

## **Oikophobia and Not Being at Home; Educational Questions**

### **Abstract**

In this paper, I explore some of the ways in which the notion of “home” has been invoked in the context of ideas about belonging and nationalism in the wake of the recent EU Referendum in Britain. I focus particularly on Roger Scruton’s account of “oikophobia”, and explore some ways in which, while questioning the pathologisation of “not belonging” implied in Scruton’s account, we can nevertheless put the notion of “home” and its political significance at the heart of our discussions about the educational response to contemporary debates on belonging, migration and movement.

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*'Under the most diverse conditions and disparate circumstances, we watch the development of the same phenomena –homelessness on an unprecedented scale, rootlessness to an unprecedented depth.'* (Arendt, 1976, p. vii)

*"Unaccompanied child refugees should be made to feel at home in the UK"* (Headline in *The Guardian*, 28th June, 2016)

*"'Unaccompanied child refugees should be made to feel at home in the UK' - so that many THOUSANDS more will come. What utter rubbish that we as a country are more interested in the well-being of others and don't give a hoot about our OWN. The LOONY LEFT..."*

(Anonymous online comment below the above article.)

### **Introduction**

We are currently facing the worst crisis of forced displacement since World War II, with the UN estimating the number of displaced people worldwide at over 65 million. In the context of debates over the responsibilities of Western states towards asylum seekers and refugees and, connectedly, the resurgence of forms of ethnic nationalism, there are serious educational questions to be asked. These involve not only practical questions about what schools can and should be doing to accommodate children from refugee and immigrant communities, but also theoretical questions about how teachers should address questions of nationality, belonging, statehood, and citizenship.

Questions about the extent to which patriotism and national identity are compatible with the aims of education in a liberal democratic state have long been the subject of rigorous debate within political philosophy and philosophy of education. (see e.g. Archard, 1999; Callan, 2006; Enslin, 1994; Galston, 1991; Hand, 2011; Merry, 2018; Nussbaum, 1996; White, 1996).

In the wake of the recent EU Referendum in Britain, where narratives of patriotism, nationalism and belonging have been frequently articulated, it seems important to revisit these questions. In the following discussion, I do so through a focus on the idea of “home”. My motivation is a concern with how a particular notion of the home and being at home has been employed within current political debates, and how the idea of *not being at home* has been pathologised.

## Oikophobia and Belonging

In 1993, Roger Scruton published a paper in the *Journal of Education* in which he used the term "oikophobia", a term he later developed in his 2004 book, *England and the Need for Nations*, where he defines it as "the repudiation of inheritance and home (Scruton, 2004, p. 36). In the earlier paper, the account of oikophobia is part of a criticism of "multiculturalism", a term that always appears in inverted commas in Scruton's writing, along with other phrases in inverted commas - "culture"; "racism"; "politically correct".

"The advocate of multiculturalism", Scruton says, "is in a state of rebellion against the established order; he is suffering from a pathological oikophobia, a hatred of home..." (Scruton, 1993, p. 96). By talking not about nationalism or patriotism, but about the *oikos*, Scruton is appealing to the emotive and evaluative connotations of the word "home". The effects of this move are significant. For while it may be fairly easy to accept, with Hand, that "reasonable people can and do reasonably disagree with the desirability of loving one's country" (Hand, 2011), it is far harder to dismiss Scruton's suggestion that there is something problematic about not loving, or at least not liking – indeed, as the term oikophobia clearly implies, feeling afraid of – one's home.

One obvious response is that Scruton is simply using the term "home" as a proxy for a notion of the (imagined) nation (see Anderson, 2006). His defence of British nationalism, or patriotism, can be challenged with the arguments developed by political theorists, including those who acknowledge that some form of patriotic sentiment can be valuable (see e.g. Macedo, 2011). Scruton can be criticised for his unreflective use of the first-person plural (the terms "our country", "our civilization" do not appear in inverted commas in his text), and for the exclusion, by definition, of anyone who does not share his conception of "our country". His arguments may raise similar concerns to those suggested by theorists who worry that attempts to foster patriotism may encourage "uncritical attachments" (Hand, 2011; see also Keller, 2015; Nussbaum, 1996; Osler, 2017), undermining the possibility for the kind of "critical patriotism" (Merry, 2009) that some see as essential for civic education in a democracy.

How we articulate and imagine the relationship between members of a society and the political structures and institutions within which they live their lives is not an abstract intellectual exercise. The idea of the "social imaginary", in Charles Taylor's influential account, has a constitutive function, referring to "the ways in which people imagine their

social existence, how they fit together with others, how things go on between them and their fellows, the expectations that are normally met, and the deeper normative notions and images that underlie these expectations.” (Taylor, 2004, p. 23). Scruton is also drawing on accounts that suggest connections between the idea of a stable national or cultural identity and a “need to belong”, often posited as having an evolutionary basis (see Baumeister and Leary, 1995). The effect is to create the impression that there is a kind of adaptive necessity or psychological desirability in what is in effect an ideological position.

Scruton’s denunciation of the oikophobe, while not explicitly aimed at “foreigners”, clearly feeds into a familiar anti-immigration narrative. This is particularly salient in the context of what Keddie (2104, p. 539) describes as “the dominant view”, expressed frequently in Britain, that multicultural policies have failed, and that “the unprecedented level of cultural diversity within western contexts such as the UK is undermining social harmony and cohesion and is attributable to minority groups’ failure to connect or assimilate with mainstream (read White Anglo) culture.”

The idea of oikophobia was taken up again in a recent commentary, where the author explicitly questions multiculturalism:

*It is a shame that we are in the grip of oikophobia, and it is indicative of how we have let other cultures crowd out our own; it’s a pity because it should be possible to express interest in and to learn from other traditions while at the same time remaining appreciative of one’s own heritage. But many people are incapable of handling that balance, and the more oikophobic we become and the more we embrace the idea of cultural diversity, the farther we are removed from the sources and thereby the understanding of our own culture. (Beckeld, 2019)*

This alleged failure to appreciate one’s own heritage is expressed in Scruton’s 2004 book, where he bemoans the critical questioning of ideas, values and personal qualities at the heart of England and Englishness:

*All those features of the English character that had been praised in war-time books and films—gentleness, firmness, honesty, tolerance, ‘grit’, the stiff upper lip and the spirit of fair play—were either denied or derided. [...] Look beneath every institution and every ideal, the critics said, and you will find the same sordid reality [...] (Scruton, 2004, p. 33)*

Both in his 1993 paper and elsewhere, Scruton berates the phenomenon of "political correctness" which he describes as "a chronic form of oikophobia" (2004, p. 37), identifying the oikophobic "state of mind" as "a frequent disease amongst intellectuals since the Enlightenment" (ibid). In revisiting these themes in the context of the 2016 EU Referendum, Scruton refers not to "intellectuals" but to "urban elites" who, he says, "form their networks without reference to national boundaries" and whose language "is the international language of commerce." (Scruton, 2016).

He goes on to describe "leave" voters as "expressing their attachment to an older form of collective identity—the 'we' of the nation", in contrast to "remain" voters who identified "with a global, outward-looking project that has the abolition of nations as its dominant aim." (ibid). These characterisations invoke the figure of the "rootless cosmopolitan" - a notion that, aside from being a familiar antisemitic trope, raises significant educational and political questions, as I explore below.

Scruton's defence of "the English way of doing things" and his rhetorical use of the term "our culture" should be challenged, both for the conceptual and historical flaws in the idea that there is "an English way" that isn't already a hybrid of several different cultural influences, and for his refusal to acknowledge that such ideas are and have always been premised on the exclusion of certain people and groups. The idea that cultures or nations can be conceptualised as coherent, clearly delineated entities, and that individuals can be viewed as unproblematically belonging to them, has been questioned by several theorists who address what Seyla Benhabib describes as the "radical hybridity" and "polyvocality" of all cultures (Benhabib, 2002; see also Sen, 2006; Clifford, 1988).

One could argue that Scruton is right in assuming that there *is* a basic human need to feel "at home", but that this can manifest itself in several different ways. We can feel "at home" in a local community, a virtual community of like-minded people, or a physical place. Scruton has just oversimplified the notion by defining "the home" as a clearly delineated, stable and coherent culture rooted in a geographical location.

Yet something more is brought into these discussions, I suggest, by the use of the word "home". In coining the term *oikophobia*, part of what Scruton is doing is turning the charge of "phobia" on the very people who have identified and condemned xenophobia, racism and

homophobia. In doing so, he is making a similar move to that described by Sara Ahmed when she analyses how

*It has become common for hate groups to rename themselves as organisations of love. Such organisations claim they act out of love for their own kind, and for the nation as an inheritance of kind ('Our White Racial Family'), rather than out of hatred for strangers or others. (Ahmed, 2016).*

In the same way, Scruton's use of "phobia" functions to pathologise and dismiss the very people who have identified discriminatory attitudes in their society. Ahmed analyses how "the very critique of racism as a form of hate [...] becomes seen as the conditions of production for hate; the 'true' hated group is the white groups who are, out of love, seeking to defend the nation against others, who threaten to steal the nation away". Likewise, the "truly" dysfunctional and phobic individuals, in Scruton's critique, are those who have called out prejudice and exclusion as form of social and psychological dysfunctionality. This pathologisation equates criticism of, opposition to, or outright rejection of *aspects* of the society in which one lives, to a pathological inability to feel at home in one's surroundings.

As the above *Quillette* piece illustrates, the charge of oikophobia was taken up in the aftermath of the 2016 Referendum in Britain. Two days after the Referendum, Tom Whyman, a Philosophy lecturer, published a piece in the *New York Times* describing his dislike of Alresford, the pretty, peaceful village in Hampshire where his parents live comfortably, and from where, as a teenager, he longed to escape. For Whyman, the Brexit victory seemed to encapsulate everything he hated about Alresford:

*And it is impossible to leave Alresford, because Alresford is not just a place: It is an ideology that infects your very soul. Let's call it "Alresfordism." It is an ideology of smallness, of contraction, of wanting to curl up in our own personal, financially secure hole and will everything amusing or interesting or exciting in the world away. (Whyman, 2016)*

Whyman explains that the murder of MP Jo Cox two weeks before the referendum

*shocked me into a realization that this referendum wasn't really a referendum about whether or not we should remain in the European Union. It was a referendum on immigration and on race — on whether to have our borders open*

*or closed. [...]In short: Do we open ourselves up to new things, even if they might be unfamiliar, risky, unexpected, sometimes even undesirable? Or do we close ourselves down: a small island, trapped in its own smallness? So I knew which way I had to vote. This was a referendum on Alresfordism.*

Whyman was described as an oikophobe by several online commentators. One blogger complained that "Oikophobia, the aversion to one's home, is blatant in the writings of far too many progressive commentators". (<https://bsixsmith.wordpress.com/2016/06/26/against-oikophobia/>) Another commentator posted a link to Whyman's piece on Twitter, commenting: "Opposition to Brexit was fuelled by irrational oikophobia, not economic self-interest", and several commenters on the original article used the term oikophobia.

Scruton attaches a political and ethical significance to the state of being "at home", suggesting that regarding one's familiar environment with suspicion, even hatred, is, at best, an immature developmental stage that healthy individuals will get over; at worst, a form of mental illness. But there can be something morally and educationally valuable in coming to feel estranged from the environment of one's home. The idea of "making the familiar strange"; the ability to see one's immediate environment afresh, with a critical gaze, often to the point where one feels discomfort with it, as part of a motivation to change it, is at the heart of a great deal of work on critical consciousness and critical pedagogy. Social justice educators and theorists have discussed how, for members of privileged groups, there can be something unsettling and uncomfortable about the process of coming to realize that what seems "normal" may in fact be normal only for one's own group, and that continuing to accept it as so can constitute a complicity in the ongoing disadvantaging of other groups. (see Boler, 2004; Boler and Zembylas, 2003, Zembylas and McGlynn, 2012). Similarly, Jose Medina has developed an account of how "perplexity and self-estrangement are of the utmost importance for cognitive, affective, ethical and political learning; democratic sensibilities depend on them". (Medina, 2013, p.19). As I have explored elsewhere (anon, 2017), such discomfort can manifest itself as an inability to "feel at home" in one's familiar home environment. People who experience such shifts in consciousness, often as the result of a pedagogical encounter, can find themselves unable to *see* their familiar environment in quite the same way as they did before. At times, the estrangement itself can play an important role in the development of deeper political understanding, as reflected in Bourdieu's remark that "Political subversion presupposes cognitive subversion; a conversion

of the vision of the world ...” (Bourdieu, 1982: 127). Other theorists have described such processes as a form of “cognitive liberation” (see Tarlau, 2014).

Perhaps what Scruton is actually suggesting is that a critical attitude towards one's home culture is acceptable, but that it becomes pathological when it descends into a kind of loathing? Yet the development of critical consciousness can often affect one's perception of familiar things and events in ways that involve a powerful emotional sense of estrangement, even hatred. To see this as an emotional response to be overcome, or as a "disease which is created by thought" (Scruton, 1993, p. 98) rather than as possibly educationally productive and even constitutive of a desirable critical attitude, is problematic.

Scruton describes the oikophobe as someone who wants to be free of the claim that his home makes on him: "...free from the pressure to belong, to be with 'us', to love something, believe in something, accept something which is his" (ibid, pp. 96-97). Yet all “homes” are complex and often contradictory places; one can embrace and identify with certain ideas and values that one encounters in one's environment, and as a result of this also be led to question or feel estranged from other aspects of the same environment.

Similarly, in suggesting that there is a voluntary aspect to this desire to be free of the claims of home, Scruton overlooks the pervasive phenomenon of people who *find themselves*, for whatever reasons, uneasy with aspects of their home. This could be due to external political events, personal experience, encounters with ideas that challenge the taken-for-granted contours of one's environment and habitual practices, or a complex combination of these factors. Stuart Hall describes such processes powerfully in his memoir, reflecting on his childhood in Jamaica and his attempt to locate himself within a society whose colonial past meant that, “the dynamics of displacement underwrite all social relations” (Hall, 2018, p. 76). Hall describes the sense of the colonized subject “inserted into history [...] by negation, backward and upside down – like all Caribbean peoples, dispossessed and disinherited from a past which was never properly ours” (p. 61). But he also describes the connected sense of being “a sort of internal exile” in his own home. “I can't recall a time”, he reflects (p. 34) “when I experienced this social arrangement as right and harmonious, or as a haven in which, by rights, I belonged”. Yet far from being a pathological state, this experience and the ongoing intellectual journey it leads to is revealed, in Hall's writing, as a deeply ethical and intellectually valuable way of being in the world.



This discussion suggests that by pathologising the inability to feel at home in the world, Scruton is implicitly rejecting the educational and moral value of the ability to regard one's environment as morally problematic. The critical response to Scruton may involve, then, questioning the normative and empirical status of "belonging". Several contemporary theorists have addressed the ways in which the notion of belonging is linked to narratives of social cohesion, citizenship and national identity. As Mary Healy (2018, pp. 5-6) notes, recent literature on the idea of belonging tends to distinguish between two different strands: "*membership belonging*" (articulated through the language of rights and responsibilities) and "*a sense of belonging*". Whereas the former refers to formal structures and institutions such as citizenship, rights of entry/abode, and access to state services (ibid), the latter sense refers to "more personal attachments to place, communities or practices often associated with emotional connections found in personal everyday activities" (ibid). It is this latter sense that is often associated with the feeling of being "at home". Healy notes that many people may "belong" in the formal sense, while not feeling a sense of belonging; likewise, some people may feel at home in a place or community even if they lack formal membership rights.

What I think needs further exploration is not just – as noted by Healy - the complex ways in which these two senses of belonging can interact, but the sense in which they may both be, for many people, perennially fragile, unstable or in flux. To appreciate this point, it is essential to begin from an acknowledgement of intertwining of the political and the personal. Antonsich (2010, p. 645) similarly distinguishes between belonging as feeling at home, described as a "personal, intimate feeling", and the "discursive resource which constructs, claims, justifies or resists forms of socio-spatial inclusion/exclusion"; what he calls a "politics of belonging". Such distinctions sidestep philosophical discussions of the emotions and their cognitive component (see e.g. Nussbaum, 2004). But my focus here is on the impossibility of disentangling the causal and conceptual links between the psychological and the discursive notions of belonging. The positioning of the notion of home as "a symbolic space of familiarity, comfort, security and emotional attachment" (ibid, p. 646) occludes the ways in which this symbolic space is already saturated with broader and deeper political meanings. Connectedly, perhaps it is more useful to think of identity not as the achievement of a stable state, but as an ongoing attempt to make sense of these intertwined layers of personal and political meaning. Hall reflects (2018, p. 16): "We tend to think of identity as taking us back to our roots, the part of us which remains essentially the same across time. In

fact identity has always a never-completed process of becoming - a process of shifting identifications, rather than a singular, complete, finished state of being”.

The possibility, and the value, of such conceptions of identity, is undermined by accounts like Scruton’s in which the disruptions, dislocations and discomfort of the oikophobe are seen not as valuable and perhaps inevitable aspects of a “constantly shifting process of positioning” (ibid), but as unsightly flaws in the smooth fabric of the home.

I want to suggest that in his use of the word “oikos”, Scruton is at one and the same time making a political point, and masking the political, indeed ideological, position behind his description of the supposedly psychological condition of oikophobia.

Scruton claims (1993, p. 95) that “‘multiculturalism’ is an attempt to ‘pluralise’ what is essentially singular - my identity as a social being.” Perhaps Scruton’s identity as a human being is singular. But many people’s identity is not singular, and this is not from choice, but because lives are transient and cultures are fluid, permeable and constantly in flux.

"To regard the human world as a collection of equally valid 'lifestyles', 'cultures' and 'values', is to fabricate choices where there are none. To choose a culture or a set of values is precisely to have no culture and no value" Scruton says (ibid, p. 95) - a sentiment echoed in former Prime Minister Teresa May’s statement that "if you believe you’re a citizen of the world, then you’re a citizen of nowhere”. Of course Scruton is right that we do not choose our cultural affiliations or values. But in the same way as Scruton was perhaps thrown into a particular culture and set of values, many people are thrown in to a messy mixture of cultures and values. This does not mean they have none; it means they have several. What is more, as narratives like Hall’s suggest, the process of coming to understand oneself and one’s place in the world within this matrix of values, emotions, and discursive forms may be an ongoing and never finished project. Healy (2018, p. 8) has developed an account of “perceived belonging”, drawing on Charles Taylor’s work on recognition. She suggests that perceived belonging has “a dialogic role: I partially become conscious of who I am through the images others have of me and that I have of them.[...]”, and regards this mutual recognition as grounding the possibility of social cohesion.

However, alongside this political project of recognition it is important, I suggest, to allow room for a social imaginary in which stable cultural and national identity is not held up as either dominant or necessary. Perhaps some people never fully feel at home anywhere;

perhaps this is precisely the aspect of them that needs to be recognised and acknowledged in political spaces, and perhaps this is no obstacle to them being able to forge allegiances and solidarity with other agents in such spaces.

### **Having a Home and Being at Home**

The above is not to suggest that there is no value to the sense of "feeling at home" in the world. Nor should we elide the conceptually distinct ideas of *having a home* and *being at home*. While it may be that for many people, the sense of being "at home" is not associated with rootedness in a particular cultural community, I would not want to devalue the importance of *having a home*. For the word "home" can, of course, signify the fundamental human need for shelter and a roof over one's head, which may seem completely separate from the idea of "feeling at home". Yet while the two are conceptually distinct, they are, like the two senses of belonging identified above, intertwined in social reality. One way in which this is so is that the experience of being uprooted from one's physical home - an experience central to many people's lives - can lead to the suspicion of the *idea* of being at home in any clearly defined geographical or cultural community.

This was captured eloquently by Hannah Arendt, who, although famous for her philosophical distinction between the private world of the *oikos* and the political, public world of the *polis*, was also an astute observer, largely through reflection on her own experience, of the political significance of homelessness. Interestingly, Arendt herself was accused of a kind of oikophobia by Gershom Scholem in response to her commentary on the Eichmann trial:

"In the Jewish tradition there is a concept, hard to define and yet concrete enough, which we know as *Ahabath Israel*: 'Love of the Jewish people'. In you, dear Hannah, as in so many intellectuals who came from the German left, I find little trace of this." (in Arendt, 1978, p. 241). Arendt responded:

*You are quite right – I am not moved by any 'love' of this sort, and for two reasons: I have never in my life 'loved' any people or collective – neither the German people, nor the French, nor the American, nor the working class or anything of that sort. I indeed love 'only' my friends and the only kind of love I know of and believe in is the love of persons. Secondly, this 'love of the Jews'*

*would appear to me, since I am myself Jewish, as something rather suspect. I cannot love myself or anything which I know is part and parcel of my own person.*

I am drawing on Arendt here not to offer a philosophical argument against Scruton's claim that there is something ethically and psychologically suspect about the inability to feel a sense of belonging to a culture or a nation. Rather, Arendt's comments serve as a reminder that Scruton's apparent ability to feel this sense, and his consequent assumption that it is natural or universal, may not be shared by others, and that this may be so for significant historical and political reasons.

Furthermore, it is not only the personal trauma of having been displaced or uprooted that can contribute to people's inability to feel fully "at home" even in a place where they have chosen to live and where they are granted "membership belonging". There are many cases in which subconscious, intergenerational memories of trauma or displacement can contribute, in subtle and complex ways, to individuals' sense of not being at home, even in the land of their birth. Again, Hall (2018, p. 15) captures this in writing about his childhood in Jamaica, where "the sense of abandonment was already hardwired into the popular Jamaican imaginary".

The contemporary world, in which displacement is so pervasive, demands that we pay particular attention to this aspect of Scruton's argument. By implying, through his emotive language and his use of the terms "we" and "our", that his own experience of belonging is universal and normative, Scruton risks pathologising displacement and uprootedness, thereby contributing to political narratives that exclude those who "do not belong". He also, as I have suggested, occludes the many ways in which experiences of "not being at home" can be productive and valuable elements of people's lives.

While Scruton draws implicitly on the idea of the nation state, contemporary theorists such as Seyla Benhabib and Nancy Fraser have questioned the normative and theoretical value of statist political ideas in a world where "the equation of citizenship, nationality and territorial residence is belied by such phenomena as migrations, diasporas, dual and triple citizenship arrangements, indigenous community membership and patterns of multiple residency." (Fraser, 2007, p. 16). Benhabib argues (2004, p. 6) that in trying to chart emerging political forms of globalization with old maps created in and for a world of nation states, "we are like travellers navigating an unknown terrain". Yet, as Sharon Todd points out, this apparent difficulty is "not because cultural and ethnic diversity is a new element in

the body politic, nor are great periods of migration entirely novel [...]. Rather the newness of the problem emerges [...] as the old fictions of homogeneity upon which nations have been built have begun to unravel at the seams.” (Todd, 2006, p.110)

In this context, Scruton’s prioritisation of the social imaginary of the nation state has further consequences, for it goes hand in hand with a broader social imaginary in which sedentarism is the norm, and “the migrant” is a marginal figure, rather than a “primary or constitutive figure of politics” (Nail, 2015). This has significant consequences for a range of social practices, including, as I explore below, education. Thomas Nail (2015) has discussed the idea of a social imaginary in which “the figure of the migrant” is central. Meanwhile, these assumptions have real life consequences for how we pathologise displacement in its various forms. Liisa Malkki has vividly depicted, in her studies of refugees, how “our sedentary assumptions about attachment to place lead us to define displacement not as a fact about sociopolitical context, but rather as an inner, pathological condition of the displaced.” (Malkki, 1992, p. 33). This pathologization of displacement is, I think, one of the effects of Scruton’s defining “being at home” in the narrow sense described above.

## **Educational Responses to Displacement**

I have suggested that we should reject the assumption that feeling at home is universally experienced, politically desirable, or psychologically necessary. Yet in doing so, is there not a danger that we will fail to acknowledge the enormity of the trauma of displacement for the individuals who experience it? Perhaps the educational challenge is to find a way to acknowledge both this trauma and its significance, and the educational value of forms of estrangement. However, this does not mean drawing a clear line between "political" and "non-political" senses of the word "home".

I have argued that Scruton's pathologization of the oikophobe serves to mask his own ideological position. In doing so, he effectively depoliticises the debate. The criticisms by Remainers of the notion of Britishness evoked by some Leave campaigners, and the expression of alienation, following the referendum, on the part of Remain voters, should be regarded not as a pathological psychological state, but as a legitimate political stance - no less of a political stance, in fact, than the claims made by some Leave voters that they no longer

felt "at home" in contemporary Britain. Yet while rejecting the pathologization of "not feeling at home" and acknowledging its political significance, it is surely important to preserve the sense that "not feeling at home" is a significantly different state from the state of those - like refugees - who have physically been uprooted from their home.

No doubt Scruton would share this moral response to the tragedy of refugees and of those rendered physically homeless. But within the social imaginary that his narrative suggests, everybody has a real "home", in an ontological and an emotional sense, even if they are physically displaced. The question "But where are you *really* from?", with its familiar racist overtones, not only reveals the exclusions and erasures on which so many contemporary accounts of citizenship and belonging are constructed; it also reinforces *belonging* as an ontologically prior and normative ideal. In the public imagination, the tragedy of refugees is that they have lost their original home. The inability of some people to feel at home in the land to which they flee, choose to immigrate or are exiled is, in this social imaginary, mirrored by their longing for their "real" home. This tragedy, on such a view, can be eased by their being encouraged to integrate into their new home, while perhaps continuing to experience and articulate, through various cultural and linguistic modes of expression, their ongoing attachment to their homeland.

The painful reality of such experiences is captured by Alessandro Petti in his critical study of refugee camps. While third-generation refugees may have built permanent homes and infrastructure, and may feel "at home" in the cultural, linguistic and political community that they are born into, the camps "often become places where people are born and die, waiting to go home." (Petti, 2015)

Can our social imaginary accommodate both the pervasiveness and pain of such experiences, and the possibility of "not being at home" as an ongoing mode of being in the world? Can we acknowledge that while this mode of being may be connected to the political experience of displacement, it is not fully captured or causally explained by it, and that it may be the result of unsettling but productive ruptures to one's "ways of seeing"?

Contemporary educators should surely be concerned to explore and analyse the causes of the current "migration crisis" and to make vivid the human tragedy of homelessness. I suggest that this involves exploring the political and personal meanings of "home", and how the

concept of home, and the loss of home, can signify an existential state that runs deeper than a physical loss, and that can endure through generations.

This existential state is captured in W.G. Sebald's writings about emigrants and refugees, as described by Alice Crary, who discusses how Sebald's narratives can "directly inform moral understanding" (Crary, 2012, p. 495):

*As a result of having been violently disconnected from their pasts, Sebald's characters find themselves responding to their environments in ways that they cannot understand well enough either to decisively identify with or to repudiate them. A second and closely related theme of the different narratives is that the trouble these characters have developing their own modes of responsiveness interferes with their ability to understand their lives.*

What is involved then, in the ethical and educational imperative to respond to refugees - a response often construed as the imperative to help them "feel at home"? Many admirable educational projects focus on encouraging children to help refugees by extending the physical spaces, objects and comforts - meals, beds, clothes - that go to make up a "home". I am not suggesting that this is not worthwhile. But I am suggesting that to understand the tragedy of homelessness that results from displacement and exile, one needs to understand it in a political sense, while not romanticising the normative ideal of belonging that is often associated with the political right to belong.

Arendt's work is helpful in thinking through this idea. Arendt's conception of the political leads her to the view that, as Marie Morgan explains (2016, p. 174), "it is political life that signifies each person's humanity, to the world, to others and to itself.". The educational implications of this view are significant, for "it is through relating with and to others in the public sphere that the thinking individual learns about the world and his place within it and to form opinions of and about that world." (ibid, p. 176).

For Arendt, it is through speech and action that we appear to each other "not indeed as physical objects, but qua men [sic]". (ibid). Yet crucially, as Menke et al argue (2007, p. 753), the associated notion of human dignity "is...no natural property, which human beings are endowed with individually, and which subsequently would have social consequences, but it consists in nothing other than their politico-linguistic existence: their speaking, judging, and acting with and vis-à-vis others".

This is what Arendt meant by her notion of "the right to have rights", a notion premised on the central importance of recognition. For "the qualities needed to be accorded treatment in line with the expectations of human rights, then, are something not found in the abstract human organism, in the socially-unclothed naked body, but, rather, they require social clothing; they require the naked body to acquire the mask – literally, the persona – of social recognition as not just a human, homo sapiens, but as a person." (Arendt, 1976, p. 292).

More fundamental than the abstract notion of universal human rights, is the right to belong; a right that is only made possible through others' recognition of one's being a person, able to be fully heard and seen in the public sphere of speech and action. For Arendt (ibid, p. 295), being recognised as a member of a political community is the basic condition on which all other rights depend: "The calamity of the rightless is not that they are deprived of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness, or of equality before the law and freedom of opinion – formulas which were designed to solve problems within given communities – but that they no longer belong to any community whatsoever."

In a talk in which he referred again to oikophobia, Scruton stated: "Every society depends on an experience of membership: a sense of who 'we' are, why we belong together, and what we share. This experience is pre-political: it precedes all political institutions, and provides our reason for accepting them." (Scruton, 2006).

My discussion has suggested that "belonging" is not in fact "pre-political"; it is the very heart of politics, and it is imperative that we enact it through our public ways of being with each other. Acknowledging this point means that if educators are to take the notion of "home" seriously, they must acknowledge that human beings are "animals whose characteristic capacities of mind make us unavoidably vulnerable to political upheavals and natural disasters that uproot us, cutting us off from our pasts." (Crary, 2012, p. 503). They must defend the value of having a home as part of a basic right to a roof over one's head, but also as part of what Arendt describes as having "a place in the world which makes opinions significant and actions effective." (Arendt, 1976. p. 296). Not to belong, in this sense, is to be deprived of the conditions in which we can be fully human, freely acting to create the world in which we live.



The subject of citizenship education or civic education in schools could provide a space in which to explore these themes. In England, while Citizenship Education is frequently tied to ideas of “community cohesion” and, recently, “fundamental British values”, several theorists have argued for a more cosmopolitan or global orientation for the subject. In fact, as Hugh Starkey points out, the Crick Report, which established Citizenship Education in state schools in Britain, “recognized the contribution the subject could and should make to discussions of what it means to be a citizen of the UK in a globalizing world” (Starkey, 2018, p. 3) and acknowledged the plurality of national, cultural, ethnic and religious identities common across British society. Yet although the Crick Report “allowed for the decoupling of citizenship and nationality” (Starkey, 2018, p. 150), recent years have seen “a series of rhetorical interventions promoting a nationalized conception of citizenship that tends to promote an essentialised national identity, sometimes referred to as Britishness” (ibid, p. 155). In the face of these political discourses, several theorists have developed and defended an ideal of “education for cosmopolitan citizenship”, which involves “a reimagining of the nation as cosmopolitan where its citizens are all connected to people in a world community extending beyond national boundaries.” (Starkey, 2018, p. 156; see also Osler, 2017).

In an important contrast to Scruton’s 2004 description of the “oik” as one who “repudiates national loyalties and defines his goals and ideals against the nation, promoting transnational institutions over national governments, accepting and endorsing laws that are imposed on us from on high by the EU or the UN”, Osler (2017) and Starkey draw on their research with young people in Britain to suggest that “cosmopolitan perspectives are no longer simply the hallmark of a global elite.” (ibid, p. 156). They note that “globalization has created conditions where people, including young people, identify with a range of places and communities, within and beyond their locality and the UK.” (ibid, p. 157)

Yet these narratives of cosmopolitan citizenship tend to obscure the fact that, as Douzinas notes, (2007, p. 155) there is a tension running through modern ideas of cosmopolitanism. For Diogenes, the original historical figure of the liminal philosopher and homeless cosmopolitan, “the only correct Republic is that of the cosmos” (p. 144), and he described himself as not feeling at home “anywhere except in the cosmos itself” (ibid). Yet over time, especially with the historical development of the Roman Empire, “the idea of a law common to all imperial subjects, of a *jus gentium*, started to take hold” (p. 156). Thus, rather than a cosmopolitanism in which “the spirit of the cosmos is mobilised against the order of the polis”, the ideal that took hold in the modern era, which Douzinas refers to as “the

cosmopolitanism of Empire”, is one in which the law of the polis is elevated to the status of the law of the cosmos. Douzinas argues that, to recover its revolutionary and utopian potential, the idea of cosmopolitanism “must be freed from its contemporary champions, who have turned it into a rather dull institutional blueprint” (ibid, p. 148).

## **Conclusion**

How can these utopian and critical ideas be connected with the themes of identity, belonging and feeling at home that I have been exploring? Arendt’s insistence on the political nature of belonging, alongside Hall’s point that “identity, in the singular, is never achieved with any finality” (2018, p. 63), can inform an educational approach that allows for the value, pedagogically and politically, of “not feeling at home”. This suggests a demanding role for educators concerned to include and recognise the children in their classrooms. It may lead to discomforting situations and forms of cognitive displacement. But an openness to and acknowledgement of these tensions is, I suggest, a more honest form of engagement with political reality than the mythical ideal of belonging promoted by narratives of “oikophobia”. For these narratives resemble what Barbara Cassin (2016, p.51) refers to as Heidegger’s “ontological nationalism”, which she contrasts with Arendt’s more political orientation. And, like Heidegger’s talk of “being” they are, Cassin suggests (ibid), “ontological *so as not to be* political”.

Interestingly, Scruton did not actually invent the term “oikophobia”. It is a recognised psychiatric disorder, involving a fear of household objects – frequently domestic appliances such as dishwashers and kettles. I think this is telling. Only those who are already part of an environment in which things like kitchen appliances exist and are taken for granted, can develop an irrational phobia of them. Similarly, only people who are already part of a political community can voice a critical view about it. For those whose familiar environment appears abhorrent, like disappointed Remainers or disgruntled Leavers, the choice is to stay and fight to change it, or to leave. It may not be an easy choice, nor one without personal costs, but it is a choice nevertheless, and one which comes with the privilege of being a member of a political community. What we should be concerned about is not the mental health of people who express such views, but the political status of those who have been excluded from doing so. What we should try to “cure” is not the “oikophobe” or the

symptoms of "okophobia", but the political conditions under which individuals cannot be recognised as suffering from these symptoms, because they are not recognised in the first place.

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