

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, Brexit, COVID-19 and a faltering economy—the EU’s motto ‘Europe united in diversity’ would appear progressively less attainable. This article submits that the European ideal is still both desirable and possible, and advances four key concepts in the fostering of unity at the level of the polity as an entity and as a community: ‘analogical federation’, ‘analogical culture’, ‘relational interculturalism’ and ‘public sphere secularity’. These concepts share the common intuition that the EU should envisage itself in a more flexible manner, and though they are circumscribed to a political theory framework, their implications could impact integration, social and economic policy.

Keywords:

analogical culture, analogical federation, European integration, 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 (European Parliament 2020). 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’, Sassoli’s statement began. ‘This situation is so serious that no European government could think of responding alone.’ Therefore, ‘all European countries will receive support for their health systems.’ And after an emphatic ‘enough with austerity’, Sassoli made it clear that ‘countries [were] authorized to spend everything...necessary’ to support their economies. The statement concluded emphatically: ‘Today the watchword for Europe is solidarity. No one will be left alone and no one will act alone’ (European Parliament 2020).

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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 2020) 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).

This article advances a few ideas that might help the discussion about, and search for solutions to the latest crisis threatening Europe, a crisis which contains among its main ingredients Brexit, COVID-19 and a faltering economy. Such ideas are arranged in two sections, the first one, considering the EU as a political entity (or *politeia*), and the second one, regarding it as a community of citizens (the *politai*). A common intuition runs throughout both sections: in order to stay together, the EU needs to develop more flexible ways of picturing the polity and the interaction among its citizens. The conclusion assesses whether the EU's many shortcomings outweigh its success as an experiment in regional integration—arguably without match in recent history.

A methodological note. The concepts here presented are set within a political theory approach in the sense aptly described by Dryzek et al. (2013) and following an initial 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 utilised.

The European *Politeia*

Not a state, not an international organisation, definable in analogical terms about what it is (Bickerton 2015:204-207). A 'paradox', not a state but a polity (Shaw and Wiener 2000). In a way, since it is nearly impossible to positively define what the EU is, some researchers have opted for defining the EU indirectly, by applying the medieval axiom 'action follows being' Contreras Aguirre, Sebastián (2010) and thus deriving what the EU is from the way it works. When the EU is seen as an analogical polity some categories that have been widely accepted in European studies have to be recalibrated, for instance the perceived 'democratic deficit' that implicitly assumes the EU to be a state as Shaw & Wiener insightfully point out (2000:65).

Analogical Polity

Because the EU is an analogical polity and not a state, the identity necessary for its cohesion doesn't need to be strong but analogical too (Jimenez Lobeira...). 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). The EU is not a state, nor is it desirable that it should become one. An analogical polity suffices. Because of that, Europeans don't have to choose between their national region or country and Europe: they can have both (Jimenez Lobeira 2014).

Suprastatism has been 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, by 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 were invaluable for me in understanding the notion, which however I have considered more accurate to term 'suprastatism' and have defined in some detail in Jiménez Lobeira (2015:22). There I distinguished between state and nation, and how the political entities which conform the EU are not 'nations' but rather states. It is indicative that they are referred to not as 'member nations' but as 'member states'. States and nations don't always coincide: different nations may live in one state, or a nation may be spread among several states. My claim is that what has been called 'nationalism' is 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, as Weiler says, the EU should continue to be a stateless polity. Obviously and a fortiori, the EU should not be a nation either, but a plurinational association of states.

Statism is what confronted Europe in the two World Wars. The concept of nation is too wobbly, too abstract, too porous to cause such levels of destruction. But states are much more definable in legal, territorial, military, political and economic terms. And they can arrive to a confrontation—even violent—using nationality as the apparent motive. From the beginning, the European communities, due to the nature of their original plan under Schuman, Monet and the rest of the founders, devised instruments to keep statism in check. Thus, the first brick in the structure was a 'supranational' (ie suprastatal) authority to resolve disputes between France and Germany regarding the joint production of coal and steel. Soon Luxembourg, Italy, Netherlands, and Belgium joined the project too.

Related to suprastatism was the distinction between **confederation and federation**. Because proponents of Europe as a state often envisage it as a 'federation' (by which they mean a federal state, think of Habermas's 'United

States of Europe'), one could be excused for concluding that 'federation' means 'federal state'. However, this is not necessarily so. '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. Weiler has observed that if Europe became a state (or a superstate) it would be a great irony since, from its beginnings, the European project (at the 'communities stage') was aimed at keeping what I'm calling here statism in check.

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 push 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 re-evaluated as one that for all its defects enables a way ahead. Mixed arrangements, consensus-based decisions and hybrid solutions would have to be tried in order to suit this **stateless polity**.

By the same token, the concept of analogical unity for the mixed commonwealth and suprastatism call for amplification. I have taken as possible illustrations of this kind of unity Weiler's descriptions of the original 'community method', suprastatism (which, as I have indicated before, he calls supranationalism), and his 'principle of constitutional tolerance' (summarised in Jimenez Lobeira 2014b). However, since even advocates of a 'postnational EU' envisage it as a state (Jimenez Lobeira 2010b:34-36), analogical unity and suprastatism must be expanded theoretically and empirically so that they will be alternatives to vision of turning the EU into a state.

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), another contribution is the submitted concept of **European identity** as analogical, and therefore capable of embracing elements from different perspectives and assuming them in a more comprehensive view. Concretely, the idea that because one perspective contains true claims disproves other perspectives, I attempted to show as unsatisfactory. There is, indeed, space for the more plausible elements in every perspective to be contained in a synthetic concept of European identity, which is analogical (Jiménez Lobeira 2010b).

Analogical Culture

The political culture of human rights (PCHR) is that shared—if analogical—language that can enable dialog in the public sphere. A cultural context that provides a common framework of reference for the presenting, pondering and connecting of diverse cultural positions in the polity. 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, the European Communities.

In Europe, the substantive **underlying culture** that has produced and maintained Western democracies springs from traditions such as the Enlightenment and Judeo-Christianity, and found political expression in political parties across Europe grouped under the Social Democracy and Christian Democracy banners (Jiménez Lobeira 2014b).

PCHR 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 but encapsulates the foundational motivations at the heart of European integration. PCHR which may not be well known and accepted in other parts of the world, but that by and large already forms part of what Europe is today (Jiménez Lobeira 2015:18-19). This PCHR 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 join (Petrov 2018:59-60).

The European *Politai*

Progression of EU integration has damaged national democracies and a perception by citizens that they have progressively less power to influence decision-making both at national and European level (Schmidt 2015:219-223).

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 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 choose between voting in their country or residence instead of their home country. Organisers claim that by 2020, over 17 million EU citizens live or work in a member state different than their country of origin (Voters Without Borders 2020).

Relational interculturalism can be fostered, in the realm of the public sphere, through secularity, or an open and inclusive atmosphere which is

agnostic about both secular and religious belief systems giving each the 'benefit of the doubt'. Secularity is different from secularism (Jiménez Lobeira 2014a:389-393). José Casanova's distinguishes between 'secularism as statecraft' and 'secularism as ideology' or worldview. Charles Taylor describes 'the immanent frame' or secular (non-transcendent or spiritual) atmosphere reigning in the public space today as open or closed. While Jürgen Habermas has carried out a serious reflection on the revival of religion in a postsecular age (Jiménez Lobeira 2014a:393-394).

I combined and linked those ideas to make the analysis of the public sphere clearer (Jiménez Lobeira 2014a:389-393). Thus, I have called 'secularity' to Casanova's 'secularism as statecraft', Taylor's 'open immanent frame' and Habermas's secular stage for the public sphere. On the other hand, I have denominated 'secularism' what for Casanova is 'secularism as ideology', for Taylor the 'closed immanent frame' and for Habermas the acknowledgement of secularism turning into an ideology when he studies the theme.

Following this terminology, I consider 'secularity' a desirable feature of the public sphere, and 'secularism' one more worldview that deserves a voice alongside other worldviews—including religious ones. Obviously none of those worldviews should monopolise the European public sphere with exclusion of the others. A secular (not secularist) public sphere is an ideal stage for political discussion and the building of social cohesion and civic identity.

Relational Interculturalism

The idea that the EU is a *sui generis* polity or that its citizens are not a *demos* but a group of *demos* is not new (Jiménez Lobeira 2010b, 2012). Since the EU as 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 envisaging the polity with somewhat resemblant of a federal state and yet different from it, and EU citizenship hinging on the member state without either contravening it or simply replicating it. In other words, being an EU citizen is not equivalent to being an Austrian citizen, nor is it something totally different, but similar to a certain degree (Jiménez Lobeira 2012).

And in the interaction within the community of citizens in a polity, **cultural backgrounds** are crucial. As mentioned in the first section 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 are, 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 distinct cultural backgrounds.

In Europe, the substantive **underlying culture** that has produced and maintained Western democracies springs from traditions such as the Enlightenment and Judeo-Christianity, and found political expression in political parties across Europe grouped under the Social Democracy and 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 or that it must exclude other traditions. But it does imply the need to be acknowledged, in the first place by those who possess it. In second place, such acknowledgement is also beneficial for newcomers, especially when their cultural background is different.

The challenge is achieving that citizens from diverse cultural, political and historical backgrounds can see themselves as part of the same polity (Longo 2019). Thus, recognition of differences is the first step towards real interaction in any civic community, as analysed in **relational interculturalism** (Jiménez Lobeira 2015:28-30). Real interaction between people of different cultural backgrounds is already complicated within individual member states. It is even more so in a stateless polity gathering several states. Relational exchange begins, therefore, with the acknowledgement that 'the other' is neither 'alter ego' 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 as well as on Beuchot's analogical hermeneutics. The 'alter ego' scenario could be a univocal idea of monoculturalism. The 'totally other' case would represent the other extreme, the equivocality and incommunicability of multiculturalism. Relational interculturalism is the analogical position, where there is some similarity and a good deal of difference, but—thanks to relation—not so big that communication and exchange between interlocutors becomes impossible.

That Dear Old Subcontinent...

Policy and Research Implications

Analogical identity expressed, among other symbols, by EU citizenship (Jimenez 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. Interesting insights could be gained by a combination of an analogical hermeneutics of the symbol, with ideas on the

concept of citizenship brightly advanced by authors such as Linda Bosniak (2000, 2008, 2010, 2011).

Another topic for 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 that I 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 would require greater elaboration. The matter is relevant as some new member states 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—admittedly, with a desire for geopolitical security as an additional motivation.

Similar deepening demand issues such as the 'fiscal union,' agricultural subsidies arrangements, the role of the European Central Bank in the supervision of banks, setting of interest rates, 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 common 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. In Jiménez Lobeira (2015:15) I mentioned how one of my motivations for beginning the study of the EU was its success and the fact that such results were not matched in other regions of the world. This could be illustrated 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 strong cultural diversity make any processes of integration slow and not evidently feasible.

In the American continent, or at least in Latin America, the situation should be different, given the relatively closer ties between countries. There is, for instance, a region, 'Ibero-America', of circa twenty million square kilometres (more than five times the size of the EU) encompassing nineteen countries, and over 620 million inhabitants, with Spanish as common language for nineteen of them and Portuguese for the other one, *O Gigante do Sul* (Brazil).

The region, which shares cultural, historic, economic, and political interests, has seen efforts of integration as far back as the time European integration started, even earlier. But today, it is still fragmented and split between a number of blocks (over ten) that sets it a long way behind the achievements of their European counterparts. Among others, Latin America has 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 North American Free Trade Agreement (and its successor, the United States - Mexico - Canada Agreement), as well as the continental Organisation of American States which groups the 35 countries of America. Yet, 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 the 35 countries of America in general and those of Ibero-America in particular.

Another path of research for relational interculturalism based on Beuchot's cultural analogical pluralism (Jimenez Lobeira 2014b:107) and Donati's relational sociology is its potential repercussions in the public sphere. Thus a theoretical connection could be explored with Habermas's setting of secularity within Taylor's open immanent frame (Jimenez Lobeira 2014a:393).

Think for instance of the problem of translation of religious concepts to secular terms and vice versa (Jimenez 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.

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, enriched theoretically too.

Relational sociology is relatively recent, a new paradigm in the social sciences with great potential.

A desirable potential outcome of relational interculturalism is civic friendship or solidarity. Another important aspect is the role of education as medium and aid for cultural exchange. 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 element in 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? My research has shown that there is a possibility from the theoretical point of view. That possibility should be further elaborated and tested.

It's Only Been 70 Years...

Things were difficult at the foundation, UK wasn't in the first group and it always remained a 'reluctant European' (Peet 2015), around 40 million Europeans had died in WWII, the Cold War threatened to wipe out its main stage, Europe, massive territorial disruptions and an economy in tatters.

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 century, but simply 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 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.

The future of Europe is by no means secured. But there can be a future—and a very desirable one—if Europeans set out to work for it. I see a Europe expanding beyond its present borders, to embrace even more member states Wallace (2000) and fostering in them prosperity, a culture of human rights, enhanced economic cooperation in education and intercultural enrichment. I see a Europe that united is able to matter in the changing landscape of a

globalised world, as a normative power, as a trading partner and as a promoter of multilateralism and international law. I see, in sum, an EU that can, with some effort, meet the goal of serving the flourishing of the peoples of Europe, their progress, culture and languages, to enrich the world with their peculiar contribution.

A mention of the introduction and a related closing remark.

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