidarity and national pride, as espoused by American philosophers such as John Dewey and Richard Rorty, as potential means for Catholics in Western democratic nations to approach the current political issues facing them in the 21st century. Though Dewey and Rorty were neither politicians nor Catholics (being liberal thinkers trained in philosophy), their views on solidarity and patriotism in modern liberal democracies provide useful roadmaps for Catholics in Europe and the Anglosphere to navigate our present period of polarised and highly partisan politics, potentially reaching a 'sensible centre' akin to the American Catholic political tradition since the 1930s. This centrism relies on this Pragmatist solidarity through a shared hope of a pluralistic society constantly improved upon for the benefit of future generations. Catholics can only achieve this solidarity and hope if they feel, in the spirit of Rorty, a deep sense of national pride for their country. This type of national pride is not reactionary in nature, but advocates a politics of pluralism rather than identity, democratic nationalism rather than amorphous internationalism, and active engagement in the public square to implement an achievable political programme of action which is hopeful and borne out of a collective imagination for a better future for their countries.

Solidarity through National Pride: Catholic Politics in the Age of Populism

Christopher J. Dowson

I. Introduction

It is not difficult to make the case that the Catholic Church in Western democracies now faces a challenge, not solely of faith but also of politics. The ‘Catholic vote’ in the 2016 United States Presidential Election was almost evenly split between the internationalist liberal policies of Hillary Clinton and the nationalist-conservative ones of Donald Trump. Regardless of Pope Francis’ political obiter dicta,¹ Catholics in America produced high levels of support for Trump (exit polling in fact showed that Trump won the Catholic vote 52% to 48%²), whose worldview appears largely opposed to the Pope’s, notably on contentious issues such as immigration.³ In Europe, in the 2018 national and 2019 European Parliamentary elections, Italian voters appeared to favour populist and anti-immigration platforms in large numbers, prompting media headlines warning of a rising ‘right wing nationalism’ across Europe and suggesting that the Catholic Church had ‘lost Italy to the far right’.⁴

This paper seeks to address the question of how Catholics might approach politics in this current era of political populism and reactionary nationalism. I aim to focus primarily upon American philosopher Richard Rorty’s concepts of national pride and solidarity and hope and imagination and propose that these interconnected concepts offer potential antidotes for Catholics to the current political polarisation facing both the Church and Western democracies. Specifically, I will examine the first two concepts in the framework of three major civic issues currently facing Western democracies: multiculturalism, nationalism, and internationalism.

II. Defining Solidarity

It must be made clear ab initio what the terms ‘solidarity’ and ‘national pride’ refer to in Rorty’s framework. Rorty does not directly link the two but, reading them in tandem, they provide a fruitful starting point for a political outlook that may be relevant to all Catholics, despite their geopolitical circumstances. *Achieving Our Country* is the seminal work in which Rorty makes the distinction between the pride of identity politics and ‘national pride’, the former identified with the post-1960s ‘cultural Left’ and the latter with the pre-1960’s Leftist tradition typified within social organisations such as trade unions and labour movements,

¹ See e.g. Phillip Pullella, “Pope says he would confront Trump directly on border wall”, *Reuters*, 29 May 2019 <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-usa-immigration-pope/pope-says-he-would-confront-trump-directly-on-border-wall-idUSKCN1SY23S>

² M. N. Schmaltz, “How the Support of Catholics Helped Donald Trump’s Victory”, *Fortune*, 9 November 2016, <http://fortune.com/2016/11/09/donald-trump-election-2016-catholic-vote>.

³ See e.g. H. Sherwood, “Pope Francis appears to criticize Trump’s Mexico border wall plan”, *The Guardian*, 9 February 2017, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/feb/08/pope-francis-walls-bridges-donald-trump>, where Francis is reported to have said not to ‘[...] raise walls but bridges [...] A Christian can never say: “I’ll make you pay for that.” Never! That is not a Christian gesture. An offense is overcome with forgiveness, by living in peace with everyone.’

⁴ See e.g. Mattia Ferrarsi, ‘How the Catholic Church Lost Italy to the Far Right’, *New York Times*, 4 July 2019 <<https://www.nytimes.com/2019/07/04/opinion/catholic-church-italy.html>>; Editorial, “Make no mistake – right-wing populism is making a resurgence in Europe, as the Italian elections show”, *The Independent*, 5 March 2018, <https://www.independent.co.uk/voices/editorials/italy-election-results-populism-resurgence-europe-anti-eu-silvio-berlusconi-5-star-movement-luigi-di-a8240861.html>; Bernd Riegert, “Italy’s election results highlight a European trend”, *Deutsche Welle*, 6 March 2018, <https://www.dw.com/en/opinion-italys-election-results-highlight-a-european-trend/a-42841622>.

occupied with concrete policy change in America's institutions, as opposed to broader theories of oppression, victimisation and identity. Rorty argues that 'taking pride in being black or gay is an entirely reasonable response to the sadistic humiliation to which one has been subjected', yet if this same pride inhibits someone from also taking pride in being an American citizen, 'from thinking of his or her country as capable of reform, or from being able to join with straights or whites in reformist initiatives, it is a political disaster'.⁵ Rorty describes the concept of 'solidarity' as the ability to see traditional differences such as tribe, religion or race as 'unimportant when compared with similarities with respect to pain and humiliation'.⁶ Contrary to the metaphysicians who pine for a meta-language that transcends individual group vocabularies and historical narratives - solidarity is achieved by taking account of the contingencies of our shared histories, places, and cultures with a view to reducing pain and cruelty through civic commonalities. Solidarity, Rorty argues, has to be constructed 'out of little pieces, rather than found already waiting, in the form of an ur-language which all of us recognize when we hear it'.⁷

By fusing Rorty's concepts of national pride and solidarity, one may assert the following propositions:

1. We cannot feel solidarity with people of vastly different beliefs, cultures, nationalities etc., if we cannot first feel solidarity with our own fellow citizens;
2. Identity politics and pride in one's 'group' – whether defined by race, gender, sexuality or religion – is acceptable up until the point it precludes a feeling of pride for one's nation, in which case it ought to be abandoned; and
3. Without pride in one's nation, there is no incentive to reform it, to improve it, to reduce pain and cruelty towards others, or to engage in the ongoing process of self-creation with fellow citizens.

Contrary to popular tropes describing nationalism as isolationist, ignorant of international issues, and self-absorbed, it is possible that by combining Rorty's concepts of national pride and solidarity, an opposing praxis will result. If national pride is widespread, 'solidarity' (in the social sense of reducing pain and cruelty towards other human beings) will, to use a Rortyan phrase, 'take care of itself'.

III. Rorty's Secularism and Catholics

A preliminary question to address is how a secularist philosopher like Rorty can serve as a useful scion upon which Catholics might graft a cohesive and modern political worldview. Rorty was nominally a supporter of the American liberal Left and had little time for religion as part of his political philosophy, arguing for a culture of liberalism 'which was enlightened, secular [...] in which no trace of divinity remained'.⁸ Yet Catholics need not limit their intellectual sources of inspiration on issues such as politics, social policy, or national pride simply to Catholic intellectuals, indeed even Christian ones. The risk of doing so presents the problem of the intellectual 'bubble', one less capable of addressing broader socio-political concerns not directly pertaining to doctrinal matters. The Church has historically found much value in non-Christian philosophers, especially in its incipient years with St Thomas Aquinas and St Augustine of Hippo borrowing liberally from the authorities of non-Christians (Plato and Aristotle, Cicero and Seneca, among others). Further, the suggestion of an alternative

⁵ Richard Rorty, *Achieving Our Country* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1998), 100.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 192.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 94.

⁸ Richard Rorty, *Contingency, Irony and Solidarity* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 45.

political programme of action to the Pope's by the laity is not at all at odds with Catholic teaching. As St Pius X said of the separation between the teachings of the Church and the political duties of the citizen:

Every Catholic, from the fact that he is also a citizen, has the right and the duty to work for the common good in the way he thinks best, without troubling himself about the authority of the Church, without paying any heed to its wishes, its counsels, its orders - nay, even in spite of its reprimands.⁹

The Pragmatists themselves were historically neither hostile nor dismissive of religious 'truth', as William James wrote: '[O]n pragmatic principles, if the hypothesis of God works satisfactorily in the widest sense of the word, it is true.'¹⁰ Even accepting Rorty's secularism on face value, such a description of his religiopolitical worldview is only superficial. As Boffetti observed, Rorty transitioned from a militant secularist early in his career to a 'romantic polytheist' who often deployed religious tropes in support of his own ideal of a liberal democratic political community.¹¹ In works such as *Achieving Our Country*, Boffetti noted that Rorty described a uniquely 'American faith' whose acolytes have included Walt Whitman, Ralph Waldo Emerson, and Abraham Lincoln: 'Sometimes Rorty calls this American faith a "religion of democracy" and at other times "romantic polytheism."' ¹² In any case, that 'being religious' is a necessary antecedent for Catholics to glean insight from a philosopher is clearly a straitlaced approach to the development of political opinions and ought not militate against the arguments proposed in this paper.

IV. Rorty's Pluralism and Francis' Multiculturalism Compared

In the article 'The Unpatriotic Academy' in 1994, Rorty admitted that, although 'any Left is better than none', there was a problem with the New Left - it was unpatriotic: 'In the name of "the politics of difference," it refuses to rejoice in the country it inhabits,' he wrote. 'It repudiates the idea of a national identity, and the emotion of national pride. This repudiation is the difference between traditional American pluralism and the new movement called multiculturalism'.¹³ Regarding this latter attitude, Pope Francis has frequently emphasised the need for such 'multiculturalism' as an intrinsic part of European identity. In a speech in Krakow on World Youth Day in 2016, Francis implored: 'Today, we adults need you to teach us [...] how to live in diversity, in dialogue, to experience multiculturalism not as a threat but an opportunity.' In the *Evangelii Gaudium* [253], he implored Christians to '[...] embrace with affection and respect Muslim immigrants to our countries in the same way that we hope and ask to be received and respected in countries of Islamic tradition'. In a May 2016 speech, Francis went further and stated: '[I]t is not enough simply to settle individuals geographically: the challenge is that of a profound cultural integration'.¹⁴ He stated that current political activity needed to see the urgency of this integration: '[T]he roots of Europe, were consolidated down the centuries by the constant need to integrate in new syntheses the most varied and discrete cultures. The identity of Europe is, and always has been, a dynamic and

⁹ St Pius X, "Pascendi Dominici Gregis" (Encyclical, Rome, 8 September, 1907), 24.

¹⁰ William James, *Pragmatism: A New Name for Some Old Ways of Thinking* (London, 1907), 299.

¹¹ Jason. Boffetti, "How Richard Rorty Found Religion," *First Things* 143 (May 2004), 24.

¹² *Ibid*, 25; see also 'civic religion' in Rorty, *Achieving Our Country*, 101.

¹³ Richard Rorty, "The Unpatriotic Academy", *New York Times*, 13 February 1994, <http://www.nytimes.com/1994/02/13/opinion/the-unpatriotic-academy.html?mcubz=1>

¹⁴ Pope Francis, "Conferral of the Charlemagne Prize - Address of His Holiness Pope Francis" (Sala Regalia, 6 May 2016).

multicultural identity.¹⁵ Such a characterisation of European civilisation echoes the Hegelian trope of constant syntheses (of ideas, classes, identities or cultures etc.), brought about by oppositions with the ‘Other’.¹⁶ Rorty made the point that: ‘The Hegelian hope is that the result of such struggles will be a new culture, better than any of those of which it is the synthesis’.¹⁷ Yet unless one interprets Francis’ use of the terms ‘multiculturalism’ and ‘integration’ as synonymic with ‘pluralism’, I think this approach needs readjustment.

In *Contingency*, Rorty goes to great lengths to use ‘solidarity’ as a real-world phenomenon (as distinct from theological or philosophic foundations), which encompasses the shared mutual obligations of a community of ‘liberals’ in the West. Its aim is to reduce cruelty and pain and to enlarge the *ethnos* to include more individuals who support their country and have a shared goal of liberalism and moral progress. Rorty’s civic nationalism is not ethnocentric but liberal-centric; it is limited to the *ethnos* that contains liberal-minded communities who believe in moral progress, as opposed to an international multiculturalism: ‘What takes the curse off this ethnocentrism is not that the largest such group is “humanity” or “all rational beings” [...] but, rather, that it is the ethnocentrism of a “we” (“we liberals”) which is dedicated to enlarging itself, to creating an ever larger and more variegated *ethnos*’.¹⁸ Rorty elsewhere argues the ‘romance of endless diversity’ ought not to be confused with what is called ‘multiculturalism’, which he defines as: ‘A politics of side-by-side development in which members of distinct cultures preserve and protect their own culture against the incursion of other cultures’.¹⁹ In *The Demonization of Multiculturalism*, Rorty proposes that: ‘[I]t is not to the advantage either of our country or of those whom it still treats as second-class citizens to urge, as the multiculturalists do, that we think of the United States as “a salad rather than a melting pot”’.²⁰ From Francis’ comments above, I want to suggest that it is possible to read some of the Pope’s past comments on multiculturalism as being consonant with Rorty’s desire for an integrated, pluralistic societal structure – but this is not without some caveats.

In a May 2016 speech, Francis warned against those in Europe who are tempted by ‘selfish interests’ and who consider ‘putting up fences here and there’, in an oblique reference to the exclusion of illegal immigrants arriving in southern Europe. Francis asserted: ‘The identity of Europe is, and always has been, a [...] *multicultural identity*’.²¹ That the continent of Europe historically consisted of different cultures is a truism, but the context of this phrase appears to be broader, alluding to the problems associated with mass migration from non-European regions, particularly controversial issues in Europe and the Anglosphere today. Francis approached this same subject in another way in his Address to the Council of Europe in 2014:

[T]oday [...] we can legitimately speak of a “multipolar” Europe. Its tensions – whether constructive or divisive – are situated between *multiple cultural, religious and political poles*. Europe today confronts the challenge of “globalizing”, but in a creative way, this multipolarity. Nor are cultures necessarily identified with individual

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ E.g. see Georg W.F. Hegel, *Die Phänomenologie des Geistes* (1807), Chapter 22: ‘Der Herr ist das für sich seiende Bewußtsein, aber nicht mehr nur der Begriff desselben, sondern für sich seiendes Bewußtsein, welches durch ein anderes Bewußtsein mit sich vermittelt ist, nämlich durch ein solches, zu dessen Wesen es gehört, daß es mit selbstständigem Sein oder der Dingheit überhaupt synthetisiert ist.’

¹⁷ Rorty, *Achieving Our Country*, 25.

¹⁸ Rorty, *Contingency, Irony and Solidarity*, 198.

¹⁹ Rorty, *Achieving Our Country*, 24.

²⁰ Richard Rorty, “The Demonization of Multiculturalism,” *Journal of Blacks in Higher Education* 7 (1995): 74.

²¹ Pope Francis, “Conferral of the Charlemagne Prize - Address of His Holiness Pope Francis” (Sala Regalia, 6 May 2016), emphasis added.

countries: some countries have a variety of cultures and some cultures are expressed in a variety of countries. The same holds true for political, religious, and social aggregations. Creatively globalizing multipolarity, and I wish to stress this creativity, calls for striving to create a *constructive harmony*, one free of those pretensions to power which, while appearing from a pragmatic standpoint to make things easier, end up destroying the *cultural and religious distinctiveness of peoples* [...] Today Europe is multipolar in its relationships and its intentions; it is impossible to imagine or to build Europe without fully taking into account this multipolar reality.²²

The use of the term ‘multipolar’ amounts to the same outcome as using ‘multicultural’ and, read with the cautions against ‘destroying the cultural and religious distinctiveness of peoples’ could easily invoke images of European nations as ‘salad bowls’, not melting pots (to apply Rorty’s metaphor). Certainly the ‘creative multipolarity’ Francis speaks of appears to be at odds with Rorty’s vision of a pluralistic society with a singular and common national pride in its country. Further, it is unclear from his speech whether Francis makes the distinction between cultural distinctiveness in private as opposed to public distinctiveness. The latter brings with it a plethora of issues, contentious ones to be sure, which affect the civic life of a nation and would certainly run counter to the Rortyan notion of ‘pluralism’, which he defined as ‘in your private life, in your religious life, in your spiritual life, be free to be as distinctive [...] as you want to be. When it comes to public affairs, your culture, your individual ideals of perfection, your religion, should be irrelevant.’²³ Francis’ statement that a constructive harmony in European societies is required, free from ‘pretensions to power’ which can destroy ‘the cultural and religious distinctiveness of peoples’ is also ambiguous as regards immigration and multiculturalism in 21st-century Europe, but it is possible to argue, along Rorty’s lines, that in the public (civic) sense, such cultural difference and distinction *should* be deemed irrelevant. Public policy ought not be made on the basis of a group’s religious beliefs or ethnic status, for example, but for the best interests of the public as whole. A globalised Europe with multiple cultures living side by side, often with different aims, beliefs, goals and imaginations, is politically unwieldy. Should a government favour one cultural group’s set of values over another’s? If so, on which bases? In this sense, Francis’ ‘multipolarity’ could lead to polarisation, since polarisation is an integral part of being multipolar (by definition).

V. ‘National Pride’ and Solidarity

A reshaping of Francis’ argument above, *pari passu* with the concept of Rorty’s ‘national pride’, would be along the lines of the following: European nations are and always have been ‘multicultural’, but disparate cultures within each nation, though distinct in their private lives (worship, customs, beliefs, etc), ought to possess shared goals and hopes that might improve and reform their countries for the better (i.e. their civic life). A Chinese or Muslim citizen in France may have different hopes for France than a Chinese or Muslim citizen in Poland, for example. The fact these individuals share the same cultural and ethnic heritage should not preclude their active contribution to reforming and improving their respective societies based on their own unique socio-political circumstances and contingencies. This is not to repudiate Francis’ argument, merely to suggest a more effective pathway to ‘creative’ globalisation, as His Holiness termed it. If Chinese individuals in Poland or France actively seek to improve

²² Pope Francis, “Address of Pope Francis to the Council of Europe” (Strasbourg, 25 November 2014), emphasis added.

²³ ‘Philosopher Richard Rorty.’ *Forum*, KQED Radio, 31 January, 2006, radio broadcast, <https://www.kqed.org/forum/601311000/philosopher-richard-rorty>.

their countries, in conjunction with their fellow citizens, with a shared goal about what Poland or France could look like 10 to 50 years from now, then I would argue that the potential for improvement across Europe in general greatly increases. A stronger, more harmonious and constantly improving Poland or France with fewer racial, ethnic, or sexual tensions, provides benefits to Europe, and the global community at large. Such an example highlights the interwoven connection between ‘national pride’ and ‘solidarity’.

Francis comes far closer to the political and social ‘solidarity’ that I have suggested above when he refers to French statesman and Biblical scholar Robert Schuman in his May 2016 address: ‘Europe will not be made all at once, or according to a single plan. It will be built through concrete achievements which first create a *de facto* solidarity’. Francis stressed, in relation to the Migrant Crisis facing Europe, that there was ‘a need to return to the same *de facto* solidarity and concrete generosity that followed the Second World War’. The use of ‘solidarity’ here would seem to be in line with what Rorty and other Pragmatists would see as a beneficial approach to modern politics.

VI. Hope Through Solidarity: Catholics and Democratic Liberalism

In *Achieving*, Rorty provides a quote from historian Nelson Lichtenstein who said that America’s great reformist movements, from the abolitionist movements of the 19th century to the labour movements in the 1930s, ‘defined themselves as champions of moral and patriotic nationalism, which they counter-posed to the parochial and selfish elites which stood athwart their vision of a virtuous society’.²⁴ The idea for Rorty was that the improvements in social conditions for Americans since the turn of the 20th century were embodied by a ‘hope’ within Leftist politics, hope in the form of a national pride. Rorty lamented that, with the rise of postmodern politics of identity within the universities after the Vietnam era, the New Left had become devoid of pride: ‘[A] nation cannot reform itself unless it takes pride in itself – unless it has an identity, rejoices in it, reflects upon it and tries to live up to it’.²⁵ Such a view of solidarity through pride in one’s national identity (as opposed to an amorphous international ‘multicultural identity’) ought to be adopted by Catholics in the West. The benefits of such an approach would translate into a political programme which could bring Catholics towards a majoritarian political position less susceptible to radical Left or Right ideologies, especially in the current era where such polarity is endemic within global politics.

To adopt Lichtenstein’s sentiments above, the credit of the early leftist movements and their union counterparts were pluralistic and driven to action, united by a shared pride in their country rather than their disparate ethnic, religious, or sexual identities. American theologian Reinhold Niebuhr stressed the need for pluralism on multiple occasions, most vociferously against the rise of the Ku Klux Klan in Detroit during the 1920s. Niebuhr proclaimed: ‘We are admonished in Scripture to judge men by their fruits, *not by their roots*; and their fruits are their character, their deeds and accomplishments’.²⁶ This approach removes the emphasis on identity politics in both the Left and Right, and instead underscores the shared motives citizens ought to be focused on to improve their countries, and to contribute to it in positive ways, rather than fracturing into various multicultural identities, pitting one against another and confusing the goals of a democratic society.

What it means to live in a Western democracy is to envision democratic liberalism as an ‘ideal’, though far from perfect or objectively ‘right’, but nonetheless something for which to strive. As John Dewey wrote: ‘We have a preference for democracy in politics [...]

²⁴ Rorty, *Achieving Our Country*, 14.

²⁵ Richard Rorty. “The Unpatriotic Academy”. *New York Times*, 13 February 1994, <http://www.nytimes.com/1994/02/13/opinion/the-unpatriotic-academy.html?mcubz=1>.

²⁶ Richard W. Fox, *Reinhold Niebuhr: A Biography* (New York, 1985), 91 (emphasis added).

Responsible government and publicity are our ideal, and upon the whole the ideal fares as well as most ideals in a rude and imperfect world'.²⁷ It is on such a basis that Catholics would be better served politically by advocating for a shared national pride in their countries. This pride ought to be enthusiastic, but not of the kind Immanuel Kant warned: *Schwärmerei*, the fanatical boasting and blind cheering for one's nation without admitting to its flaws or shortcomings.²⁸ Instead, Catholics should not refrain from debate within the public square, and indeed should be impelled to action where there are serious social and economic challenges to be addressed. Behind all of these political efforts there must be *something* tangible for which to strive, lest it become an unanchored desire purely indifferent to the trajectory of the society in which one lives. In St John Paul II's *Sollicitudo rei Socialis*, His Holiness made this declaration on the meaning of Catholic solidarity:

[Solidarity] is not a feeling of vague compassion or shallow distress at the misfortunes of so many people, both near and far. On the contrary, it is a firm and persevering determination to commit oneself to the common good; that is to say, to the good of all and of each individual, because we are all really responsible for all.²⁹

On the one hand, St John Paul II's description of solidarity echoes Rorty's, and the latter sentences of the quotation above should be borne in mind when discussing solidarity through national pride. However, I would temper such a global definition of solidarity and instead assert that, while an awareness of injustices abroad ought never to be ignored, this should not first supersede an awareness of the injustices within one's own country. If a society cannot address pain and cruelty in its own country and feel compassion for those less fortunate in its own communities, how can it hope to solve the myriad of injustices in other nations? To borrow from Edward R. Murrow during the Cold War: '[W]e cannot defend freedom abroad by deserting it at home'.³⁰

VII. Solidarity Through Introspection

The internationalism that has been championed by the Vatican in the last few decades parallels the pivot of the Western cultural left and corporate capitalists towards globalisation, where foreign aid in record proportions has been donated from Europe and the Anglosphere into the global south and developing nations, where international travel is relatively inexpensive, and where the flow of capital between countries is lucrative, but which has led to the increasingly rapid collapse of local blue-collar industries. In an essay for the *Business Ethics Quarterly* 1998,³¹ Rorty quoted from an article by Edward Luttwack's entitled "Why Fascism is the Wave of the Future" (1994). Luttwack had gone to the trouble of analysing the impact of globalism in America, characterised at the time by President Bill Clinton's embrace of multilateral trade deals such as the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA).

²⁷ John Dewey, "Our National Dilemma", in *Characters and Events*, vol. 2, ed. J. Ratner (New York: Henry Holt and Co., 1929), 616-17.

²⁸ See the distinction between *Schwärmerei* (fanaticism) and *Enthusiasmus* (enthusiasm) in Immanuel Kant, P. Guyer (trans.) 'Observations of the feeling of the beautiful and sublime'. In *Anthropology, History, and Education. The Cambridge Edition of the Works of Immanuel Kant* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 58 where Kant uses 'patriotic virtue' as an example of *Enthusiasmus*.

²⁹ St John Paul II, "Sollicitudo rei Socialis" (Encyclical, Rome, 30 December, 1987), 38.

³⁰ Edward Murrow, "A Report on Senator Joseph R. McCarthy," *See It Now*, Screened 9 March 1954 (CBS, 1954) Television Broadcast quoted in Joseph Wershba, "Murrow vs McCarthy: See It Now", *New York Times*, 4 March 1979, <<https://www.nytimes.com/1979/03/04/archives/murrow-vs-mccarthy-see-it-now.html>>

³¹ Richard Rorty. "Can American egalitarianism survive a globalized economy?" *Business Ethics Quarterly*, Supplemental Volume (1998): 1-6.

Luttwack noted that those working class Americans who had once earned decent wages in blue-collar jobs would no longer tolerate politicians who permitted a catastrophic fall in employment and in the standard of living. They would, according to Luttwack, ‘imitate the behaviour of the Germans at the end of the Weimar period. They would turn to populist rabble-rousers who would make empty promises, or else attempt to reinvigorate the economy by starting’, presumably referencing the rise of early 1990s populists such as Patrick Buchanan.³² Despite the eventual lack of such scenarios playing out in the 1990s or early 2000s, both authors remain equally prescient today. Both foretold some form of unpredictable populism (for example Trumpism or Brexit) would be a likely consequence of unabated globalism and quasi-free trade. Rorty observed that the gap between rich and poor had been widening for twenty years, and noted a poll which suggested 57% of Americans thought that life would be worse for their children than for themselves. He asserted that, if the globalisation of the labour market accelerated at the predicted rate, vast areas of America would be reliant on the State for their welfare and large-scale income inequality would result:

We know what happens when a middle class realises that its hopes have been betrayed, that the system no longer works, that political leaders no longer know how to shelter it from catastrophe. Middle class people look around for a scapegoat-somebody to blame for a catastrophe that they themselves did nothing to deserve.³³

Despite the current nationalist fervour in the United States, the clear demand from voters on both sides of politics for clearer economic programmes tailored to the lower-middle classes could be seen as a sign of Catholic voters ‘introspecting’ again; that is, looking to the fundamental economic and social issues of their own communities before attempting to turn their minds to the myriad of similar or more grievous problems overseas. In the context of Francis’ political push for internationalism and multiculturalism, it is understandable why large groups of Catholics sympathised with Clinton’s worldview. Many Catholics have become partial to Francis’ political position and if European democracies held polls on whether they would prefer Trump or Clinton as their leader, many more European Catholics might have voted for the latter.³⁴ Yet given Francis’ position on issues such as multiculturalism and immigration and his intense influence on many Catholics worldwide, what, if anything, can explain the high level of support for populist nationalist candidates in the United States, United Kingdom, and Europe?

VIII. Catholic Voters and ‘Patriotic Virtue’

This is explicable by first noting that the political locus of *American* Catholics has historically been within the political centre, with Catholic voters comprising a part of the valuable swing voting bloc which has decided the winner of every US Presidential election since 1972.³⁵ I stress here the adjective ‘American’ because I do not think many of the patriotic or nationalistic tendencies within American Catholics are as widespread in European countries (excepting perhaps Italy in recent times), or even in other parts of the Anglosphere like Australia or Canada. One can trace the strengthening of American Catholic patriotism across historic waypoints such as the New Deal of Franklin D. Roosevelt, the labour movements of

³² *Ibid.*, 2.

³³ *Ibid.*

³⁴ See e.g. v where surveys found all EU member states, except Hungary, preferred Clinton to Trump.

³⁵ E.g. see George E. Condon Jr., “Will Catholic Presidential candidates follow the Pope? Should they?” *The Atlantic*, 18 June 2015. <https://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2015/06/will-catholic-presidential-candidates-follow-the-pope-should-they/442350>.

the 1930s, and finally the rise of John F. Kennedy to the White House by the early 1960s. This is largely because an immense segment of the American trade union movement in the early 1900s was driven by Catholic beliefs of solidarity, social justice (in the Catholic sense), and fraternity.³⁶ John McGreevy's *Catholicism and American Freedom*, observes that it was the Catholic priests across the United States during the 1930s who were encouraging their parishioners to join labour unions, 'some like Pittsburgh's Charles Rice, Detroit's Frederick Siedenberg, and Buffalo's Monsignor John P. Boland, served on regional [labour] boards and played key roles in workplace negotiations'.³⁷ These Catholics were not ashamed of their country, but nor were they uncritical of its political character.³⁸ Instead, they were hopeful that if they each worked together towards a 'New Deal', then they could imagine and create an America that would be a better place for them, their families, and their children's children. As Rorty argues, solidarity is not discovered by reflection but created: 'It is created by increasing our sensitivity to the particular details of the pain and humiliation of other, unfamiliar sorts of people. Such increased sensitivity makes it more difficult to marginalize people different from ourselves.'³⁹ This is the type of solidarity I take from the Rortyan characterisation of 'national pride' or the Kantian 'patriotic virtue'.

Reactionary politics is not novel to Catholics, especially working-class ones, in Western nations,⁴⁰ though it is by no means a sustainable panacea to today's pressing political issues. Yet without some nascent patriotic solidarity on the part of all American, German, Italian, British or Australian Catholics alike, I do not think the political course of these cultures' respective nations can be lastingly altered. Isaiah Berlin argued against reactionary national pride on the basis that, in his view, such nationalism was:

[...] [N]ationhood in a pathological state of inflammation: the result of wounds inflicted by someone or something on the natural feelings of society, or of artificial barriers to its normal development. This leads to the transformation of the notion of the individual's moral autonomy into the notion of the moral autonomy of the nation, of the individual will into the national will to which individuals must submit, with which they must identify themselves, of which they must be the active, unquestioning, enthusiastic agents.⁴¹

Such a characterisation of nationalism seems too simplistic and indeed the latter sentences of Berlin's characterisation above can, and should, be construed as potentially *positive* consequences for citizens. It would instead be prudent to caution against a national pride that looks 'inward', uncoupled from the principle of solidarity, and certainly modern leftist philosophers such as Slavoj Žižek have made the contrast between 'healthy', as opposed to

³⁶ See inter alia David J. Sapos, "The Catholic Church and the Labor Movement" *Modern Monthly* vol. 7, (1933), 225: 'The significant and predominant role of the Catholic Church in shaping the thought and aspirations of labor is a neglected chapter in the history of the American labor movement.'

³⁷ John T. McGreevy, *Catholicism and American Freedom* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2004), 163.

³⁸ See for example just over a decade later during the Civil Rights era, the Catholic integrationist who strongly opposed Catholic segregationists, discussed in Mark Newman, *Desegregating Dixie: The Catholic Church in the South and Desegregation, 1945-1992* (Mississippi: University Press of Mississippi, 2018), Ch. 4.

³⁹ Richard Rorty, *Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1989), xvi.

⁴⁰ Cf. n. 40 above Sapos (1933), 225: 'The significant and predominant role of the Catholic Church in shaping the thought and aspirations of labor is a neglected chapter in the history of the American labor movement. *Its influence explains, in part at least, why the labor movement in the United States differs from others, and why it has become more and more reactionary*' [emphasis added].

⁴¹ Isaiah Berlin, *The Sense Of Reality: Studies in Ideas and their History*, ed. Henry Hardy (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1997), 247.

‘excessive’, nationalism.⁴² If national pride leads to isolationism and apathy for fellow human beings around the world, then the result is detrimental to a nation and to the global community in which that nation and its citizens interact. However, beyond its own political and legal institutions, to invoke a Kantian *Reich der Zwecke*, a democracy’s moral autonomy can only be derived from the morality of its individual citizens. Enthusiastic and active participation in that moral framework therefore breeds local, state, and national solidarity. Solidarity does not (and should not) need to derive from a single, negative source; for example, from perceived ‘wounds inflicted by someone or something’ (per Berlin), but simply from a shared dream that perhaps individual circumstances could one day be improved for future generations, a goal grounded in reducing pain and humiliation, incrementally, based on the contingencies of history and circumstance. As Rorty explains:

The social glue holding together the ideal liberal society [...] consists in little more than a consensus that the point of social organization is to let everybody have a chance at self creation to the best of his or her abilities [...] This conviction would not be based on a view about universally shared human ends, human rights, the nature of rationality, the Good for Man, nor anything else. It would be a conviction based on nothing more profound than the historical facts which suggest that without the protection of something like the institutions of bourgeois liberal society, people will be less able to work out their private salvations, create their private self-images, reweave their webs of belief and desire in the light of whatever new people and books they happen to encounter [...] ⁴³

IX. Hope and Imagination in Place of Reactionary Politics

Hegel saw the nation as a creative *Geist* or spirit that was constantly refashioning itself.⁴⁴ Dewey saw it the same way, but viewed democracy as the best vehicle for reaching better political outcomes for individuals.⁴⁵ Similarly, Rorty asked the cultural Left to think about changing the direction of the country through broad participation in a liberal democracy, unified by a national pride instead of identity politics of difference. I think Hegel and the American Pragmatists’ approach is the right one here. Real and lasting political change in Western societies requires a national will, not a menagerie of individual ones. A national will is an alloy of national pride and solidarity that, in turn, arises from local communities each with shared concerns for the socio-economic futures of their children and grandchildren. The importance of this contrast is central to this discussion; namely that the notion of ‘solidarity through national pride’ turns on the proposition of whether the individual wills of its citizens must be submitted to a national one. The answer must be in the affirmative. For democracy to function, there must be a necessary collective imagination of where the nation should be heading. If the autonomy of the individual is supreme and the needs of a nation are consistently secondary, polarisation and division quickly become the by-products. As St Thomas Aquinas argued in his Commentary on Aristotle’s *Politics* (Book 1, Comment 2):

⁴² Slavoj Žižek, “Multiculturalism, Or, the Cultural Logic of Multinational Capitalism” *New Left Review* 1/225 28 (1997), 38: ‘The weak point of the universal multiculturalist gaze does not reside in its inability to “throw out the dirty water without losing the baby”: it is deeply wrong to assert that, when one throws out nationalist dirty water—“excessive” fanaticism—one should be careful not to lose the baby of “healthy” national identity, so that one should trace the line of separation between the proper degree of “healthy” nationalism which guarantees the necessary minimum of national identity, and “excessive” nationalism.’

⁴³ Rorty, *Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity*, 84-5.

⁴⁴ See e.g. Georg W.F. Hegel, *Lectures on the History of History*, (1857), 1.6 (John Sibree translation 1914).

⁴⁵ See e.g. John Dewey, “Democracy and Educational Administration,” *School and Society* 45 (April 3, 1937); 457-67, 457.

‘Thus the political community seeks the supreme human good, since it aims at the common good, which is superior to, and more god-like than, the good of an individual.’

In participating in the greater good of a nation through democratic means, Catholics in Western democracies ought not react to economic or social change impulsively, as has been the case in many of the populist movements of the last few years. A more sustainable approach may be to imagine an imperfect utopia which, however flawed, could still be better than what one’s country is now. This utopia is not telic but rather an ongoing, collaborative project in which a nation continuously fashions its own social and political destiny, informed by its successes and chastened by its failures.⁴⁶ The imagination of a future for one’s nation must translate to action and re-creation. Two quotes from Dewey are apt: ‘The self is not something ready-made, but something in continuous formation through choice of action’,⁴⁷ and: ‘Imagination is the chief instrument of the good’.⁴⁸ When it comes to the nation state too, Dewey’s line of thinking is entirely consistent: ‘[I]n actual and concrete organisation and structure, there is no form of state which can be said to be the best; not at least till history is ended [...] The formation of states must be an experimental process.’⁴⁹ What breeds imagination is hope: a hope, pace Rorty, to reduce pain and cruelty for future generations. Hope can only exist where there is some solidarity between individuals and communities, where people of different creeds unite to remedy the plights within their own communities. It would lead to, what has been called, a ‘conservative internationalism’ that was once championed by Catholics in the early post-war period.⁵⁰ Policies such as foreign aid, environmentalism, and pluralism fashioned in a society where its citizenry is striving for the same goals and hopes of reducing pain and humiliation, would have the potential to become much easier to address than they would in a society where its citizenry is politically and culturally divided against itself.

X. Concluding Remarks

Like the labour movements of the 1930s, it is the right time today for Catholics to encourage fellow citizens to come together and advocate those causes that can benefit their nations. Catholics around the world in the coming few years will be required to make difficult political decisions about their countries’ futures and these decisions will be made easier only through a national pride shared with their fellow compatriots, who, although all living under the ‘same sky’ do not all have the ‘same horizon’, to paraphrase Konrad Adenauer.⁵¹ Each nation has its own culture and imagination regarding what its future might look like for the next generation of citizens. A national pride in each country breeds a solidarity for a better society a century hence, which only then can provide a solid foundation for addressing global issues through cooperative foreign policy, shared international development goals, and mutually beneficial relationships.

According to Rorty, this cannot be achieved solely within the ‘Academy’; that is, by contemplative debate among intellectuals in the universities, but rather must be done through majoritarian politics and concerted practical action within a pluralistic society, bolstered by collective efforts (such as labour movements or political programmes advocating systemic

⁴⁶ Cf. Hans Blumenberg’s notion of ‘self-assertion’ in *The Legitimacy of the Modern Age* trans. R. Wallace (Cambridge, Mass., MIT Press, 1983), Part Two.

⁴⁷ John Dewey, *Democracy and Education* (New York: MacMillan and Co., 1916), 408.

⁴⁸ John Dewey, *Art as Experience* (New York: Capricorn Books, 1958), 348.

⁴⁹ John Dewey, *The Later Works 1925-1953* (Illinois, 2008), 2.256.

⁵⁰ See Carsten Holbraad, *Internationalism and Nationalism in European Political Thought* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2003), 27.

⁵¹ Konrad Adenauer. Quoted in *Atlantic Community Quarterly* 14-15 (1977): 200.

economic reform) with a shared imagination for what their country's future might look like.⁵² This project will not reach a point where action is no longer required or the goal is fulfilled, when Catholics can retreat from engaging in political action but instead, it will be a continuous collaboration handed down from one generation to another, reshaping itself into posterity. Yet improvement requires pride in one's country, having enough invested in it to be willing to change it for the better. To have a civic system fragmented into competing racial, religious, sexual, and cultural identities may result in contradictory beliefs and goals that stymie a nation's progress. Rather than identity or reactionary politics, Catholics might seek to promote a kind of solidarity through this national pride, based on hope and shared by individuals of all backgrounds, who dare to imagine a better future for their nation's next generations in which suffering, cruelty, and humiliation are minimised. This ongoing and creative process might engender a national selfhood with concomitant political and social programmes. Such collaboration might also result in a lasting solidarity between communities that, if imagined and strived towards, could possess a genuine possibility of bridging the increasingly partisan divisions facing liberal democracies today.

⁵² Cf. Rorty, *Achieving Our Country*, 99: '[The] Left will have to stop thinking up ever more abstract and abusive names for 'the system' and start trying to construct inspiring images of the country. Only by doing so can it begin to form alliances with people outside the academy – and, specifically, with the labor unions. Outside the academy, Americans still want to feel patriotic. They still want to feel part of a nation which can take control of its destiny and make itself a better place.'