Europe United in Diversity—An Analogical Hermeneutics Perspective

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Abstract:

At a moment when a new crisis threatens Europe—a crisis containing, among other ingredients, COVID-19, a faltering economy, immigration and Brexit—the European Union (EU)'s motto 'Europe united in diversity' would appear progressively less attainable. This paper submits that the European ideal is still both desirable and possible through the fostering of political unity at the constitutional (regime) level by using the notions of analogical state and analogical culture, and at the community level by the enablement of public sphere secularity and relational interculturalism. These concepts share the intuition that the EU should be envisaged in a more flexible manner, and carry several policy implications for the future of European integration.

Keywords:

analogical culture, analogical state, European unity, public sphere secularity, relational interculturalism

On Tuesday 3 March 2020 David Sassoli, President of the European Parliament, pronounced a statement. It followed the European Commission's announcement of measures to address COVID-19. Though the statement was less than two minutes long, it symbolized 'things old and new' in the history of European integration:

> 'Not since the end of the Second World War have we faced such a dramatic crisis. Today the European Union is taking action… This situation is so serious that no European government could think of responding alone. The package of measures put forward by the European Commission today to fight COVID-19 goes in the right direction… The first priority is saving human lives. The other commitment is to protect jobs, businesses and the economy. To do this: enough with austerity. Countries are authorized to spend everything that is necessary to guarantee support for employees, self-employed workers, businesses, and banks… To save our countries, we must act together… Today the watchword for Europe is solidarity. No one will be left alone and no one will act alone.' (European Parliament 2020).

Such words and their deep implications would have been unthinkable only a few years ago, even as recently as during the Greek crisis (Irwin 2015). And yet, they were not out of place. Not only did they correspond to the magnitude of the challenge posed by the new pandemic to Europe, but their historic reference to the catastrophe of the Second World War was accurate and legitimate, as such event provided the background for the beginning of European integration (Jiménez Lobeira 2014b:94-97). This realisation prompted discussion and even serious consideration of an economic recovery plan, 'Next Generation EU', a coordinated, EU-level investment stimulus supported by all EU members (Verwey et al. 2020). The result was 'a giant leap in fiscal integration' (Politico 2020a) which conferred the Commission extraordinary powers to borrow up to €750 on the capital markets on behalf of the Union (Council of Europe 2020:3).

However it is easier to talk about solidarity and unity than to bring them to practical outcomes. This article advances ways of visualising the EU that might contribute increasing its cohesion in the face of the latest crisis threatening Europe, a crisis which contains among its main ingredients COVID-19, a faltering economy, troubled integration of migrants and Brexit. The ideas are arranged in two sections which consider the EU, respectively, in its political form or 'constitution' *(politeia)* and in its community of citizens *(koinônia politikê)*. A common intuition runs throughout both sections: in order to stay together, the EU needs to develop more flexible ways of picturing both the polity itself and the interaction among its citizens. The conclusion assesses whether the EU's many shortcomings outweigh its successes as an experiment in regional integration.

A methodological note. The concepts presented are set within a political theory approach in the sense aptly described by Dryzek et al. (2013) and following the outline sketched in Jiménez Lobeira (2010c). Analogical hermeneutics, a tool barely used in political theory so far, and explained at some length in Jiménez Lobeira (2015:6-19), is used here as a tool for analysis.

The European *Politeia*

Part of the difficulty in approaching any issue related to the EU is its political form, regime or 'constitution', what Aristotle called *politeia* (Miller 2018). As has been widely pointed out, the EU cannot be clearly conceived as a state or as an international organisation only, but constitutes a 'paradox' (Shaw and Wiener 2000) and can be better defined in analogical terms (Bickerton 2015:204-207). In a way, since it is nearly impossible to positively define what the EU is, some researchers have opted for indirect descriptions, by applying the medieval axiom 'action follows being' (Contreras Aguirre 2010) and thus deriving what the EU is from what it does (Ferrera & Giuliani 2008:22). When the EU is seen in analogical terms, though, some categories that have been widely used in European studies must be recalibrated, for instance the perceived 'democratic deficit' that implicitly—if inaccurately—assumes the EU to be a state, as Shaw & Wiener insightfully point out (2000:65).

The problem becomes evident in the current circumstances: a 'European' response to the problems the EU faces is difficult because there is a difference between de EU polity and a 'proper' state.

Analogical State

The EU is not a state properly speaking, though it resembles one. In this sense it could be called an 'analogical state'. Therefore, the identity necessary for its cohesion does not need to be strong but analogical too (Jiménez Lobeira 2010a). Because of this, there is no need to choose between France and the Soviet Union as potential scenarios for the future of Europe (Green 2000). Europeans do not have to opt for either their national region or country, and Europe: they can have both (Jiménez Lobeira 2014a).

In this context, suprastatism can be used to analyse the EU as a polity and its situation, origins and desirable future (Jiménez Lobeira 2015:21-23). The idea of stateless suprastatism originates in Schuman and Monnet (Burgess 2011) and is developed, among others, by Rainer Bauböck (2007) and, before him, Joseph Weiler (1999), though the term the three of them use is 'supranationalism'. I draw on this topic mainly from Weiler. His description of the community method and his principle of constitutional tolerance are invaluable in understanding the notion which, in Jiménez Lobeira (2015:22) I call 'suprastatism'. There too I distinguish between state and nation, pointing out that the political entities which conform the EU are not 'nations' but rather states. It is telling that they are referred to not as 'member nations' but as 'member states'. The reason is that states and nations do not always coincide: different national groups may live in one state (eg UK, Spain, Finland) and a nation may spread among several states (eg Catalans in France, Andorra and Spain). Besides, nations may have cultural expressions and history but only states necessarily possess legal and political form ('regime'). My claim is that what has been called 'nationalism' is often in reality statism: the

promotion of one state above some or all others. True, once unmasked in this way, statism becomes much less appealing. This distinction between nationalism and statism sheds light on why the EU should not aim at becoming a state, or even less 'a nation', since it already is a plurinational stateless polity.

Statism confronted Europeans with each other in the two World Wars. The concept of nation may have been used as a pretext, but wars were waged between national (and sometimes multinational) states. From the outset of the European integration project, Schuman, Monet and the other founders, devised instruments to keep what I call statism in check. Thus, the first brick in the structure of integration was a 'supranational' (ie suprastatal) authority to resolve potential disputes between France and Germany arising from the joint production of coal and steel. Soon Luxembourg, Italy, Netherlands, and Belgium joined the project too. Weiler (1998:27) considers the idea of Europe becoming a state (or a superstate) an irony since, from its beginnings, the European project (at the 'communities stage') was aimed at keeping what I'm calling here statism in check.

But can a plurinational stateless polity be a confederation or a federation? Habermas (2001b) has in mind a federation when he reflects on the EU desirable political form, which he describes as 'a community of nation-states that itself assumes some qualities of a state'. However, 'federation' can be either the union of several provinces or states, or the act of federating—to unite or cause to unite in a federal union. There are degrees of federation, but not all of them imply the creation of a state or a superstate. Confederacies contain, in fact, a level of federation. There can be federating for Europe without it becoming a state.

Certain initial features are not difficult to visualise: if the EU is not a confederation of sovereign, completely autonomous states, nor is it a federal state with a relatively strong degree of centralisation, then its economic regime would have to follow that of a federal state as the main referent, yet tend towards a confederate arrangement without arriving at it. The 'piecemeal', consensus approach that makes so many observers despair of the EU due to the slowness and mildness in restructuring, introducing reform and making economic decisions, would have to be reconsidered as one that for all its defects enables a way ahead. Mixed arrangements, consensus-based decisions and hybrid solutions must be tried in order to suit this stateless polity.[2]

Considering that 'tensions in defining national identities are an ever-present phenomenon, because the immanent feature of every identity is its fluidity, understood as the constant need to (re)define itself' (Ładykowski 2018:105), European identity should be regarded as analogical, and therefore capable of embracing elements from different perspectives and assuming them in a more comprehensive view. Concretely, I have attempted to show as unsatisfactory the idea that one conception of European identity disproves others just because it contains true claims. There is, indeed, space for the more plausible elements in

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[2] Ferrera & Giuliani (2008) have proposed 'governance' as a key element to understand the working of the EU while leaving aside the ontological ('What is it?') and teleological ('Where is it going?'). While the authors' is a useful and pragmatic approach, here we cannot omit those 'ontological' and 'teleological' aspects since they impact the legitimacy for the European polity.

every perspective to be contained in a synthetic concept of European identity, which is analogical (Jiménez Lobeira 2010b).

At any rate, if European identity is going to work as a link to keep the European polity together, it needs some substance, some definition and its distinction from 'national'—member-state—identity.

Analogical Culture

Elsewhere (Jiménez Lobeira 2015) I have proposed as content for such European identity the 'political culture of human rights' which could be summarised by the 'EU values' of human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, the rule of law and human rights (European Commission 2020) that are notionally shared by Europeans in all member states. A cultural context that provides a common framework of reference for the presenting, pondering and connecting of diverse cultural positions in the polity's public sphere. This 'analogical culture' is not as strong as member-state 'national' cultures, and commands only a limited appeal—one of assent. It contains the inspirations and 'the spirit' that motivated the creation of such great projects as the Council of Europe, the European Court of Human Rights and the European Communities.

The analogical culture implies human rights, democracy and the rule of law but does not necessarily equate to the growing body of positive law (including charters) of human rights. Rather, it encapsulates the foundational motivations at the heart of European integration. This culture may not be as well known and accepted in other parts of the world, but by and large it already forms part of what Europe is today (Jiménez Lobeira 2015:18-19). Such analogical culture is an important element in the approaching process of candidate countries towards membership and is often referred to in terms of 'values' that the EU upholds and that potential joining states must eventually adopt to show their real will to be part of the Union (Petrov 2018:59-60).

However, this analogical culture cannot take the place of national cultures, which provide an existential background to member states' political identities. It should be viewed not as a competing, strong or 'proper' culture but as a weaker version, definable enough to constitute a European axiological common ground, but vague enough to allow for differing nuances across member states. For those 'EU values' to take the form of a living political culture that can be called genuinely European, though, a simple assent is not enough: they need to be more than a concept in order to have an existential appeal to citizens. And a shared concept becomes an existential conviction when it is discussed, shaped and appropriated by citizens in the public sphere. The analysis of this process requires us now to change our viewpoint about the EU, from its consideration as a regime or polity to that of a community of citizens.

The European *Koinônia Politikê*

The progression of EU integration has damaged national democracies and has created a perception among the community of citizens that they have progressively less power to influence decision-making both at the national and European level (Schmidt 2015:219-223). This perception is magnified by higher immigration pressures of people with contrasting cultural backgrounds (Pew Research 2017). The vehicle for such magnification is, among other factors, the media, resulting in a more stressed public sphere. But the source of tension is related to the interplay between religion and secularism, as the case of Samuel Paty, a French middle school teacher beheaded on 16 October 2020 by an immigrant claiming to defend respect for the Muslim religion (Savarit-Lebrère 2020) shows.

The European public sphere is the place where generic values that have an in principle assent from European citizens can take concrete form and turn into existential convictions shared by the political community. However, for this shared political culture to be formed, the cultural backgrounds of the participants must be acknowledged, respected and appreciated.

Public Sphere Secularity

The importance of a public sphere that bridges the gap between national and European realms for the strengthening of European political identity has been pointed out, among others, by Longo (2019), who sees in the European Citizens Initiative (ECI) a concrete way to build such a public sphere. One interesting example of ECI is 'Voters Without Borders—full political rights for EU citizens', seeking to obtain the possibility for EU citizens to vote in their country or residence instead of their country of origin. Organisers claim that by 2020, over 17 million EU citizens live or work in a member state different from their country of origin (Voters Without Borders 2020).

The public sphere is not only a stage for the announcement of initiatives that affect the political community, but also for the free expression and discussion of ideas, even of those which result controversial due to their grounding in worldviews not shared by all.

In a previous analysis of the public sphere I have merged Casanova's 'secularism as statecraft', Taylor's 'open immanent frame' and Habermas's secular stage in the concept of 'secularity' (Jiménez Lobeira 2014a:389-393). I have synthesised in 'secularism' what for Casanova is 'secularism as ideology', for Taylor the 'closed immanent frame' and for Habermas secularism as ideology. The distinction between secularity and secularism is important, since the former denominates a neutral frame for discussion of different worldviews—religious or not—whereas the latter is a non-religious worldview (French *laïcité* might sometimes fall in this category, see Casanova 2014, and for a recent example, Deutsche Welle 2020).

Understood in this sense, secularity is an essential feature of the public sphere. Instead, 'secularism' is only one among several worldviews—including religious ones, deserving the respect awarded to all of them. None of those worldviews should be allowed to monopolise the European public sphere. A secular public sphere is an ideal stage for political discussion and for the building of social cohesion and civic identity. When a worldview is allowed to dominate the public sphere, those holding different worldviews might feel alienated and find it more difficult to integrate.

Habermas, who has carried out a serious reflection on the revival of religion in a postsecular age (2010; see too Jiménez Lobeira 2014a:393-394), advocates for a secular public sphere (Bohman & Rehg 2017) which in practice will be closer to secularism than to religions in its configuration. The possibility of 'pure secularity'—a framework for the hosting of different worldviews that is itself devoid of cultural underpinnings—is an open debate (Jiménez Lobeira 2011a). However, given that Europe stands for some non-negotiable political values such as democracy, the rule of law and human rights, all with a clear cultural and historical background, secularity, even if imperfect, may still be the best option for a complex society such as the European political community.

Yet, even if the condition of secularity were met, the discussion and exchange of ideas in the public sphere, and more importantly, the day to day interaction between the citizens of the European polity, would require a set of attitudes for integration to occur. Somewhere along the way between monoculturalism —unqualified cultural assimilation of immigrants—and the kind of multiculturalism that tends to create parallel societies living in one polity, relational interculturalism proposes a way of interaction which is, on the one hand, appreciative of different cultural backgrounds, but which, on the other hand, does not renounce to also spell out and appreciate the culture of the receiving population.

Relational Interculturalism

The idea that the EU is a sui generis polity or that its citizens are not a *demos* but a group of *demoi* is not new (Nicolaïdis 2004; see also Jiménez Lobeira 2010b, 2012). Since the EU is a mixed-commonwealth but not a state, understanding of its particular kind of citizenship becomes clearer with the aid of analogical hermeneutics. This tool enables to envisage a polity somewhat resemblant of a federal state yet different from it, with EU citizenship hinging on the member state without either opposing or simply replicating it. In other words, being an EU citizen is not equivalent to, yet not entirely different from being an Austrian citizen: it is similar and compatible to a certain degree (Jiménez Lobeira 2012).

And in the interactions within the community of citizens in a polity, cultural backgrounds are crucial because culture is an essential part of who concrete persons are. As mentioned above and shown in Jiménez Lobeira (2011), even those regimes that would like to think of themselves as 'value-free' possess a certain political culture with implied values and moral assumptions in their inner

structure. On occasion, conflicts arise between citizens holding the cultural background akin to, or at the origin of those values, and citizens with different cultural backgrounds. An example is the ongoing discussion about the compatibility of Sharia Law within the European legal framework (Kalampakou 2019). Any human organisation will have at its core certain values grounded on cultural underpinnings. It is better to reflect on and spell out those values, and determine how much a polity is prepared to modify them when new members join the political community. This discussion would impact the political culture of the polity as a whole, but also the interaction between its citizens, especially when they hold contrasting cultural backgrounds.

As advanced in the previous section, a neutral, or at least agnostic and open European public sphere, secular but appreciative of the value of religion for a significant number of current and future citizens, would set a climate for interaction between them. This interaction would include not only transactional matters but also an appreciation of worldviews held dear by them.

In Europe, the substantive underlying culture that has produced and maintained its democracies springs from the Enlightenment, rooted in turn in 'Jerusalem, Athens and Rome' (Ratzinger 2019). This culture has found political expression in parties across Europe grouped under the Social Democracy and the Christian Democracy banners (Jiménez Lobeira 2014b). Having an underlying culture for the polity does not mean that it has to limit itself to that culture only, excluding other traditions. But it does imply that such culture should be acknowledged, in the first place, by those who possess it, and secondly, by newcomers, especially when their cultural background is different.

The challenge is to achieve that citizens from diverse cultural, political and historical backgrounds come to see themselves as part of the same polity (Longo 2019). Recognition of differences is the first step towards real interaction in any civic community, as highlighted by relational interculturalism (Jiménez Lobeira 2015:28-30). Cultural exchange between people of different backgrounds is already complicated within an individual country. It is even more so in a stateless polity gathering several member states. Relational exchange begins from the acknowledgement that 'the other' is neither 'another me' nor someone completely alien, a 'totally other'. There is a difference, for sure, but it is not incommensurable.

The concept of relational interculturalism is based on Donati's relational sociology (Donati 2010) as well as on Beuchot's analogical hermeneutics (Beuchot 2005). The 'another me' scenario mentioned above could describe the univocal idea of monoculturalism. The 'totally other' case would represent the other extreme, the equivocality or incommunicability of multiculturalism. Following previous analyses on paradigms for social cohesion (Jiménez Lobeira 2014b:105-108) and the nature of analogical hermeneutics (Beuchot 2005a:13-27, 2005b:77-88; Jiménez Lobeira 2015:6-11), relational interculturalism would sit between mono- and multiculturalism as an analogical position, where there is some similarity even in the midst of difference (which—thanks to relation—is never so big that

communication and exchange between interlocutors becomes impossible). The beheading of Samuel Paty in France, the national discussion around the fact (Macron 2020a, 2020b) and its international repercussions (Rettman 2020) illustrate the need for different approaches to the ones tried so far.

That Old Little Subcontinent...

Pathways to Further Research

Analogical identity expressed, among other symbols, by EU citizenship (Jiménez Lobeira 2010b:31) requires much more elaboration. The symbol has a very important role in the theoretical outline of analogical hermeneutics (Beuchot 2004). It could be deepened in order to better explicate the concept of EU citizenship and to provide guidelines for its application as an emblem of political identity across the Union, in combination with ideas on the concept of citizenship advanced by authors such as Linda Bosniak (2000, 2008, 2010, 2011).

The concepts of analogical unity and suprastatism call for amplification. I have taken as possible illustrations of this kind of unity Weiler's descriptions of the original 'community system', suprastatism (which, as indicated above, he calls 'supranationalism') and his 'principle of constitutional tolerance' (summarised in Jiménez Lobeira 2014b and treated in detail in Weiler 1991:2410-2422 and 2005:184-190). However, since even advocates of a 'postnational EU' such as Habermas (2001a:98-103) still envisage it as a state (see Jiménez Lobeira 2010b:34-36), analogical unity and suprastatism must be expanded theoretically and tested empirically so that they can be alternatives to the vision of turning the EU into a state.

Another topic for further development is the application of analogical hermeneutics to the economy. In Jiménez Lobeira (2015) I focused on political unity and the related issues of political identity and political culture. But there is no reason why analogical hermeneutics could not be applied to economics. And indeed the flexible integration scheme submitted in Jiménez Lobeira (2014b) contains the essence of an analogical economic strategy.

One of the issues that in this field requires development is the relationship between political and economic unity and policy; concretely the consequences of a mixed-commonwealth regime for the economic architecture of the EU. In (Jiménez Lobeira 2014b) I suggested that workable economic arrangements for the EU would have to follow a rather flexible pattern, unlike the clear-cut one of a 'normal' polity—a state. Yet, how that arrangement might play out in aspects such as a banking union requires greater elaboration. The matter is particularly relevant to some of the new member states which based their 'return to Europe' and became active members of the EU hoping to obtain clear economic gains in the long term, as Vaaks (2013:53-55) has shown for Estonia—though also combined with a desire for geopolitical security as an additional motivation.

Similar deepening demand issues such as the 'fiscal union', agricultural subsidy arrangements, the role of the European Central Bank in the supervision of financial institutions, the setting of interest rates, and the discretionary use of monetary policy and 'quantitative easing' (printing of money to buy government bonds and other financial instruments) to fight unemployment, recession and panic attacks among investors in the euro and euro-designated financial instruments. For instance, to look into the possibility of more targeted audiences among the potential addressees of funds, as in the case of small and medium-sized businesses and other sectors of the economy that could generate more jobs and push growth in the different member states and the EU as a whole. This area of discussion has been opened as the economic effects of COVID-19 have prompted a search for EU-wide solutions (Zalan 2020).

A further stream for future research would be the comparison of integration between Europe and other regions of the world, with the parameters I have used for political unity, political identity, political culture, and so on. As mentioned in Jiménez Lobeira (2015:15), the success of European integration has not been matched by similar attempts in other regions of the world. This could be illustrated by attending to the case of the Asia Pacific, where some efforts exist such as the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation and more recently the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership and the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (Chien-Huei Wu 2020). Still, the extension of the region and its wider cultural diversity make any process of integration slow and not evidently feasible in the short run.

In the American continent the situation should be different, given the relatively closer affinity between at least the Latin American countries. A good part of this continent, 'Ibero-America', extends for circa twenty million sq km (more than five times the size of the EU) and encompasses twenty countries with over 620 million inhabitants, with Spanish as common language for nineteen of them and Portuguese for the twentieth (*O Gigante do Sul*, 'the Southern Giant' —Brazil).

That subregion, which shares cultural, historic, economic, and political interests, has seen efforts of integration predating the foundation of the European Economic Community. Nevertheless, today it is still fragmented and split between a number of blocks (over ten) that places it a long way behind the achievements of their European counterparts: the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States, the Ibero-American Community of Nations (which includes Portugal and Spain), the Latin American Integration Association, the Southern Common Market, the Union of South American Nations, the Central American Integration System, the Pacific Alliance, and if North America is included, the United States-Mexico -Canada Agreement (successor of the North American Free Trade Agreement), as well as the continental Organisation of American States which groups the 35 American countries. For all its difficulties and imperfections, the EU has been so far a much more successful experiment in regional integration. So, an obvious topic for further research would be a comparison, a historical explanation

and a suggested way ahead for American—particularly Ibero-American—integration[3].

Relational interculturalism still requires to be developed. Its main concepts have to be translated into concrete hypotheses for specific situations, then tested empirically and, with that information, revisited theoretically too. In particular, how it relates to—and differs from—monoculturalism requires further elaboration though a start can be found in Jiménez Lobeira (2014b).

Another path of research for relational interculturalism is its potential repercussions in the public sphere. Think for instance of the problem of translation of religious concepts to secular terms and vice versa (Jiménez Lobeira 2015:16). The stage for dialogue would be an open and secular public sphere. The analogical language or framework would be the political culture of human rights. And the catalyst for dialogue would be relational interculturalism. The translation would have to occur not only from the religious to the secular but also from the secularist to the secular. However, there are many questions that would need to be addressed, procedures to be outlined, comparisons with other models that have been already proposed, such as those of rational theory and of course Rawls's.

Another element in the development of relational interculturalism would be to explore the connection between relational interculturalism and solidarity in the context of the economic and political crises in Europe. In other words, could relational interculturalism—and in what way—significantly influence the level of civic friendship, also translated into mutual help and care for those less economically fortunate present in the EU as a whole? Here the role of education as medium and aid for cultural exchange could be explored. Education itself could benefit from a viewpoint that is neither monoculturalist nor multiculturalist, but relational interculturalist, both at the theoretical and practical level.

A further matter for deepening would be the religious elements in the Enlightenment's cultural background to determine strategies for the integration of migrants with strong religious backgrounds today. Could the experiences of European democracies' interactions with Judaism and Christianity bring light to more successful approaches in the interaction with Islam too?

It's Only Been 70 Years…

Europe no doubt faces trying times. Immigration, COVID19 and its derived economic crisis, populism in member states and in the EU's main ally—the US, Brexit and the upcoming political transition in Europe's de facto leading country—Germany (Politico 2020b), are all current significant challenges.

Brexit will bring important changes which the EU can, however, handle: the EU's population of 446 million is over 6 times the size of the UK's, with clear consequences in terms of economic importance and legal influence as explained by Gstöhl & Phinnemore (2020). From being one of the three big prominent EU countries the UK will have to line up and share in the challenge that all EU

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[3] Of course efforts of integration have existed in other regions too, particularly Asia and Africa.

neighbours interested in a privileged partnership face: 'they need to find an acceptable balance in the fundamental trade-off between the benefits resulting from broad participation in the internal market and the lack of real participation in EU decision-making' (Gstöhl & Phinnemore 2020). The UK was not a founding member state and it always remained a 'reluctant European' (Peet 2015).

In previous works I have focused on several problems that the EU faces today and into the future. I have been a critic of some of its present positions. At times,I have even expressed cynicism, as when I pointed out that Europe's most important threat in the 21st century is not internal destruction, as in the 19th century, or annihilation from one of the two Cold War superpowers, as in the 20th, but rather plain irrelevance (Jiménez Lobeira 2015:3). Yet, from the beginning to the present, my position has consistently been one of decided enthusiasm for a 'Europe united in diversity.' Not only do I consider it desirable, but I think the elements are there to make it work. The value of the European project and its remarkable uniqueness become evident when what the EU is today is contrasted with the chaos, resentment and poverty reigning in the region after WWII, and with the underwhelming outcomes of regional integration in other parts of the world. An illustration of its achievements is the transformative effect that enlargement has had in the societies of new member states. Enlargement has 'managed to trigger the expansion of the democratic ideal across the European continent' (Pérez-Solórzano Borragán 2015:239) even if with nuanced success.

There are signs that support for the European project may be growing notwithstanding—or even thanks to—the rise of populist euroscepticism in countries as crucial as Germany. As Turnbull-Dugarte (2020) has shown, the rise of *Alternative für Deutschland* has led the silent majority to double down on their European positions. In his view, 'the arrival of a threat to the pro-European consensus has served as something of a wake-up call for the previously complacent and permissive eurocentrists who have now become europhile and willing to "rally around" the EU.' If Turnbull-Dugarte (2020) is right, his finding could have implications beyond Germany, with 'the rise of a threat to EU membership' driving 'voters to be more supportive of EU integration and parties react along the same europhile direction of travel.' Something similar might be happening in Poland, where the belligerent language of its government notwithstanding, support for Europe among the population not only has not decreased, but is today higher than it was when the country joined the EU (Varga 2020).

The future of Europe is by no means secured. But there can be a future—and a very desirable one—if Europeans continue to work for it. Under certain conditions the EU could still expand beyond its present borders, to embrace even more member states (Wallace 2000) and foster in them prosperity, democracy and human rights, enhanced economic cooperation, research and educational exchange and intercultural enrichment. A united Europe can aspire to matter in the changing landscape of a globalised world as a normative power, a reliable trading partner and a promoter of multilateralism and international law.

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