

Chapter Two

Portrait of a Union: Redrawing a Sketch of the Whole

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Abstract

This chapter looks into the current polity shape of the European Union (EU), and how it accommodates the concurrent demands for unity of the whole and diversity of the parts. In raising the question of what kind of theorizing can best capture a general image of the whole, it revisits the concept of ‘organized synarchy’ and makes the case that, despite integration’s currently unfolding crises and uncertainties, the EU ‘polity’ has managed to bring about an advanced system of collective ordered symbiosis among highly codetermined polities. It also argues that, at this stage of EU polity evolution, such a condition is not about the subordination of the parts to a superior, let alone federal, or even federalising, political centre, but rather about their preservation as distinctive, and at the same time constituent units; as partners in a late-modern ‘syspondia’ which retains its essential character as an ordered plurality of co-evolving polities.

Prelude

Writing in the late 2010s, Europe’s aspirations for a reformed architectural design seem to be in retreat both symbolically and strategically to the extent that current divergences in states’ views question whether the European Union (EU) can still be regarded and, crucially, sustained as a ‘polity’ which can inspire. In addition comes the consolidation of a statecentric rationale in its workings and, at the theory front, a variety of ‘intergovernmentalisms’ (Puetter, 2012; Bellamy, 2013), albeit of a more refined logic compared to (neo)realist takes or Hoffmann’s (1966) ‘logic of diversity’ thesis which, at a period marked by the effects of the ‘Luxemburg Compromise’ (Nicoll, 1984; Teasdale, 1993) and for the next twenty or so years, confirmed the state-controlled nature of integration. Today, with the rise of the far-right, the uncertainties caused by the Brexit vote and the roadblocks to a solidary and humanistic response to the refugee crisis, the issue raised is not about the union’s prospective constitutional evolution, let alone polity transformation, as was the case back in the mid-2000s when Europeans debated the fate of the Constitutional Treaty; but whether, and if so, how, it can recover from a much troubled decade.

At this critical state of play – an instance of emergent systemic deficiencies –, theorists may ask whether a conceptual image of the whole – a portrait of ‘European “politeia”’, to quote Tombeur (2013, p. 117) – can be (re)drawn, also sketching out some potential end states. In light of unfolding, but less connected to Europeans as one might have hoped, debates on their future, the question raised is whether the union can still aspire to a self-identifiable demos; not in the compelling sense of a compact, fully integrated or self-standing ‘European public’, but as a ‘Republic of Europeans’ (Lavdas and Chrysochoou, 2011): a civic-oriented union of diverse but fellow-Europeans who can be taken as ‘symbiotes’ in Althusius’ (1995 [1603/1614]:19) sense: ‘participants or partners in a common life’. Carney (1995, p. xv) explains: ‘Symbiotic association involves something more than mere existence together. It indicates a quality of group life characterized by piety and justice without which, Althusius believes, neither individual persons nor society can endure [...] Wherever there is symbiosis there is also communication, or the sharing of things, services, and right’. Keeping in mind Grimm’s (1995, p. 296) point that ‘(t)he European level of politics lacks a matching public’, a plural European civic body may still be said to exist along the lines of ‘many peoples, one demos’, whose members can direct their democratic claims and concerns to, and via, the central institutions and share in the collective rewards of their pluralist union. But can it sustain itself? Can Europeans preserve and even develop further a sense of ‘demos-hood’ of and out of many? As put by Nicolaidis (2004, p. 77): ‘What should a Europe for all, an EU that most of us can like, if not love, look like?’ Also: how to navigate the present union, wherever situated in the ‘federal/confederal’ (Forsyth, 1981; Burgess, 2005) or ‘polity/organization’ (Pollack, 2005) axis towards a dynamic but viable equilibrium?

Premises

These preliminary notes provoke the question: can there be a union in and through which established liberal polities transform themselves into an embracing ‘politeia’? The latter enshrines into our vocabulary a certain normative content, raising some ‘constitutional’ – in the wider, Roman sense portrayed by Cicero (Atkins, 2018, pp. 11–13, 24–34) – expectations. More than that, it can be paralleled to a ‘state of mind’, to recall Schattschneider (1969, p. 42, quoted in Adamany, 1975, p. xii), impacting on citizens’ daily parlance and praxis. Arguably, Plato’s and Aristotle’s ‘theasis’ of ‘politeia’ has marked for over two millennia its distinctive intellectual imprint upon our understanding of what it means (and takes) to be part of a commonly shared life within a ‘polis’; on how citizens share among themselves some common concerns, how they form a consciousness of their collective existence as ‘members’, ‘fellows’ or ‘partners’ under conditions of ordered symbiosis which, for all its human and thus institutional imperfections, allows them to develop a sense of the ‘common good’. Thus ‘politeia’ as the architecture of organized public symbiosis; the very ‘soul’ of

a union made up of nested political lives. At the same time, it signifies a legally constituted order that reflects the demos' concerns: its sense of union and unity.

But how can one grasp Europe's polycemous and challenging polity qualities? A plausible way would be to speak of a civic-minded political association of interactive publics which is capable of disentangling, as Lavdas (2001, p. 4) argues, 'the issue of participation in an emerging polity from the cultural and emotional dimensions of citizenship as pre-existing affinity and a confirmation of belonging'. As he also notes, 'some elements of the real and symbolic *res publica*, may sustain a degree of political motivation vis-à-vis the EU and its relevance for peoples' lives while also allowing for other and more intense forms of motivation and involvement at other levels of participation' (Lavdas, 2001:5). The idea is for an extended but vibrant civic space among entwined democratic publics; a structured plurality composed of multiple co-evolving affinities and affiliations drawn from an impressive variety of historical, cultural, constitutional and soci(et)al sources. The challenge is to institutionalize respect for diversity as well as to sustain, in Bellamy's (1999, p. 190) words, 'a shared sense of the public good'. Such a condition may well emerge through Pettit's (1997) notion of freedom as 'non-domination', as it combines, in Lavda's words (2001, p. 6), 'the recognition of the significance of the pluralism of cultural possibilities for meaningful choice and a framework based on a minimal set of shared political values' or, as Bowman (2006, p. 113) put it, 'multiple forms of political membership and overlapping sites of pooled sovereignty'. This is more than a projective polity sketch for the union as it can assign meaning to a vision of 'politics' –which, as Heywood (2004, p. 53) reminds us, 'literary means "what concerns the polis"' – and still be part of a great European tradition of political thought. Tsatsos (2009, pp. 48–49) notes: 'The demos never constituted a totally homogenous unit of its members. Demos as a source of power in democratic regimes rarely nowadays appears as a true political unit, but mainly as a complex aggregate with geographical, linguistic, national and institutional subgroups, which, however, belong to the same power structure'.

Given current debates on EU 'polity-hood', or lack of it, and the kind of balance the union should aim at in view of its ascending heterogeneity and, much to the detriment of its constitutive values, decreasing solidarity, one is tempted to speak of a 'community of strangers', as Castiglione (2009) does, or of a 'community of projects', as in Nicolaidis' (2004, pp. 76, 84) 'demoicracy', 'founded', as she argues, on the persistent plurality of its component peoples but not reducible to a set of complex bargains among sovereign states' and 'predicated on the mutual recognition, confrontation and ever more demanding sharing of our respective and separate identities, not on their merger'; or, as in Taylor's (1993, p. 114) refined statecentrism, a 'symbiotic consociation'. He explains: 'Consociationalism fundamentally alters the teleology of integration theory by indicating an end situation which has built into it pressures for the maintenance of segmental autonomy within a cooperative system, i.e., a symbiotic arrangement', and: 'The term which captures most accurately the dominant character of the relationship between the states and the region is, therefore,

symbiosis. Each of the two levels, the separate states and the common system depended upon the other' (Taylor, 1993, pp. 84, 108). Arguably, enhancing the civic bonds among the member publics is crucial for the systemic viability and vitality of the union, but this does not invite, let alone necessitate, an abrupt restructuring of pre-existing, historically constituted, public structures and cultures or a compromise of the states' democratic autonomy. Rather, it requires what might be termed from a pluralist-republican prism a politically structured plurality of 'distinctive' but 'constituent' democratic polities; distinctive, in retaining their governing qualities as discrete constitutional orders and *demoi*; and constituent, in reaching higher levels of collective symbiosis by sharing in the mutual benefits of living together in a larger but identifiable political whole.

Almost seven decades of integration have brought about, in Taylor's (2008, p. 7) words, 'a unique way of managing a system of sovereign states, the like of which had not been seen before', based on an advanced system of codetermination among highly interactive (sub)national units; a condition, however, which is not about states' subordination to a superior federal(ising) political 'centre' as compared to established federal polities (as those composing the union), but rather about their preservation as states within a political association which retains its character as a plurality of diverse but increasingly co-evolving polities. The aim, as noted above, is for a 'Republic of Europeans' along the lines of 'civic unity in polycultural diversity' (Lavdas and Chryssochoou, 2007). Capturing the dialectics of a polity constituted by co-evolutionary practices of authority-sharing is not about a federally inspired, state-like order; it is about an integrative scheme that exceeds, even transcends, previous notions of international authority; a pluralist imaging of a union taken at the same time as 'polity' and as 'polities' driven by highly codetermined sovereignties. A sense of 'demos-hood' may still be needed, but one which accords with Tsatsos' notion of 'sympolity' (2009), Dobson's (2000, p. 15) account of 'multipolity' or MacCormick's (1997) construct of 'mixed commonwealth'; at best, given Europe's celebrated and reviving republican tradition, a '*res publica composita*' as in Elazar's (1998, p. 25) reflection on Hoenonius' classical distinction of the term from '*res publica simplex*'; at least, a legally and politically structured plurality as in a polity made out of many.

Although EU-level systemic growth may release and even increase pressures towards (further) centralization, they do not in themselves make for a conventional 'federal republic' or any other superior 'centre' aspiring to 'statehood'. Rather, they are an indication of polities adjusting themselves to the collective terms of their symbiosis, without negating their domestic governing orders. Both Bellamy and Castiglione's (2000, p. 190) projective assertion that 'a future multinational European polity could be a "Republic, if you can keep it"' and Honohan's (2002, p. 280) view that, 'interdependence of fate and future can come to be seen as the basis of political community', accord with the promise of diverse but interactive *demoi* shaping together their collective association. As Preuß (2015, p. 218) wrote on the novelty of it all: 'This is the first time in human history that sovereign states form a political

community which not only established legal channels for their cooperation and the peaceful dealing of conflicts – this is, at least on paper, meanwhile the standard on the global level as well – but which has created an institutional realm in which different peoples form a political “We” without giving up their or pressed to give up their differentness as peoples with their respective national histories, cultural traditions and particular mentalities (...) they share a conjoint law which regulates important spheres of their everyday life and thus creates a quite peculiar “We”.

In support of the above comes the assertion that the decade-old Lisbon reforms have not, as yet, affected the essential character of the union as a ‘synarchy of co-sovereigns’ (Chrysochoou, 2009, p. 139) combining different forms and visions of shared rule. This pluralist imaging has considerable implications on how sovereignty can be re-conceptualized given the intensity and depth of what binds together, both legally and politically, a cluster of co-evolving polities and what being part of a larger whole entails for their collective future. It may be seen as part of the union’s polity evolution which confirms that states are a constitutive part of a general system, while, at the same time, the latter can be taken as a polity, rather than merely as an instance of exclusively state-controlled interactions. The view taken is that states still determine, albeit collectively, the pace and range of the common arrangements, but the latter exemplify a co-evolutionary view of the parts. This is key to acknowledging that, for all the profound changes in sovereignty, we have not reached the point of its complete transmutation into a kind of post-statist order: for all its late-modern connotations, and there have been many and insightful (Walker, 2003), sovereignty cannot be convincingly detached from the component state parts, nor can it be subsumed or submerged into a superior federal authority. Rather, the whole is about strengthening the parts through, not despite, a polity-building exercise that enhances their collective capacity to combine authority; transcend classical self-rule; and bring about a qualitative, even transformative, stage in their political and constitutional evolution. Taylor (1996, p. 97) made the point well: ‘The states became stronger through strengthening the collectivity’. Or, as he also put it, ‘it came to seem persuasive that the survival of the state as completely compatible with the strengthening of the common arrangements’ (Taylor, 2008, p. 103).

A general note from the above might then be, that for all their efforts to meet the changing realities of institutionalized shared rule, the parts have not lost sight of their own and, many a time, hard-won, autonomy (and claims to it). This is premised on the idea that their collective capacity to accommodate diversity and subsystem autonomy has invited respect for their individual integrities – to which the Lisbon Treaty contributes explicitly in Article 4(2) with reference to ‘national identities, inherent in their fundamental structures, political and constitutional’ and to ‘essential State functions’ – confirming that states may well continue to codetermine issues of mutual interest in ways which make sovereignty still valid but not equated to or even reminiscent of older, largely exacerbated or idealized, Westphalian notions of territorial self-rule (Krasner, 1999). As to the union’s confederal attributes or, from

an evolutionary, polity-prone prism, ‘neo-confederal’ (Burgess, 2005:263) ones, states still retain (ultimate) political control over the extension of authority –more accurately, of ‘public powers’ (Grimm, 2015, pp. 43–46)– to the European ‘centre’ –the institutions of common governance– in light of the oft-raised constitutional principle of ‘Kompetenz-Kompetenz’: in Lock’s (2009, p. 409) words, ‘a state’s competence to determine its own competences’. As Grimm (2015, p. 50) asserts: ‘The EU does not have a portion of the sovereignty. The EU has but a portion of the public powers’.

Hence the German Constitutional Court’s view of the EU as a ‘Staatenverbund’ in its Maastricht and Lisbon rulings (BVerfG, 2BvR 2134/92; BVerfG, 2 BvE 2/08). As it stated in the latter, ‘Verbund covers a close long-term association of states which remain sovereign, an association which exercises public authority on the basis of a treaty, whose fundamental order, however, is subject to the disposal of the Member States alone and in which the peoples of their Member States, i.e. the citizens of the states, remain the subjects of democratic legitimisation’ (BVerfG, 2 BvE 2/08, 30.6.2009, par. 229C, quoted in Mayer and Wendel, 2012, p. 143). Or, as Neframi (2015, pp. 69–70) put it: ‘The principle of conferral, together with the amendment procedure, mark the lack of sovereignty at the EU level and designate the Member States as masters of the Treaties. Recourse in this regard to the qualification of Staatenverbund, in contrast with Staatenverband, illustrates the preservation of national sovereignty embodied in the principle of conferral, notwithstanding the principles of primacy, direct effect and effectiveness of EU law’. Grimm (2015, pp. 45–46) summarizes the Court’s rationale: ‘Sovereignty in the EU lies with the Member States since they are the “Masters of the Treaties” and hold the Kompetenz-Kompetenz. This is indeed the difference between a federal state and other types of federations. The EU does not have the right to self-determination about its existence, its legal basis, and its competences. The decision about these matters is in the hands of the Member States’. He goes on to confirm: ‘With regard to its legal foundation it is hetero-determined and consequently not sovereign’ (Grimm, 2015, p. 46).

The condition of codetermination, a reflection of intersected, co-evolving, yet self-standing, constitutional polities, challenges the assumption that the union, for all its ‘state-like’ qualities, has gained a locus of sovereignty, whilst confirming that the member units can still claim to shape their own political future. The ‘centre’ may well retain, in certain domains, a key role in collective management, and there are good reasons for states to enhance the centripetal dynamics of the general system when they so decide and that consensually: a treaty-based construct, the union still rests upon state-controlled rules. As a result, claims to ‘ever closer union’ also, but not exclusively, rest upon states’ collective, rather than merely individual, capacity to invest in the cumulative rewards, functional or structural, of shared rule. Thus, in its current state – political, architectural and, crucially, cultural – integration is not driven, let alone determined, by those envisaging a federal end state of the process.

Projections

Given these conceptual expositions, it is possible to define the union through the lens of ‘organized synarchy’ and project a general view of integration or, to use the essay’s subtitle, to redraw a sketch of a whole beneficial to its parts. The concept depicts a union called upon to organize the collective symbiosis of diverse parts within a larger plurality which allows them to preserve themselves as polities in their own right and, at the same time, act as co-evolving partners. Although this condition does not pose a post-statist threat to constituent sovereignties, it is not in itself void of a post-statecentric quality, for it rests beyond the exclusive control of the parts. All in all, integration is about the constitution of a plural but collective order; a novel form of politically constituted symbiosis among diverse but highly codetermined democracies, whose sovereignty can be taken as still being alive, but whose essential qualities are attuned to the demands of their common association. It offers the possibility to think about a form of ‘politeia’ through the synergies integration theory allows in a post-statecentric direction, where states share in the authority of a larger system built by them and subject to reform through their expressed consent.

This condition was reflected in an earlier conception of the union as a ‘confederal consociation’ (Chrysochoou, 1994; 1998) of constitutional polities which are bound together in a consensual form of union, without either losing their sense of forming collective national identities or resigning their individual sovereignty to a higher central authority. As a post-statecentric quality, ‘organized synarchy’ performs collective functions which, far from invalidating the constituent sovereignties by creating a single locus of authority, it recomposes them by moving the level of collective symbiosis away from classical interstate accounts of joint rule or from types of ‘stato’ beyond or to the detriment of the parts and their historic reality or pride. Rather, it rests on a cooperative culture which, far from sweeping away the member state *demoi* in the trajectory of (super) imposed homogeneity, embraces mutually reinforcing perceptions of organizing their collective life. It allows the member collectivities to embrace a culture which is not merely the expression of an advanced institutional partnership, but also an enduring legal and political bond among co-sovereigns. Thus ‘organized synarchy’, as more than an instrumental view of reconceptualizing the nature of governance in cooperative general systems, indicates a polity frame aiming at a dynamic equilibrium between whole and parts.

However, in view of various(ly) connected crises in the daily management of the union, not to mention the strains caused by Brexit and the all-alarming rise of the far-right in domestic and transnational arenas, its polity expectations seem rather limited. But its current predicament – its ‘unhappy state’, to recall Tsoukalis (2014) – may not be all there is to it. This provokes the question: is ‘organized synarchy’ – the ordered symbiosis of codetermined polities – a more permanent condition, if not a mirroring of what the end state might look like or is it merely a passing reflection of a temporal state of play? An answer confirming the former, and thus the union’s co-evolutionary qualities, is that the transition ‘from sovereignty to synarchy’ is in

line with states' disposition to transcending some of their traditional attributes of sovereignty; most notably, and crucially, the right to be involved in their partners' domestic affairs. This may well be regarded as integration's greatest cultural, rather than merely legal or institutional, achievement; as yet another instance of 'organized synarchy' expanding the horizons and thus boundaries of authority-sharing towards new forms of unit(y) with a transcendental quality: sovereignty's emancipation from classical self-rule. It is also one out of many possible end states, signalling no less of a normative departure from a set of coordinated polities towards an ordered but not fully unified polity retaining its pluralism and allowing the parts to sustain their own polity 'soul' into a viable whole. Taylor (1996, p. 78) asserts: 'Each [level] had become essential to the survival of the other. Put differently: there were arrangements at the European level which had become semi-detached from the state, representing a distinctive level of political activity, interacting with national affairs, but containing its own values and imperatives, including that of survival. In this arrangement states retained sovereignty within the transnational system'.

As a union of co-evolving polities, Europe is now an integral part of citizens' everyday life and parlance; it is part of a culture in dealing with common concerns, although these may at times shake the level of trust as in the different accounts of solidarity, or the limitations to it in view of the 'flexible solidarity' scheme proposed by the 'V4 group' in 2016. This is no less of a collective accomplishment; not as ambitious as federalists may have hoped for, but still an indication, even conviction, that for all their differences in incentives or aspirations, the parts are increasingly conscious of the reality that more is to be achieved by joining forces, rather than by acting alone or by resorting to more conventional forms of collective action, and that finding collective ways of managing diversity through commonly shared values adds to their unity. Preuß (2015, p. 219) captures the larger picture: 'The vision is, rather, the idea of solidarity grounded on the mutual recognition of otherness and the development of modes of cooperation and, yes, also of collectively binding decisions taken by "others" whose bindingness is rooted in institutional devices which encourage civic solidarity and the tolerance for otherness'.

Prescriptions

Those favouring the transcendence of the nation-state criticise the union for a failed federal transformation; others, who oppose any federalist direction, criticise it for having gone too far, arguing the case for policy repatriation; still others, who favour a more cohesive and solidary union, whether or not of a constitutional orientation, direct their criticism against any projective scenarios of 'variable geometry' schemes on the grounds that they produce (intra)systemic fragmentation, rather than serve the purpose of 'ever closer union'; and others, who position themselves in the far-right, fiercely anti-European currents – which, not without consequential delay, are no longer treated merely as a crisis-related passing stage, but as a persisting threat

to Europe's own fundamental values – condemn it for simply existing. So: can Europe still inspire? Investing, as Castiglione (2009, p. 51) put it, in 'citizens' growing perception that the Union contributes to a fundamental (though multilayered) institutional and legal order within which they can exercise their liberty' may serve the purpose, provided those at the receiving end navigate their collective life into higher levels.

Despite its evident, if not ascending, statecentrism, the union has, by and large, been worthy of the term 'polity'; if by that we mean an architecture of ordered public symbiosis constituted through commonly shared values and forms of rule. This architectural quality, essential for any political association's public constitution, has invited not only integration theorists, but social and political thinkers from various normative strands, to recapture a sense of civic purpose with the view to revisiting and, where appropriate, recasting, the union's uneasy path to 'polity-hood' and, more demandingly, but crucially for what appears to be the most promising example of 'organised synarchy', 'demos-hood'. As to sovereignty itself, in a union of advanced authority-sharing, where established and novel perceptions of shared rule shape the fate of co-evolving political units, it has become essentially codetermined.

Finally, as to fellow-Europeans themselves, Preuß's point (2015, p. 220) is in order: 'The EU may become the paradigm of a polity without a demos, based on the solidarity of citizens who are able and willing to reflect their otherness. It is a polity in a world where people have become neighbours and still remain strangers with respect to each other and accept mutual responsibilities (...) And the Europeans should proudly tell each other and their fellow men from other parts of the world that the Europeans have learnt from their dark history and can offer innovative ideas for the bettering of human conditions in a world torn by serious injustices and conflicts'.

And so is Tsatsos' (2009, p. 47) evolutionary account of 'demos': 'The claim that there is no such thing as a "European demos" presupposes the acceptance of an absurd conceptual positivism, which denied the historicity of concepts and assigns to the terms "demos" or "public opinion" a definite and perpetual, that is to say, a-historical, content, which is not affected by the evolution of the historical spaces of their application or by their adaptation to discrete historical terms'. After all, to re-quote Tsatsos (2009, p. 91): 'Concepts do not create history. History either creates concepts, or assigns new meaning to existing ones'. As stated by Dobson (2000, p. 20), 'the social cement required for the moral solidarity to stabilise itself and its product(s) over time and generate self-sustaining mechanisms to underpin a liberal/social democratic order (...) can only be built and then reproduced as a kind of demos constituted by the convergence of demoi on a framework of common institutions designed to permit them their chosen enterprise of addressing collective action problems, collectively, constrained by the circumstances of politics and within a social order cognitively apprehended as structurally mutualist in its relations of recognition and respect between rights-holding agents'. Or, as Castiglione (2009, p. 51) put it, 'the solution may lie more in imagining how an interlocking political space

may need interlocking systems of trust, solidarity, and allegiances –none of which may need to be absolute– than in the assumption that we can reproduce the absolute demands of national citizenship at a European level’.

It is then possible to develop novel conceptions of engaging in deliberative and decisional ways a plurality of citizenries in their larger association. All the more so, given the rise of what Eatwell and Goodwin (2018) call ‘national populism’ and the need for open democratic dialogues about the future evolution, even finality, of the union, bringing transnational social and political action closer to the member publics and reactivating civic aspirations for large-scale demos-formation. As debates raise fundamental concerns about the political viability of the union, out of many possible, perhaps equally plausible, prescriptions, an appropriate path to European unity may well lie in diverse publics shaping their political future in common, without equating demos-formation with the transfer of loyalties to a higher authority unit. As a shared vision, this may ascribe the polity aspirations of a late-modern union with a sense of plural ‘demos-hood’ within an identifiable whole, whose publics see the purpose of their collective symbiosis; for as Cohen (1971, p. 47) put it, ‘there can be no larger part unless the larger part and the smaller parts are indeed parts of one whole’; otherwise, fragmentation may prevail in the sense of ‘polycracy’ as meant by Sartori (1987, p. 22): ‘a separable multiplicity made up of the unit “each one”’.

The triptych ‘symbiosis–synergy–osmosis’ corresponds to the three stages in the making of an EU demos: the first describes the current state of the relationship between whole and parts; the second aims at strengthening horizontal links among the latter; and the third, a culmination of the two, invests in the civic potential of fellow-Europeans. But today’s democratic challenges bring into fore, on the one hand, a view claiming that democratic shortcomings are still tied, by and large, to a series of (inter)institutional imbalances within a state-controlled union: thus, an appropriate reformist path would be to strengthen the institutions of common governance, even at the expense of state authorities; and, on the other, an argument suggesting that focusing primarily on the institutional front fails to address the question of ‘demos’: thus the reformist need to bestow the member publics with a sense of ‘demos-hood’ to embrace the concerns shared by Europeans about the union and/as their future.

Finale

Arguably, theorizing integration has impelled many promising departures – portraits of projective wholes. But the sketches remain incomplete and thus only drafts; yet, they defy both international and statist categories, favouring a dialectic composition of intersecting units: taking this as an ensemble of shapes drawn from various angles points to a portrait of a union characterized by an incipient but fragmented demos.

The challenge is thus set: to re-invest in what binds Europeans together as fellow-participants in a purposeful integrative journey. True, they live their lives in multiple polities; they may not eventually amount to a federal demos; they may also fail to

acquire – or, as van der Walt (2015) has it, ‘give themselves’ – their own constitution; but they can and should lead their lives as fellow-citizens. As Lavdas (2012, pp. 13–14) put it, ‘discovering republican virtues in a post-national edifice and internalizing those in a way that strengthen Ulysses’ constraints is no easy task. Yet it is not far-fetched to suggest that the current juncture calls for nothing less: the EU will either emerge as a locus of a minimal but shared set of republican commitments or disintegrate to states or groups of states. Ulysses’ constraints weaken without a degree of republican commitment to the European project: they are in doubt at the domestic level and they also appear increasingly untenable as viewed from abroad’. In this sense, a libation – ‘spondē’ – on ‘Ulysses’ constraints’ may well serve as a libation for a commonly shared life even in a late-modern ‘syspondia’. After all, as Strabo tellingly noted in his *Geography* (9, 3.5, 1927, p. 355; quoted in Hudgens, 2013, p. 73), ‘the greater the number of the sojourners and the greater the number of the places whence they came, the greater was thought to be the use of their coming together’.

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