

Conclusion

Echoes and Polyphony

In Praise of Europe's Narrative Diversity*

Janie Pélabay, Kalypso Nicoláidis, and Justine Lacroix

*'Ni tout à fait la même,
ni tout à fait une autre'*

(Marcel Proust, *Albertine disparue*)

Behold our Europes! Europe invented, possessed, reified in the core – Germany, France, Italy; Europe othered, appropriated, enlisted in its borderlands – Great Britain, Greece, Ireland, or Spain; Europe returned, revealed, defied in the East – Poland, the Czech Republic, or Romania; Europe imagined, revered, resented in the limes – Norway or Turkey. If this book tells one story, it is that Europe is debated, deconstructed, debunked, and demystified in thousands of different ways across Europe. And as they do so, European intellectuals from different traditions seem to disagree about an evanescent Europe, *pas tout à fait la même, pas tout à fait une autre*, across ideologies, national traditions, and disciplinary biases.

In this conclusion to *European Stories*, we seek to draw together common threads from the chapters presented in this volume, each analysing specific national debates. What do we find?

Firstly, we conclude that the quest for a unique and unanimous 'European narrative' as an answer to the EU's legitimacy challenge is a non-starter. The pluralism that characterizes Europe's cultures and politics, Europe's socio-economic systems, and Europe's national bargains extends perhaps even more deeply to its intellectual traditions, thus giving rise to a 'deep diversity' of narratives about Europe and the EU.¹ More importantly for our purposes, as

* We would like to express our gratefulness to Gabi Maas for her insightful comments on this chapter.

¹ For prior work on narrative diversity in Europe, see Nicoláidis and Pélabay 2007 and 2008.

In Praise of Europe's Narrative Diversity

our national accounts make clear, this narrative diversity that animates intellectual debates, and beyond them the EU's political life, should not be reduced to the mere juxtaposition of supposedly clear and homogeneous national narratives about Europe. This book makes a case for insisting that we must resist the tendency to ascribe specific European narratives to different national 'collective selves'. In this volume, we find different focuses and cleavages, grounds for different fears and hopes, *within* each national debate about Europe; and despite the difficulty of translation between different intellectual 'languages' – as well as between our national languages literally speaking² – we also find multiple echoes between these conversations that are woven into a polyphony of sorts, the European way.

In short, consistent with Liebert's insightful notion of contentious European democracy,³ the chapters in this book tell us not only about the inner tensions within each national context, but also about a number of transverse cleavages and – still fragile – transnational narratives emerging from lines of contestation that cut across the boundaries between member states. Could it be their combination into a grand and extravagant polyphony that is the ultimate European story?

Intellectuals, of course, do not speak like politicians: their views on the EU tend to be shaped by a core of abstract and normative statements. This principles-oriented approach is applied to what John Erik Fossum and Cathrine Holst qualify as the European experiment, that is, the EU apprehended as 'a testing ground for ideas, principles, procedures, and institutional arrangements'.⁴ This is not to say that intellectuals' views are not context-dependent or historically framed: on the contrary, intellectual debates about the EU are significantly coloured by the discursive contents of each political culture, including *longue durée* frames of reference, from the birth of some European nations in the nineteenth century to the earlier foundational myths of ancient Greeks, Celtic times, or Ottoman *grandeur*.⁵ So much so that the reference to each specific national project may appear unrelenting and somewhat obsessive in the debate over a Europe that is supposed to transcend them. Yet the debates that we witness across Europe do not generally oppose one national project to another but highlight diverging visions *inside* each country on how the European project affects the nation and vice versa.

Which brings us to the normative front where we emerge from this intellectual journey. We find solid reasons to counter the idea that often refers to thick

² It is interesting to note in particular that the impression that English has become the *lingua franca* of intellectuals around Europe is clearly biased, as it simply reflects the segment of European debate that can be accessed across borders. Most of our chapters cite extensively from works in the national language.

³ See Ulrike Liebert, in this volume.

⁴ See the chapter by John Erik Fossum and Cathrine Holst.

⁵ See Mario Telò, in this volume.

One Story or Many?

consensus on representation of the polity as a necessity if the country is to hold together – or rather, the idea that this axiom necessarily applies to the EU construct. Instead, the concept of deep diversity⁶ allows for a plurality of equally acceptable ways of belonging and feeling allegiance to the political community, at least when the political entity at issue is the EU. Indeed, this ‘union of states and of peoples’, this ‘demoi-cracy in the making’ (Nicolaidis 2004a), rests on practices of interpretation and negotiation that reflect strong – yet reasonable – disagreements between its many component parts on the norms and goals that underpin the process of European integration. In the end, we believe that democratic life in the EU can only be enhanced by such a great variety of diverging and competing stories about Europe as a whole, and about its current institutional translation through the EU.

Our praise of narrative diversity, however, does not imply a denial of any common core. To be sure, European citizens, peoples, and member states do seem to share a certain inclination for reiterating their commitment to universal political principles and purposes – freedom, peace, the rule of law, prosperity, solidarity, fundamental rights, and social justice, for example (Garton Ash 2007c). These common principles are arguably the object of a ‘soft consensus’ within the EU. A similar kind of consensus is depicted by Juan Díez Medrano, who argues in the preceding chapter that political elites and ordinary citizens tend to converge in their stories about the EU, since they apprehend Europe in the same way, namely, as a market founded on democratic values.⁷

In our view, however, such a common core does not take us very far. The vague image of the EU as both ‘a market and a democratic club’ is too general to prevent the disagreements and cleavages identified in this volume. For the kind of pluralism that most of the authors emphasize when investigating their national landscape has to do with how various intellectuals translate a set of fundamental but abstract norms into the concrete workings of the EU polity. When it comes to offering an interpretation of the so-called ‘shared values’ or giving an account of what ‘market democracy’ means in practice, narrative diversity prevails.

Far from convergent and consensual, the various ‘European stories’ which emerge from the intellectual debates considered in this volume thus provide deeply contrasting visions of what the Union *is*, or *should* be. There is of course the divide between the EU’s discontents and the EU’s cheerleaders. We might also simply contrast descriptive accounts of European integration which seem hardly compatible. Other visions again put forward normative propositions for the future EU that are grounded on conflicting expectations. And even where there is overwhelming support for the EU – as in Spain where Europe is

⁶ The concept of ‘deep diversity’ is articulated by Taylor 1993. For a study of this concept applied to the EU, see Pélabay 2009.

⁷ See Juan Díez Medrano, in this volume.

In Praise of Europe's Narrative Diversity

conceived as a 'national project',⁸ or in Germany where European integration has long appeared as 'an unquestioned, or even unquestionable, good'⁹ – the intellectual debates about the EU act as a catalyst of disagreements, revealing profound axiological cleavages – notably with regard to political ideals inherited from modernity as will be discussed below, as well as the nature and scope of liberal democracy.

Unsurprisingly, intellectuals have found a wide selection of labels to designate the object of their scorn or desire that is 'Europe'. Those who disapprove of EU membership tend to portray the Union as an artificial construct, since for them there is no European heritage, identity, or people, but only national ones; some go further and see the EU as an identity threat – to give a radical example, the *civitas diaboli* picture remobilized by some Polish Catholic conservatives;¹⁰ or as an 'ethical hazard' which in Noica's view has replaced the ideology of state socialism; or, most succinctly, as a 'giant supermarket' exclusively focused on material goals.¹¹ On the other side of the spectrum, Europhiles find a variety of labels to express their approval, from an established Western civilization to a moral 'community of values' consistent with the image of a humanist Europe,¹² a legal community based on human rights, an 'anchor for democratic consolidation',¹³ a provider of social goods, or a normative power capable of transforming the world in its own image. One of the contributions of this book is to take us on a journey beneath the labels attached to the traditional Europhobe–Europhile debate.

The range of contentious issues in the deliberative space carved by our European intellectuals is huge. In this concluding chapter, we identify four types of debate which we believe constitute the main common threads that run through our chapters.¹⁴ In each case we specify the nature of the debate, the object of the debate, and what can be seen as the normative horizon of the debate, seen as a promise by some and contested by others. The first debate we call *relational* in that it focuses on the theme of identity, broadly understood, and on the implicit or explicit disagreements on whether, and how, mutual recognition is to be achieved both inside and outside the EU. The second debate, which is *civilizational* in nature, deals with the issue of progress as the contested promise of European modernity. The third debate is *political*, dealing

⁸ See Carlos Closa and Antonio Barroso, in this volume.

⁹ See Jan-Werner Müller, in this volume.

¹⁰ See the chapter by Magdalena Góra and Zdzisław Mach.

¹¹ For the last two 'labels', see Daniel Barbu in this volume.

¹² See, for instance, the chapter on Norway by John Erik Fossum and Cathrine Holst; but a similar vision appears in the chapters devoted to Greece and Italy.

¹³ See the chapter on Spain, by Carlos Closa and Antonio Barroso.

¹⁴ We can think of these as transnational contentions in the sense of 'contentious politics', and focusing on ordinary people (as opposed to elite interaction). A quantitative research work devoted to mapping transnational contention has been undertaken by Imig and Tarrow 2001 in the field of political sociology.

One Story or Many?

as it does with the core idea of integration – in other words, the challenge of ‘unity in diversity’ and the contested promise of liberal democracy. And with the fourth, *definitional*, debate we enter the controversy on the very nature of the European polity and the question of its *finalité*. Finally, with a view to clarifying what is theoretically and practically at stake in Europe’s narrative diversity, we contrast two competing modes for debating Europe, namely self-clarification and public justification.

A relational debate: identity and the contested promise of mutual recognition

Unsurprisingly, most of the chapters in this volume reveal the crucial importance of the reference to their own national project as the preferred prism through which many intellectuals tackle the EU. To be sure, this obsession does not contradict our central argument that there is no such thing as a *French* or *Polish* vision of Europe, since part of the national debate is precisely *over* this national referent, whether it is pertinent or not, and if it is pertinent what it implies: the national prism to discuss Europe can accommodate radically different ideas about Europe, about the national project, and about the relationship between the two.

More generally, whether national identity is seen as bolstered or denied intellectuals worry about how Europe affects it and how it affects Europe in return. But while we find such identity warriors across member states we also find their counterparts, intellectuals who worry that identity-talk is generally dangerous, or at least misguided. Indeed, the debate – within and across borders – often pits those who seek to ground identity through othering against those who are more interested in mutual recognition between peoples, turning away from essentialist identity preoccupations. These identity debates, we find, are always relational in one way or another, whether the relation is to one’s neighbours, one’s past or some other ‘other’. Before we review these different angles, we start by embedding the national prism in a broader context.

From national to European: the mosaic of intellectual prisms

Again and again, Europe and its EU incarnation serve as a foil to the fate of each country in their respective domestic debating spaces (Diez Medrano 2003; Leerssen 2007). ~~To be sure~~, the EU is discussed first and foremost not as an object in itself, but rather in terms of how it either reinforces or endangers the nation – or more precisely a specific national project and particular vision. In other words, the debate is less about the EU itself than about what the EU means for *France*, for *Italy*, for *Poland* – or for *Britishness*, *Greekness*, *Germanness*. The positive assessment expressed in the slogan ‘Europe is good for Ireland’

In Praise of Europe's Narrative Diversity

illustrates the tendency to view the EU through the exclusive prism of national identity and interest. The same goes for those intellectuals in Poland or Germany who apprehend Europe as protecting the nation from its internal evils, or for the Europeanist views articulated in Spain and Greece that represent the EU as the best solution to the country's problems. On the other side, we find the same reference framing intellectual visions of the likely negative effects of European integration on the nation. The various facets of these debates all revolve around a series of 'relational' questions: to what extent is the EU itself like 'our country' or antithetic to 'our values', 'our story', 'our national project'? Can this new kid on the block, the EU, even perhaps allow us to reinvent the national? Or is the EU the conduit for the domination of 'our country' by bigger ones? In short, national debates about Europe do not generally start with the *abstract* notion of the nation-state and its relations to Europe, but rather with the *specific* nation-building project at hand, and – what is more – with contrasting interpretations of it.

Inescapable though it may seem, the nation is not the only prism through which intellectual debates on the EU are framed and articulated. In the chapters collected in this volume, we also find other 'intellectual gates' to discussing European integration which serve as 'connecting points' between the domestic sphere and the European level.¹⁵ These can be 'regional' narratives, like the 'Nordic model'¹⁶ and the paradigmatic 'Central Europe' considered by Jan K2-en as 'a conceptual stage on the way to Europe as a whole',¹⁷ or 'cultural' narratives, like Hellenism or Celtic heritage. Finally, there are narratives whose subject is 'Europe' as such – whether this term refers to a European 'spirit' or self or whether it designates a political project, a set of institutions and policies, or even a bureaucratic body also named 'Brussels'.

Peripheral angst: self-assertion through recentring

From these intellectual prisms, the dichotomy 'centre versus periphery' emerges in full relief. To start with, references to nationhood are predominantly associated with Eurosceptical attitudes. In reaction to what the likes of Václav Klaus see as the denationalization of citizenship associated with the EU – and against their compatriots who support it – a brand of intellectuals found especially in Poland, the Czech Republic, and Ireland converge in championing their vision of nationhood in a *defensive mode*. The Polish debate on this issue is animated by the resurgent polarization between, on one hand, a homogenized

¹⁵ We borrow the phrases 'intellectual gate' and 'connecting point' from Muriel Blaive and Nicolas Maslowski and from Katy Hayward respectively.

¹⁶ See John Erik Fossum and Cathrine Holst, in this volume.

¹⁷ See, for instance, the chapter on the Czech Republic, by Muriel Blaive and Nicolas Maslowski.

One Story or Many?

and essentialist vision of nationhood inspired by Roman Dmowski's integral nationalism and, on the other, a multi-ethnic vision inspired by Józef Piłsudski. As Mach and Góra show in their chapter, a post-Romantic speech now places 'national uprising, messianism, martyrdom, the Christian crusade' at the core of Polishness.¹⁸ Similar views on identity and nationality are widespread in the Czech Republic via Václav Klaus' discourse which reactivates the pan-Slavist and anti-Western ideology inherited from the communist regime. Another variant of the *defensive mode* can be found in countries such as Greece, where Diamandouros' culture of the underdog (Diamandouros 1997) leads to an ethnocentric exaggeration of both past glory and present misery, as discussed by Pagoulatos and Yataganas in this volume. In these debates, Europe is targeted by one camp as a cause of national demise and enlisted by the other as its remedy.

Indeed, if peripheral countries are often home to intellectuals who perceive the EU as a threat to the nation, they are also home to what we could call intellectual strategies of recentring: 'our nation may be small but it is at the core'. This is the case of Irish or Greek claims to have played a vital role in moulding European culture: the struggle for leadership within the competitive market of cultural foundations and the assertion of a civilizational centrality reflects, on the narrative front, the institutional squabbles regarding state equality. In these two countries, the rhetoric of exceptionalism echoes the complex dialectic between senses of superiority and inferiority, as with the claim for Romania's contribution to European integration as an effort to keep alive the 'pre-political spirit of Europe'.¹⁹ A similar version of the centre/periphery antagonism underlies Norwegian debates about EU membership, which reactivate structural socio-cultural and territorial cleavages that strongly marked *longue durée* national memory in that country. As for regional prisms, the use of the concepts of Slavism, Central Europe, or even Central-European-ness in Poland and the Czech Republic serves as a remedy to the existential (much more than geopolitical) peripheral role ascribed to Eastern member states.

Arguably, many of the criticisms advanced by intellectuals 'from the periphery' are not targeted at Europe and the EU in general; rather, they express a reluctance to adhere to a hegemonic, ready-made narrative of European integration. To put it differently, what is refused is a form of 'Europeanization through imitation'. Europeanization – they argue – is a multi-faceted process with many possible paths. Consequently, they urge the self-confident laudators of 'Europe' in their own country to admit that their dominant view is controversial. Grounded on the memory of past domination or colonialism, or based on what the Turkish intellectual Ali Bulaç considered to be an ontological

¹⁸ See Magdalena Góra and Zdzisław Mach, in this volume.

¹⁹ See the chapter by Daniel Barbu.

In Praise of Europe's Narrative Diversity

incapacity in mainstream European circles of 'acknowledging the truths of "Others"',²⁰ such a claim finds growing support. This is particularly the case amongst intellectuals from the 'new' member states. An illustration of this is the Central European appeal for an expansion of European understanding launched by Marek A. Cichocki. In his view, the time is ripe to acknowledge that there was not just one 'European Enlightenment' from which we can derive practical conclusions for the European Union, and that the 'predominantly Franco-German narrative is no longer appropriate'. Hence he makes a case for the enrichment of the European narrative with a variety of different forms of the Enlightenment occurring side by side (Cichocki 2007).

It is now, of course, generally accepted that what Cichocki calls the Franco-German narrative is of little relevance to the contemporary EU. Indeed, there are plenty of intellectuals on both sides who also fear that their national identity might be soluble in Europe. And often, support for the EU in France and Germany is also framed – just as in Ireland or Greece – by the conviction that the Union is simply a France or Germany writ large. Implicitly or explicitly, the argument goes, Europe is good because and when it is made in our image, or better still because it is of our making.

Neighbours and frères-ennemis: from 'them' to 'us'?

Peripheral angst is but one variant of a more general line of debate revolving around the relation to the Other, within or outside the EU. Here, the dividing line across countries pits those who are prone to adopt a rhetoric of 'us' versus 'them' against those who resist this logic. The 'us' language prevails in narratives which insist that EU member states are part of a larger 'European we'. Conversely, when the relations between member states are viewed on the model of international relations or foreign affairs, the use of 'us' is reserved for the national community, while 'them' refers to the rest of the EU. As analysed in the chapter on Poland, the transition from 'them' to 'us' is typically made possible through a change in the perception of previous neighbours – Germany in the case at hand – from a threat to a possible cooperation partner, or even an ally, often with the help of the EU. But whether the *frère-ennemi* turned partner transforms all other Europeans into members of a 'we' is open to debate.

When applied to 'external' Others, we of course find debates about Europe and Islam, be it within or outside its borders. But at least in the chapters that make up this book, this relational debate is mainly about the appropriate partnership between Europe and the United States. Some intellectuals argue in favour of a strong EU–US partnership – from Václav Havel or Timothy Garton Ash to the Italian pro-Atlanticist shift identified by Mario Telò as a by-product

²⁰ See Nora Fisher Onar and Ahmet Evin, in this volume.

One Story or Many?

of the ‘Berlusconian revolution’. In contrast, a ‘Mediterranean Europe’ has emerged as a possible anti-imperialist EU, converging with the concerns expressed from within the British left by Perry Anderson – who deplores the lack of independence from the US – and by Tom Nairn, who feared that the suggestion of increasing European–American partnership would turn into a process of ‘self-colonization’. The US, then, is the common topic of discussion around which European debate has constantly gravitated, even if Europeans passionately disagree on whether it is about a ‘we’ or a ‘them’.

A community of memory? Whose memories?

Ultimately, debates over identity tend to turn around memory and intellectuals’ relationships with the intertwined national and European pasts. Perhaps the past, loved or loathed, is the real other of Europe. Here, the fundamental cleavage is mainly between an apologetic approach to national history and a self-critical thinking applied to collective memory. In Poland, for instance, many have advocated the ‘defalsification’ of a collective memory marked by decades of Communism, and, subsequently, a critical rethinking of the national past in order to build a double identity, both national and European – or even a ‘European-oriented’ new identity. But at the same time, our Polish chapter documents the weak propensity in Poland for recognizing the harm and historical injustice done to others, thus noting that Polish opinion seems to be devoid of any ‘post-colonial complex’. And indeed, self-criticism finds little room in an intellectual environment dominated by discourses warning against ‘nothingness’ and the ‘lack of memory foundations’.²¹

Such a tension between self-reflection and apologia can be found in other national debates too. In Ireland, the experience of colonialism teaches that the European past is composed of national traditions which are capable of ‘barbarism’ as well as ‘beauty’. This is a crucial lesson if we are to learn from the negative aspects of national history and give impetus to mutual recognition. But, as argued by Hayward, this self-critical attitude is far from predominant. Instead, a rather apologetic relation to the national ‘heritage’ tends to focus the debate towards ‘how best to reclaim Ireland’s past’, even at the risk of verging on an intoxication with such a mythical history.²² This ‘hyperbolic’ sense of the past is arguably shared by a large number of Greek intellectuals, except that in their case – they claim – the national inheritance has benefited the whole of Europe, and indeed, the world.²³ By contrast, the anti-nationalist and pacifist narratives analysed by Mario Telò tend to encourage critical self-appropriation of the past in Italy. This is all the more so in the case of Germany, where the

²¹ See the chapter by Magdalena Góra and Zdzisław Mach.

²² See Katy Hayward, in this volume.

²³ See Georges Pagoulatos and Xenophon Yataganas, in this volume.

In Praise of Europe's Narrative Diversity

contribution to the construction of a united and peaceful Europe proceeds from a desire for 'moral rehabilitation' grounded on historical sin.

Finally, the dichotomy 'continuity versus discontinuity' appears in several European stories analysed in this book, with both perceptions usually coexisting for the same country depending on *which* history is referred to.²⁴ Hence the gap between, on one hand, EU membership as an extension of the nation's history – or more precisely of what is perceived and glorified as its most positive achievement – and, on the other, EU membership as a break with what is perceived as its most contemptible past (communism, fascism, collaboration, colonialism). For Italians, the EU vindicates their turning their back on Mussolini, while for the French it reverberates with memories of revolution and resistance. For Greece or Ireland, EU membership has been viewed by the mainstream as a means to free the nation from the colonial yoke, but at the same time as a reconnection with a more remote past. The 'myth of continuity' that George Pagoulatos and Xenophon Yataganas discern in Greek intellectuals' visions of Europe may well reveal some anxieties about the future in general, and about the possible role of Greece within the EU in particular. We also see how historical rivalries throughout Europe are offered up to the altar of a project meant to remember and transcend them (France and Germany, France and Britain, Greece and Turkey, Poland and Germany, etc.). Alternatively, the EU may entrench elements of some traditional dominances (France, Italy), or it may help to enhance a country's power on the continent (small states in general, post-communist states). To sum up, all EU members use the EU in one way or another as a means of renegotiating their own history and the relationship between their respective histories. Just like national identities in general, patterns of continuity and discontinuity are thus constructed to *Europeanize* national history to one's national advantage.

Turning to the European prism, these national differences can of course be apprehended under an overarching tension when it comes to the past of Europe as a whole. Many intellectuals across member states tend to chime with the idea of the EU as a 'community of memory', a means of atonement for Europe's cardinal sin, the transformation of two continent-wide civil wars into world wars. Others, however, prefer to put a more positive emphasis on Europe's Enlightenment heritage – a continuity argument – or conversely on its break with the various pasts of some of its member states – a discontinuity argument. Under the latter, 'virgin birth' understanding, the EU was designed on a blank slate and does not need to atone for the colonial legacies of the former metropolises in its midst. It is noteworthy, however, that the colonial pasts of some of the member states and the EU's pattern of relations with previously colonized non-European peoples is scarcely discussed by the intellectuals considered in

²⁴ We are grateful to Gabi Maas for helping us to clarify this point.

One Story or Many?

this volume. In this, they may simply reflect a general pattern of denial in European societies. The memory of European intellectuals, as well as European publics, is indeed selective.

To sum up, we have indicated here just some of the variants of the identity debates that readers will find scattered across the chapters of the book. It is remarkable, however, to note that underlying much of the argument around identity lies an almost universally shared sense of the exceptionalism of one's national project, the conviction that one's national history is not only unique but uniquely related – positively or negatively – to European history. Given the relatively (though increasingly less) closed nature of these national debates, it is even doubtful that we can observe an actual 'clash of exceptionalisms'. Instead, we find a happy coexistence between similar yet contradictory claims to exceptional status, that are each oblivious to such ironies. It remains to be seen whether the alternative gates or prisms used by intellectuals to 'enter' debates around Europe will eventually diversify, leaving their *patrie* to compete with other frames for their musings about Europe.

A civilizational debate: progress and the contested promise of European modernity

We can now turn from the range of particulars, each concerned with the fate of their own national project, to more generic transnational cleavages. As far back as we can go – i.e. six or seven centuries ago (see the discussion on emergence of intellectuals in the introduction to this volume as well as Francis Cheneval's chapter) – 'intellectuals' in Europe have clashed around the issue of unification of the continent, and about whether such unification could in turn be seen as one version of the bigger question of what constitutes progress, however this may be defined in a given era and by a given author or group of authors. Is progress best served by forming smaller or larger political entities? Does it point in the direction of state sovereignty or continental unity? In our introduction, we referred to this *longue durée* discussion over the nature of progress as the first-order debate that underpins the continuous pendulum between the national and supranational poles. At the end of our intellectual journey, we find that the EU is discussed as the embodiment of 'European modernity' and its promise of progress. The question as to whether this promise has been kept or broken is at the core of our intellectual debates, thus reminding us that progress is neither unequivocal nor irrevocable.

Modernity and its European nemesis

For many intellectuals, European integration has come to epitomize progress, whilst for others it is the most evident symptom of the 'diseases' caused by

In Praise of Europe's Narrative Diversity

modernity in the public domain. Almost all of our countries have seen modernity and its European nemesis alternatively celebrated and put on trial, although on different grounds and with different reference points.

Those who regard the process of modernization by and large through the lens of progress tend to define it broadly, notably through its extension to the requisites of social justice or to certain forms of egalitarianism or multiculturalism.²⁵ The fact remains, however, that they tend to consider the ideals attached to the Enlightenment, political modernity, rationalism, secularism, and universalism to be self-evident normative benchmarks for the European project. In this 'Europeanist-modernist' perspective – widely represented in Spain and Italy – European integration is viewed as an obvious path towards democratization, social progress, and the implementation of modern values. But precisely because this diagnosis is presented as so unproblematic, it prompts concern among those who fear that a process of Europeanization unilaterally conducted in the name of 'modernity' will act as a straitjacket for many countries. Scholars in this vein resent the one-size-fits-all, EU-led hegemonic interpretation of 'European modernity'.

These anxieties may take various forms. One of them opens a debate about the *sources* of the 'modern European self'. In this debate, alternative sources – most noticeably Romanticism and Christianity – are invoked with a view to counterbalancing what is perceived as a dominant yet truncated picture of 'Enlightened Europe'. The predominance of a European narrative embedded in the legacy of Western Enlightenment is especially contested by intellectuals from the post-communist member states. Thus for instance, in the face of a universalistic rhetoric, 'post-romantic speeches' and calls for the community's distinctiveness have found a significant audience in Poland and the Czech Republic. To be sure, the dichotomy between universalism and particularism might appear too simplistic; but it clearly surfaces in intellectual debates on the EU.

The latter brings out another important aspect of modernity: secularism. On that subject, Polish pleas for the recognition of the Christian/Catholic sources of the 'European ethos' are paradigmatic. Behind this claim lie slightly different purposes: based on the concept of the '*ante-murale*' and supported by the discourse of 'martyrdom' and 'Christian crusade' as discussed above, some intellectuals exhort the Polish citizenry to engage in a double quest for moral integrity and cultural purity that tends to fuel a defensive and mistrustful attitude towards European integration; others encourage a more offensive attitude aiming to fulfil Poland's mission of 'bringing Christianity back to Europe'.

²⁵ This stance can be exemplified, among others, by Habermas' moral and political philosophy and its attempt to reformulate the Enlightenment ideal of progress through a 'post-metaphysical' vocabulary based on the notions of learning, process, deliberative opinion formation, or cosmopolitan law.

One Story or Many?

This narrative of the saviour bears striking similarities with De Valera's speech on Ireland's religious and spiritual task in Europe. This discourse, with Herderian undertones, presents the Irish people as having made a unique contribution to 'European culture' and therefore deserving of special recognition. The 'Irish genius' – the argument goes – lies in its capacity to protect Europe from the dangers, and the decadence, that stem from a public culture disconnected from any transcendent framework and perverted by consumerism and the pursuit of material goods.²⁶ One might also refer to Greek 'communitarian' thinkers such as Yannaras, especially the members of the so-called 'neo-Orthodox movement', who promote a sense of 'particularist loyalty' to a 'warm' community shaped by the Greek-Christian tradition and worldview.²⁷

It is worth pointing out that the controversy over the religious ethos and telos of the EU has gained a wider audience not only at the societal level but also within European academia where secularism, multiculturalism, and the accommodation of religious differences have become widely debated.²⁸ The debate mobilized and polarized large portions of public opinion around Europe, especially in Spain, Italy, Portugal, and France, where issues related to secularism are highly sensitive. Here, the divide is between secularism as a prerequisite for any political regime respectful of a plurality of comprehensive worldviews and secularism as a cause for the failure of Europe on the front of culture and civilization.

Universalism and secularism are thus two bones of contention that merge into a broader tendency which consists in appraising the EU in terms of the benefits and damages attributed to 'European modernity'. To be sure, except for those who lament the loss of 'organic solidarities' and 'holistic worldviews',²⁹ there are few intellectuals who explicitly contest the value attached to political modernity in general, and to the principles of liberal democracy in particular. Nevertheless, as we shall see, this does not preclude deep disagreements about the appropriate interpretation of these principles and their implementation within the EU. Moreover, emphasis put on progress in terms of freedom, education, or prosperity can coexist with a critical stance towards the consequences of modernization for public culture and democratic life in contemporary European societies.

²⁶ See Katy Hayward, in this volume.

²⁷ See George Pagoulatos and Xenophon Yataganas, in this volume.

²⁸ The debates were triggered by the question as to whether a reference to Europe's Christian roots should be included in the European Charter of Fundamental Rights and later in the Preamble of the Constitutional Treaty. See, for instance Weiler 2003b: in this essay, the prominent lawyer and transnational intellectual, well known in academia for his notion of 'constitutional tolerance', made a case against the 'denial' of the Christian roots of Europe. For critical reviews, see Howse 2004; Menéndez 2005; Pélabay 2008.

²⁹ See, in this volume, the analysis of the Romanian debate by Daniel Barbu.

In Praise of Europe's Narrative Diversity

Europe and the pathologies of modernity

The latter line of debate is reminiscent of the philosophical discourse about the 'malaise of modernity',³⁰ a prevailing theme throughout this book – from the pleas for a 'return to metaphysics' and holistic (religious) orders to Václav Klaus' case against 'radical human-rightism', or the arguments about the shortcomings of modern individualism and procedural citizenship. The uncontrolled development of atomism and narcissism, the dominance of instrumental reason, the bureaucratization of state action, and the decline in civic participation appear frequently on the list of the 'pathologies' characteristic of this truncated vision of modernity. According to this diagnosis, some of the most complex problems currently faced by the European polity, including its 'democratic deficit', must be understood as a manifestation or radicalization of such 'pathologies'.

Finally, let us pick up the most radical vein within the rhetoric on the 'loss of meaning' associated with modernity and the European project, namely the discourse of those intellectuals who see the very process of European integration as synonymous with a decline in morality, culture, and religion. These radical critics – such as those we encounter, for instance, in Polish and Greek intellectual circles – warn against the extreme ethical and spiritual poverty of the EU caused by the erosion of any 'superior', transcendent horizon and of any traditional authority. These visions of Europe express a profound mistrust – if not an outright rejection – of modern ideals and processes, including the rationalization and autonomization of the political order. One of the most characteristic illustrations of this stance is provided here by the 'historicist counter-narrative of Europe' spread by the Orthodox Church in Romanian society and 'the revival of metaphysics' propped up by followers of Noica.³¹

This is not to say that intellectual debates about the EU have returned to rekindling the quarrel between *the Ancients and the Moderns*. At the very least, however, we have to admit that the 'European stories' told by certain branches of thought contribute to shaping a much contrasted picture of 'European modernity', which in turn supports a series of extremely ambivalent positions on EU membership. More often than not, the ambivalence lies in an attitude which consists in celebrating the great strides made in science and technology, the political advances in freedom of movement, and especially the increase in economic prosperity, while rejecting the spiritual, moral, and cultural impoverishment deemed to symbolize the 'negative' aspect of Europeanization. The separation of these two contrasting faces of modernity is exemplified in the Turkish debate by the 'tendency to treat "Europe" as a menu', that is, to adopt

³⁰ On this philosophical debate, see Habermas 1987; Taylor 1991.

³¹ See Daniel Barbu, in this volume.

One Story or Many?

‘the material aspects of “European” civilization’ and to avoid embracing the underlying values and worldviews.³²

Interestingly, this traditionalist and conservative intellectual sensitivity bemoaning the dominance of the market, the material, and the foreign in today’s Europe converges with a left-wing anti-market and anti-globalization stance found across all member states. Both perceive the EU as a Trojan horse for cultural globalization, ‘homogenization’, and consumerism, which are the hallmarks of modernity’s pathologies.

Ultimately, this ‘civilizational’ debate over European modernity not only pits different opinions about whether Europe contributes to progress against each other; it also spawns polarized views about what kind of progress actually matters – material, political, or spiritual. One sort of European modernity does not fit the bill for all.

A political debate: integration and the contested promise of liberal democracy

If we take the idea of progress down one level of specificity and move from civilizational to more political controversies, we find that intellectuals across Europe disagree passionately on the most appropriate foundations for and forms of integration in a political community. In these debates, the various meanings of integration within states echo those attached to the EU as a whole, since on either level the question is how to reconcile unity and diversity, cohesion and tolerance, not only in the cultural realm where all tend to agree, but more controversially on the political and socio-economic planes. In short, how can different models of integration accommodate the requirements of pluralism in a given polity, on whatever scale?

In this sense, even if we follow Rawls’ minimalist requirement for a consensus on the norms of justice within a ‘well-ordered society’ – a ‘social union of social unions’ – the EU would need to develop an overlapping consensus of overlapping consensuses, a contract between different social contracts as it were.³³ So to the extent that the EU makes them coexist it is legitimate for intellectuals to argue over what each of the component consensuses should be made of. And it is this normative agenda that is at stake as we watch debates unfold both over liberalism in general and over liberal democracy in particular.

³² See Nora Fisher Onar and Ahmet Evin, in this volume.

³³ See Nicolaïdis and Pélabay 2007 and 2008.

In Praise of Europe's Narrative Diversity

Liberalism and its discontents

Throughout Europe, some criticize the EU for being too liberal, and others for not being liberal enough. As shown by Georgios Varouxakis, the suspected illiberalism of continental Europe has long served as a cause of Euroscepticism in Britain, and still today British intellectuals' distrust of the EU is partly due to its lack of liberal credentials. On the other hand, there are critics of the EU who lament its liberal orientation, whether that means the drift towards a procedural pattern of democracy (as argued by the republican proponents of a robust democracy in France or Poland) or the hegemony of a neoliberal pattern of free market economy (as lamented by left-leaning intellectuals in many countries analysed in this volume). Along this ideological fault line, the debated attributes of liberalism include pluralism, legalism, state neutrality, and state–society relationships.

In line with British liberal intellectuals who have expressed concern about a perceived obsession with the uniformity of Continental Europe, one finds converging views of pluralism as a mainstay of European democracy in the Polish, French, German, and Italian contexts. These are currents of thought which celebrate the expression of social pluralism, the free flow of ideas and the plurality of worldviews as so many antidotes to totalitarianism and a political order based on what Ingolf Pernice called 'legal monism'.³⁴ In contrast, consistent with the Schmittian assumption that interest-group pluralism represents a threat to sovereign statehood, some intellectuals fear that the promotion of pluralism would undermine democracy, allowing for the capture of the state by special interests. Reiterating the conceptual opposition between holism and atomism that is a crucial aspect of the controversy on the 'malaise of modernity', intellectuals disagree about whether European integration has homogenizing or fragmenting effects: is the EU the incarnation of the dream of homogeneity or of the 'art of separation'³⁵? Should the EU be contested for being a 'superpower' with homogenizing and imperialistic tendencies, or rather in Noica's words for realizing a 'civilization characterized by total disconnections and multiple partitions'?³⁶

More generally, the kind of pluralism so feared by neo-Schmittians is often defended through rights-based discourses. Clashes over pluralism therefore lead to disagreements over the place that the rule of law should have in society. To be sure, the same fears as those found over pluralism also underlie the various critical stances about the prevalence of legal norms over civic virtues or, to put it differently, about the primacy of rights over duties. Echoing the idea expressed

³⁴ See Jan-Werner Müller, in this volume.

³⁵ This phrase is used by Walzer 1984 to criticise the liberal atomistic view of social and political order.

³⁶ See Daniel Barbu, in this volume.

One Story or Many?

by many Romanian intellectuals that the priority of rights is a self-defeating theory,³⁷ French intellectuals such as Gauchet view the EU as being in the grip of a ‘religion of law’ which exacerbates the damages caused by individualism and quite simply undermines the popular basis of democracy. Conversely, the picture of the EU drawn by French ‘liberal-revolutionary’ intellectuals emphasizes the anti-oppressive dimension of the claim for rights as well as their socially ‘binding effects’. According to them, it is rather the inadequacy of the EU in implementing ‘human rights politics’ that reveals its democratic failure.³⁸

Intellectuals also disagree over another tenet of political liberalism, namely state neutrality. Consistent with the civilizational claims analysed above, some Polish and Romanian intellectuals attack liberal impartiality and criticize that ideal for preventing the assertion of collective identity and memory in an affirmative way. Fustigating ‘European amnesia’, Romanian ‘metaphysicians’³⁹ associate state neutrality with diseases such as relativism, secularism, and estrangement from tradition, while their Polish counterparts advocate ‘a Roman-inspired system of law’ and call for the consolidation of morality by faith and the return of the nation as a medium between the citizenry and what they call ‘the absolute’. And while the nation is best placed to uphold the moral values in question, these critics also turn to the European project to urge their fellow Europeans to accept their own cultural, axiological, and religious partiality.

But then what should come first, state or civil society? And how should the EU affect state–society relations? A brand of intellectuals around Europe passionately resists the liberal ‘primacy of politics’, since the conduct of modernization/²Europeanization from a purely political perspective is suspected of preventing marginalized cultures from wielding their spiritual influence over the continent.⁴⁰ This debate over ‘the autonomy of the political’ results, in a more precise form, in normative standpoints that set ‘centralism’ *against* ‘independence of civil society’ and ‘statism’ *against* ‘constitutionalism’, and converge in their extreme suspicion of the public domain per se. In this respect, Václav Klaus’ assertion that the lack of state control over ‘civil society’ represents a danger to democracy is emblematic.⁴¹

On the other side, in Petr Pithart’s view, a highly developed civil society is the best means of curbing the tendency to succumb to totalizing ideologies such as fascism or communism. Indeed, as Jan-Werner Müller points out, any attempt to restore the idea of a unitary state with a hierarchical administration is regarded by a number of German intellectuals as the potential reactivation of

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ See Justine Lacroix, in this volume.

³⁹ The calls for a ‘return to metaphysics’ (see Barbu’s chapter in this volume) can be understood as opposed to Rawls’ famous defence of his theory of justice as being ‘political and not metaphysical’.

⁴⁰ See Daniel Barbu, in this volume.

⁴¹ See the chapter by Muriel Blaive and Nicolas Maslowski.

In Praise of Europe's Narrative Diversity

political and intellectual traditions deeply compromised by Nazism. Furthermore, as explained by Muriel Blaive and Nicolas Maslowski, Václav Havel and his fellow opponents of communism celebrated Europe precisely for recognizing and protecting intermediary bodies between state and citizenry. Of course, this debate can be found across Europe, but it is perhaps especially acute in the new member states.

Finally, these debates often find another variant around the advocacy of American versus European versions of liberalism, a debate most famously addressed in 2003 by Habermas and Derrida, expanding on Habermas' vision of a distinctive 'European mentality'. As for this dichotomy, we can contrast a procedural and rights-based vision of justice characteristic of 'American' liberalism with a model supposedly more in line with a republican approach to political integration. In this volume, however, the most frequently discussed occurrence of such a dichotomy pertains to egalitarianism and social democracy. Across European debates in Poland, Italy, Britain, Germany, Greece, and Norway, a leftist-feminist-green and anti-globalization intellectual coalition emerges against an 'American' version of liberalism, associated with capitalism and the free market economy. A number of intellectuals in these countries condemn the EU for having being converted to economic neoliberalism, and call for re-orienting Europeanization towards a model more concerned with social justice, gender equality, and ecology. Alternatively, assuming that there is no going back, many among the British New Left proponents, including Anderson, have lost hope that the EEC/EU could be 'a vehicle for socialist reform'.⁴² In Greece and Norway, meanwhile, the link between Europeanization and liberalization fuels intellectual resistance to European integration and the defence of national sovereignty. And yet, as explained by John Erik Fossum and Cathrine Holst, this attitude can also support a conception of the EU as 'a value community', in that it can give grounds for the promotion of the European social model which stands 'in opposition to unbridled American individualism'.

The preconditions of democracy and the national premise

Unsurprisingly, our chapters show that many intellectual debates on Europe revolve around the preconditions of democracy – understood in a broad sense as including both self-government and some kind of social equality. In particular, these discussions focus on the relevance of nationhood, both in its cultural facet (based on a common sense of ethnicity and cultural distinctiveness) and, more often, in its political dimension (pertaining to arguments such as statehood and popular sovereignty). Here, intellectual stances consist in reasserting

⁴² See Georgios Varouxakis in this volume.

One Story or Many?

or questioning the basic idea that there can be no democracy beyond the nation-state.

In the different chapters of this book, this premise comes in a variety of forms. In Norway, it impregnates what John Erik Fossum and Cathrine Holst depict as a ‘taken-for-granted nationalism’ espoused by the vast majority of academic intellectuals. In this ideological context, any infringement of state sovereignty is deemed to be so untenable that many prefer to adopt, so to speak, a politics of avoidance on such matters. By contrast, in Germany, France, and Britain, the controversy over the ‘no democracy beyond the nation’ axiom serves as the main motivational vector for embarking on the European debate. In Germany, the few suspicious attitudes towards European integration are framed by references to statehood as a precondition of democracy and constitutionalism.⁴³ Firmly established in the French political imaginary, this premise underlies criticisms of the EU advanced by the French ‘national-republicans’ who reiterate the classical idea that democratic legitimacy requires citizens to exert political authority.⁴⁴

To this civic plea for an effective popular sovereignty some intellectuals add that the national embodiment of democracy is a prerequisite for implementing social justice policies, thus echoing the key thesis of Miller’s ‘liberal nationalism’ as well as the British left-leaning criticism of the EU developed in the name of egalitarianism and progressive politics. On the opposite side of the British political spectrum, the very same premise leads right-wing Eurosceptics to consider the concept and practice of sovereignty pooling to be an ‘absurdity’. Thus, according to Noel Malcolm, any sort of democratic politics is dependent not only on a real political authority over the legal order, but also on an ‘established political community’, where ‘established’ means that people should share ‘the same customs, political traditions, and, above all, the same language’.⁴⁵

At that point, political criticisms of sovereignty pooling meet culturalist claims for national integrity – such as that voiced in Britain by Roger Scruton, who asserts that England should be protected against its undoing by European ‘transnational legislation’.⁴⁶ Moreover, these criticisms also bring tensions between the universal and the particular back to the fore, as shown by the French and German debates about constitutional patriotism. On this matter, thinkers close to the ‘national-republican’ paradigm in France and proponents of ‘liberal nationalism’ in Britain once again converge in reproaching an abstract universalism and a disengaged cosmopolitanism for underestimating the importance of a sense of belonging required by democratic politics. Associated by Pierre

⁴³ See Jan-Werner Müller, in this volume.

⁴⁴ See Justine Lacroix’s chapter.

⁴⁵ See Georgios Varouxakis, in this volume.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

In Praise of Europe's Narrative Diversity

Manent with a 'passion for similarities', the 'reign of legal universalism' and the unencumbered view of the self on which it rests are suspected of eventually leading towards an undifferentiated society, thus defeating democracy.⁴⁷

The question of whether – and to what extent – the rational, formal, and abstract principles of democratic citizenship can be disentangled from the nation in turn highlights the conceptual link between assertion of state sovereignty and the notion of 'territory' or political 'body'. On the opposite side of the French debate, one finds Rancière's idea that democracy is 'anybody's government', complemented as it is by the French 'liberal revolutionaries' who conceive Europe as a potential testing ground for a new kind of citizenship dissociated from nationhood and as the ideal locus for radical democratic ambitions. For instance, Etienne Balibar and his followers attempt to reappraise the myth of the sovereign nation-state by giving priority to an anti-discriminatory language which denotes a more specific concern for non-EU nationals.⁴⁸ In a slightly different vein, the 'anti-nationalist' stance that Mario Telò identifies at the centre of the Italian political culture⁴⁹ contributes to stressing the practical link between the limitations of national sovereignty and the achievement of peace and justice. This stance also resonates with the German intellectual enterprise of 'Gruppe 47', nowadays supported by post-nationalist and left-liberal thinkers, united in their rejection of the nation-state as 'a prime moral imperative'.⁵⁰

In sum, diverging conceptions of democratic principles lead to diverging conceptions of the European project. The language in which this disagreement is expressed may itself be deeply embedded in distinct national cultures. But, against the cliché according to which there would be 'a' French, 'a' Polish, or 'a' German vision of Europe, disagreements within each of these contexts over what should be a political community lead to distinct conceptions of what the European polity is, and should be.

A definitional debate: *finalité* and the contested nature of the European polity

The debates over the keys to political integration and the desirability of liberal democracy in individual member states are intrinsically interwoven, as we have just seen, with debates over the nature of the EU as a political community in itself. At this level, we could simply say that intellectuals disagree over the definition to be attached to the strange animal, unidentified object, *sui generis* project, unprecedented experiment – or whatever other metaphors we might

⁴⁷ See Justine Lacroix, in this volume.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ See Mario Telò, in this volume.

⁵⁰ See Jan-Werner Müller, in this volume.

One Story or Many?

use to describe this state of definitional limbo. Ultimately, intellectuals disagree not only over the appropriate definition of the EU as it *currently* stands, but over what should be its *finalité* and even whether it should have a *finalité* at all – or is it the journey that matters?

Conceptual triangulation: nationalism, supranationalism, and the transnational third way

There are, of course, several dividing lines. Among the thinkers who expect the EU to become a true ‘political body’, the dividing line is between the advocates of a Europe of nations and the proponents of a federal Europe. The former option can be connected with the Mazzini-inspired idea of a ‘Europe of nations’ as ‘a third alternative to the utopia of importing the American federal model and the reality of the existing European Concert’.⁵¹ The federalist option is much more multiform. As for Britain, seminal variations are given by Larry Siedentop’s Euro-federalism and Glyn Morgan’s plea for a European sovereign state. The latter contrasts with the federalist idea defended by Spinelli, Colorni, and Rossi, according to a Hamiltonian model. Within the German federalist camp, there is a conceptual division between ‘a federation of states’ and ‘a federal state’ which has made the picture even more complex.⁵² Despite their differences, all these representations of the EU as a supranational body with federalist features share the ‘embodiment’ premise described above, be it in its thin or thick version. By contrast, those in Romania, the Czech Republic, Britain, or Norway who represent the EU as an intergovernmental organization insist that the association between European sovereign states should be as flexible as possible, according to a ‘problem-solving’ logic.⁵³

In the introduction to this book, we suggested a way of simplifying our grasp of all these variants found across countries around the question of what the EU is or should be. We argued in two steps: first, that we could most simply arrange traditions of thought around the two poles which have served to discuss progress and its relation to Europe, that is whether they are closer to a nation-centred or supranational understanding of the EU. However, as also suggested in the introduction, not all debates about Europe can be framed around the question of substantive progress, at least to the extent that it is framed as a choice between the national and the supranational. Rather, in a second step, we see a set of intellectuals enter the fray who prefer to ask how integration can accommodate diversity per se. In the introduction, we labelled this generic third-way leaning ‘transnationalism’, although the differences of national contexts make it impossible to aggregate all the viewpoints associated with it.

⁵¹ See Mario Telò’s chapter.

⁵² See Jan-Werner Müller, in this volume.

⁵³ See the chapter by John Erik Fossum and Cathrine Holst.

In Praise of Europe's Narrative Diversity

Nevertheless, what we do find is a set of debates which may pit the *same* intellectuals against sovereigntists on one hand, *and* supranationalists on the other.

As we saw, the national(ist) premise works towards denying both the possibility and appropriateness of separating democratic politics from national identity. And yet, the diagnostic of the non-existence of a European unified people and active popular will could, by the same token, create the normative grounds for a federal state as a new political body based on a strong sense of European belonging. Under the label of 'post-nationalism', therefore, two different patterns of European democracy can be articulated: supranationalism and transnationalism, the former reproducing the national trope at the supranational level (one polity/one people), whilst the latter seeks to transcend it. Thus intellectuals writing in the transnational vein can be seen as oriented towards the conceptualization of a pluralistic political order of a new kind; and we see them asking, across the member states discussed in this volume, whether Habermas' plea for a 'core Europe' should not be seen as hedging in the direction of a Euro-nationalist or Euro-patriotic temptation – a controversy which brings together in this book Jan-Werner Müller, Ulrike Liebert, and (via the chapter on Britain) Timothy Garton Ash and Ralf Dahrendorf. Together with the supranational thinkers, the representatives of the still emerging transnational constellation attach – to use Jan-Werner Müller's phrase – 'no ethical significance' to nationality. At the same time, they warn against the exclusionary and homogenizing tendencies stemming from the supranationalist hope of anchoring European democracy in a unified people. This transnational stance is articulated through a 'post- or anti-statist language'⁵⁴ developed in its most sophisticated version in Germany.

A new generation of European intellectuals is thus trying to conceptualize the EU as a polity of a new kind by rejecting both nationalism and supranationalism, and defining functional equivalents of democracy able to resist the transposition of statism to the European polity. They include *inter alia* Pernice's and Teubner's theories of 'multilevel constitutionalism', Robert Cooper's visions of the EU as a 'voluntary empire', the 'Europolity' defended by Bellamy and Castiglione under the ambivalent notion of 'cosmopolitan communitarianism', Kalypso Nicolaïdis' notion of 'European demoi-cracy' and the concept of 'a democratic association (or community) of semi-sovereign nations' developed by Anthony Giddens according to an approach qualified as 'cosmopolitan nationalism'.⁵⁵

Is 'definitional instability' an asset of the European project or a sign of its weakness? This question partly revives the disagreements over whether EU institutional arrangements on the balance of powers, the respective competences of

⁵⁴ See Jan-Werner Müller, in this volume.

⁵⁵ See Georgios Varouxakis, in this volume.

One Story or Many?

the EU and the member states, and so on should be constitutionally settled once and for all; whether its borders should be drawn permanently; and whether the *finalités* of the EU should be laid down by constitutional law. Those who argue for ‘undefinition’ view the EU as a political project in the making that has to remain so for the indefinite future. Illustrating this stance, Petr Pithart depicted European integration as ‘a “story without ending”...where the process of construction constitutes a goal in itself’.⁵⁶ The opposite camp, however, sees its ranks bolstered in times of uncertainty – after half a century, they argue, the EU has reached an equilibrium and constitutional maturity. It is time for Europeans to call Europe by a name, whether federation, association of states, or any other appropriate label; and, if its *finalité* still seems unknown, Europeans must now invent it.

What is the glue that binds us together?

Such reinvention involves deeply contrasting views about what binds European citizens, peoples, and states together. Is the vector of belonging to the EU a common identity, a shared ethos, a core of basic rights, a set of procedures and rules of government, a series of common interests? And depending on the answer, what is Europeanization supposed to achieve?

Here again, a great variety of answers emerge from the intellectual debates analysed in this book. According to a consequentialist approach to European integration, some consider that the EU’s task is to supply social goods and increase economic prosperity, thus reducing the European project to its economic dimension – and provoking the rebuttal of the anti-modernity camp encountered earlier. Instead, emphasizing its political dimension, others view the EU as a ‘democratic anchor’ whose task is to secure and enhance democracy in its member states.⁵⁷ Others expect the EU to promote the mutual recognition of each other’s cultural, economic, and political identity among the nations that compose it. This European ‘politics of recognition’ transcends the liberal model of tolerance and allows each nation to exercise a direct and active influence on others, so as to promote the nation’s particular vision and to spread its specific values.⁵⁸ In this perspective, EU policies can be considered as legitimate to the extent that they adapt to national identities, and not the opposite. More often than not, those who follow this line of reasoning consider that the attempt to consolidate a European identity is both utopian and dangerous. However, one also finds vibrant discourses about the need to construct a new, ‘European-oriented’ collective identity for instance in Poland, Greece, or

⁵⁶ See Muriel Blaive and Nicolas Maslowski’s chapter.

⁵⁷ As shown by Carlos Cloa and Antonio Barroso in their chapter, this vision of the EU is predominant among Spanish intellectuals.

⁵⁸ See, for instance, the chapter on Poland, where Magdalena Góra and Zdzisław Mach show that some intellectuals insist on the need to ‘make Europeans more Polish’.

In Praise of Europe's Narrative Diversity

Turkey. These discourses echo some Italian intellectuals' calls for the creation of a 'new European consciousness' which might frame international relations.

Given the crucial role played by the notion of territory, it is no surprise that the 'embodiment' question eventually leads to the issue of borders: are they to be consolidated or expanded? This issue is discussed in Spain as the 'European dilemma', that is, the need to specify the EU's 'final territorial horizon',⁵⁹ especially with regards to Turkey's accession. As illustrated by the French debate, the emphasis put on the notion of territory entails an opposition to the vision of the EU as 'a heterogeneous, multi-polar Europe with ever-evolving frontiers'.⁶⁰ According to Pierre Manent, 'intangible borders' are needed in order to protect the most vulnerable people, in particular against the pervasive forces of globalization. By contrast, Balibar and his followers warn against the current obsession with borders control, which reveals the exclusionary tendency of the EU as well as signs of a new European racism against third-country nationals, asylum seekers, and migrant workers. In Greece and Poland, meanwhile, we see the 'fear of Balkanization' giving rise to two opposite attitudes: in Greece, it stirs up isolationist reflexes based on the 'foreign surrounding' syndrome, whereas in Poland the same fear prompts the recommendation of reducing the value attached to borders.

The chapters provided in this volume discuss numerous other instances of such definitional wars. Ultimately, we are interested in asking how such contrasting claims, concerns, and anxieties contribute to furthering the debate about the EU. We also investigate how they can be turned into 'reasonable disagreements', thus encouraging thinkers who speak the language of self-criticism and mutual recognition to use it in order to define European integration in a more inclusive and decentred way.

In praise of narrative diversity

Michael Freeden asked at the beginning of this volume whether the 'European stories' that are told across Europe are dedicated to *interpreting* or *changing* the EU; and he is right to highlight the tension between the identity and hermeneutic dimensions of story-telling on the one hand, and the normative task of political theory on the other. This tension appears clearly in civilizational debates about European modernity, where different identity-based discourses seek to preserve or restore what the intellectuals involved see as the 'authentic' sources of the 'European self'. These are 'stories' in the sense conjured up by Michael Freeden and, true, their problematic dimension lies in a normative

⁵⁹ See Carlos Closa and Antonio Barroso, in this volume.

⁶⁰ See the chapter by Justine Lacroix.

One Story or Many?

deficit in rational critique. In this concluding part, we examine the differences between these two divergent modes of debating Europe and what they imply.

Self-clarification versus public justification

Self-clarification corresponds to what Antonio Barroso and Carlos Closa refer to in their chapter on Spain as ‘an “introspective” view’ dedicated to disclosing, clarifying, and emphasizing a country’s or a culture’s distinctive values as they relate to Europe. In this view, any culture – be it ‘ethnic’ or ‘civic’ – is to be conceived of as a shared fund of semantic contents, as a sediment of historical, religious, or ethical experiences that take the form of a ‘legacy’, or – in Daniel Barbu’s words⁶¹ – ‘a cultural repository of meanings’. Such viewpoints are oriented towards promoting the distinctiveness or uniqueness of the community’s *ethos*. The search for authenticity leads to a ‘politics of survival’, the purpose of which is to protect what makes the community so specific vis-à-vis some ‘significant others’ – the rival neighbour discussed above or, for Europe as a whole, the US, Turkey, or ‘Islam’ – and to preserve its cultural and/or moral integrity in the face of external (and, occasionally, internal) influences which might threaten it. Obviously, this approach goes hand in hand with a civilizational view and a moralistic definition of the EU as an entity loaded with a set of substantial ethical values, in particular a Christian definition of the good life. In all, the self-clarification approach is both foundational in nature, since it focuses on the founding features of a given culture, and defensive in practice since their protection is a predominant preoccupation, far beyond the search for fundamental or social justice.

It should be noted that the self-clarification approach may be applied to the nation, to a regional identity, to Europe as a civilization, or even to the EU *qua* polity. On all these scales, political integration is grasped through the prism of self-definition, that is the elucidation of what is genuinely *constitutive* of collective identity. According to this communitarian perspective, the ‘European community’ should be entrenched in a common tradition of values, virtues, and spiritual traits to be cherished for giving a ‘substance’ to the European project. In other words, this approach to European integration, often designed against liberal individualism, paves the way to a community-building process devoted to the stabilization of a ‘thick’ collective identity.⁶²

On the other hand, one finds intellectual debates about the EU which are oriented towards legitimation issues. This line of reasoning (see for instance Eriksen 2009) can be seen as ‘justificatory’: not in the sense that its representatives are unquestioning supporters of the present-day EU, but because they are

⁶¹ See Daniel Barbu, in this volume.

⁶² See, for instance, Etzioni’s (2007) communitarian conceptualization of European integration.

In Praise of Europe's Narrative Diversity

primarily concerned with the problem of finding a basis for 'public justification'⁶³ based on rules, principles, and norms that might be viewed as criteria for critical assessment of state action and the legitimacy of the polity. Differently put, this approach leaves room for competing normative viewpoints on the choices and trade-offs associated with integration to be set against each other in the public domain. Debates in this vein are thus 'normative' in nature, including political, legal, economic, institutional, and constitutional issues, since they express disagreements about the path that should be followed in order to reach a just, fair, or 'sustainable' integration within the EU.

In this realm, disagreements are about what balance is best to be struck between different political purposes (e.g. social peace versus international peace, redistribution versus growth, power versus equality considerations, political unity versus respect for national, cultural, and linguistic diversity, etc.). They are also about which institutions, rules, and procedures are to support such a process, and about how various actors ought to participate in it. Perhaps the most fundamental divide here is between those whose legitimation strategies are based on applying to the greatest extent possible the pattern of nation-building, and those who stress the openness of the political project (Beck and Grande 2007; Grande 2009: 54).

These two lines of argument follow divergent logics. It is one thing to attempt to clarify the buried sources of the 'European self',⁶⁴ deemed – rightly or wrongly – to be the grounds of our common 'Europeanness'; but it is quite another to look for a basis of public justification to debate European integration as a political process and project. The differences between these two tasks lie in their respective normative and critical potential. The self-clarification approach, moreover, suffers from at least three normative and pragmatic deficits. First, when exploited for 'identification' ends, the mode of narration is limited to articulating, expressing, and even reproducing a background of shared meanings. Second, the 'common values' frequently invoked may not be so common as might be expected. As illustrated by the failed attempt to refer to Christian heritage during the debate on the late Constitutional Treaty, there is little if any agreement on the various components of a European civilization. Consequently, any call to common values may spark off conflicts between European societies (Grande 2009: 52). Third, reifying the 'European mentality' might ossify oppositions that hinge on the modernity issue (Lacroix 2009: 141). This is what Habermas seems to have in mind when he deplors the 'hysterical call for the

⁶³ A number of political theorists, including John Rawls, Jürgen Habermas, and Bruce Ackerman in one way or another ground their theory within the framework of 'public justification'. For a study of the concept and a critical analysis of its use in the field of contemporary political theory, see: D'Agostino 1996.

⁶⁴ Through this phrase, we of course allude to Charles Taylor's seminal book, *Sources of the Self: The Making of the Modern Identity* (1989) which falls within the 'self-clarification' approach.

One Story or Many?

defence of our values' which is apparently nothing 'but a semantic armament against an unspecified domestic enemy'.⁶⁵

It is precisely this crucial tension between the descriptive and (implicit) prescriptive dimensions of self-clarification which takes us back to the question of the theoretical and practical status of the EU's 'narrative diversity'.

What is at stake? Unity through diversity

The competing visions of Europe represent an inescapable element of the EU's political life. At the same time, is 'narrative diversity' more than a mere *fact*? More precisely, could it be considered as a *practice*? Here, a practical approach to 'narrative diversity' raises the question as to whether the 'European stories' over which public intellectuals – and, partly influenced by them, wider sections of public opinion – agree or disagree could provide the basis for a transnational deliberation about European integration. In other words, beyond *intergovernmental* bargains, is the EU still amenable to *inter-societal* debates devoted to public discussion of the similarities and differences between competing visions of the EU among its citizenry?⁶⁶

Insofar as the permissive character of the EU project is increasingly elusive, encouraging the 'reasonable confrontation' of European narratives has become a more urgent task. However, this requires framing the antagonism between narratives as clearly as possible. We must therefore start by shedding the illusion of narrative unanimity. It is indeed pointless to seek one single and official 'European grand narrative', now more than ever, as politicians try to accommodate the many contradictory grounds of existence for the EU. In this respect, we consider that the very idea of 'narrative diversity' has a positive role to play in fostering the EU's democratic life. Therefore, by way of conclusion, let us suggest what a public process of 'confrontation-cum-legitimation' might look like.

Such a process should represent an alternative to the collective self-clarification approach. Indeed, we should abandon the criterion of 'narrative truth'⁶⁷ as we internalize the idea that 'reasonable pluralism', including a range of divergent views about what brings us together, should be a fact of life in a transnational democracy like the EU. Here, the idea is to break away from the correlation between identity and legitimacy, that is, to 'refuse to tie Europe's legitimacy to an identification logic' (Lacroix 2009). This orientation is intended to take into account that 'the glue that binds the EU together is not a shared identity; it is, rather, a shared project and shared objectives' (Nicolaidis

⁶⁵ The article originally appeared in German in the *Kölner Stadtanzeiger* on 8 November 2006, and in French in *Le Monde* on 28 December 2006.

⁶⁶ For a preliminary discussion see Nicolaidis and Pélabay 2008.

⁶⁷ As Rawls explains, 'holding a political conception as true', and 'for that reason alone' as the one suitable for public agreement 'is exclusive, even sectarian, and so likely to foster political division': see Rawls 1993: 129.

In Praise of Europe's Narrative Diversity

2004a: 103). As a result, we consider that a 'processual scenario'⁶⁸ focused on public justification should be prioritized over a substantialist one, so as to exploit Europe's 'narrative diversity' in a dynamic and inclusive manner.

Importantly, the latter conditions – i.e. dynamism and inclusiveness – rule out two common understandings of the 'narrative' mode. Firstly, they preclude the political or managerial use of 'story-telling' as a technique to control and manipulate peoples' behaviours.⁶⁹ Instead, a public process of 'confrontation-cum-legitimation' is intended to transform the political debate on the EU by creating a common deliberative space precisely through disagreements. Secondly, our emphasis on the processual dimension thus conflicts with the communitarian concept of the narrative self.⁷⁰ To begin with, a processual model is predicated on a fluid and plural notion of identities. As stated by Ricœur (1995: 6), 'narrative identity takes part in the story's movement, in the dialectic between order and disorder', and remains open to criticism and revision. Thus conceived, the narrative mode gives rise to self-reflexive practices, and points to a politics of mutual recognition. This is what Jean-Marc Ferry conceptualizes through what he qualifies as 'an ethics of reconstruction': 'the strictly procedural ideal of reconstructive justice consists in an open, cooperative confrontation that is self-critical on both sides, listening to all of the stories that narrate conflicting experiences and understanding the possible interpretations that we might give to them in a comprehensive way' (Ferry 2000: 147; authors' translation).

How, then, might such a confrontational process unfold? A first step consists in assuming that the various European narratives may act as so many 'comprehensive interpretations' to be publicly discussed and questioned across borders, which in turn calls for a much more ambitious and systematic work of *translation* across borders than we see today. To go beyond a purely hermeneutic and contextualist – most likely conservative – enterprise of self-clarification, the 'authenticity claims'⁷¹ advanced through competing narratives ought to be translated into *normative statements* about different options for integration. Such translation is made possible through the 'public use of reason', that is, a

⁶⁸ This is a scenario of the kind which Jean-Marc Ferry (2005) proposes under the name of 'consensus through confrontation'.

⁶⁹ For a fascinating and very well-researched critical study on 'storytelling', see Salmon 2009.

⁷⁰ A version of this concept is provided by the notion of 'cognitive self' as expounded by Sandel 1982 against the liberal, 'voluntarist' approach to identity. The constitutive role of the narrative exploration of one's prior attachments to community is also at the core of MacIntyre's concept of narrative: 'What I am . . . is in key part what I inherit, a specific part that is present to some degree in my present. I find myself part of a history and that is generally to say, whether I like it or not, whether I recognise it or not, one of the bearers of a tradition' (MacIntyre 1984: 221). For a critique of the communitarian concept of the narrative self, see Hunyadi 1992.

⁷¹ Here we refer to Habermas 1984: 8–23, where he distinguishes between different forms of 'validity claims', namely: truth, rightness, and authenticity claims. The latter claims pertain to the particularistic values and cultural integrity of a given community or historical tradition, while 'rightness' claims pertain to a legal-political sphere of public deliberation.

One Story or Many?

public deliberation where ‘reasonableness’ means respecting principles such as reflexivity, equal consideration, and mutual recognition. As Michael Freedon rightly pointed out, the aim is not to agree on what it means to *be* European; instead, we can agree on explaining to each other how we each conceive of the European project.

To be sure, the process of translation we must confront represents a triple challenge. First, and most obviously, if one is to affect a transnational sphere, there is the challenge of translation between national languages, traditions, and political cultures so as to build a discursive framework within which to debate the sense and nature of European integration. Second, we need better translation between various disciplinary and professional spheres that correspond to different intellectual vocabularies and epistemological maps. Thus, for instance, the ethical-existential realm is concerned with the ‘good’ life and the ‘good’ citizen; in the normative realm, we speak the language of constitutionalism, the rule of law, and, more broadly, share concerns about the fate of modernity; in the world of experts and bureaucracy, we dissect and shape regulations, decision-making procedures, and modes of governance; and in the political perspective, we engage in a pragmatic search for a new type of democratic polity. In short, we need clues and words to speak across, rather than over, these various languages and spheres. The third and final challenge, which to some extent subsumes the other two, is that of translation between the worlds of scholarship and of politics. Here, we need to find conduits and bridges for stark images and subtle arguments. The *political* message that can inspire the journey ahead for a European Union that is perhaps at last ready to look beyond its confines may well be a compound of our European stories, a sparkling of their various insights and inspirational powers. Among these stories, European citizens can find the material for their own individual interpretations of the common project. Perhaps scholars themselves can learn to translate and channel their own disagreements into the message of mutual recognition, deep diversity, and demoi-cracy at the heart of the EU.

Some may argue that the ‘narrative restraints’ that we advocate in the name of reasonable pluralism tend simply to cover up the most profound causes of contention, and to limit drastically the range of contestation over the EU; others may fear that the focus on ‘reasonable disagreements’ precludes the achievement of consensus, and eschews the goal of ever closer union. We believe that what is at stake is of a different nature: when incorporated into this confrontational practice, the various ‘European stories’ that we have explored lose their self-evident dimension as well as their purely contextual validity. They become part of a larger multi-faceted whole, part of a logic that we can only wish for, a logic of reflexive appropriation, decentring, and mutual learning. If we can amplify the echoes between them and hear them together in a new kind of political polyphony intended to take the competing visions of Europe seriously, we may start to turn ‘unity in diversity’ into more than just a pleasing motto.