

Is a European People Possible?

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Abstract: The present work is an attempt to think the potentials of the European people. It takes a detour into the philosophical, political and economic theories and practices of the past and contemporary Europe. It also discusses the political proposals for Europe and their limits.

Keywords: EU, Spinoza, political bodies, common affect, imperium, people

"We think that it is possible to advance towards the possibility of constructing a European popular sovereignty" does not finish to affirm the leftist Europeanism. It will be granted without difficulty that it is a very beautiful thought. But we ask what makes it something else than a petition of principle. Once reunited, right-wing euro-federalism and left-wing Europeanism have in common that they want something in the exclusive mode of wishful thinking, and without ever questioning the conditions of possibility, nor to wish to submit the desire for analysis.

Submitted, however, it will be necessary, except to renew the adventure of the euro, an allegedly economic construction but tarnished from the beginning by an irremediable lack of political thought - the idea that the sincerity of wanting to, could palliate the absence of a reflection most often devoted to the full-scale experimentation of political *wishful thinking* to catastrophic destinies... But the idea of a European popular sovereignty is at least a proposal with serious consequences, and especially of requisitions, which will hardly be satisfied for any justification of a "we think that ..."

What will be granted without difficulty to the leftist Europeanism is that its horizon of desire is worth it and that, if the national solutions do not deserve the discredit for what overwhelms them, there is always material to think about the transformation of our present political forms, there is no reason to consider that nation-states in their present circumscriptions are the last word in history, and that there's a lot to be gained from considerations on overtaking it - but provided that one sees there first of all an intellectual site of first magnitude rather than a hazardous political enterprise in which to throw oneself headlong without the least preliminary.

In any case, without falling into Kantian teleology from the cosmopolitan¹ point of view, it is true that there is an intrinsic interest in envisaging the constitution of political groups as vast as possible, interest that, the argument of peace put to on the other hand, one could formulate in terms not Kantian but Spinozist: interests of power. Very generally speaking, one could say that there are profits of power for individuals in contact with more numerous and more diverse powers: all things

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¹ Kant 2016.

being equal (and this is an important clause!), it enriches its affective complexion of being in contact with more varied complexions, that is to say in contact with other ways of thinking and feeling, and the variety of complexions encountered (or encounterable) is favored by the size of the population, and even more by the fusion of formerly constituted² people. Power profits equally from the point of view of totality, not at all here in the classical sense of economic or geopolitical power, but in the Spinozist sense of the power of a collective body, is the extent of the spectrum of its affectabilities such as that it results from the variety of the affectabilities of its constituent parts. The complexion of the whole is more powerful in proportion to the diversity of its parts, that is to say, of the fact of composing among them a more varied individual affectability. A collective body composed by a greater variety is richer in ways of being affected, and hence in the power to affect - and that is the same power for Spinoza.

For all that, the political groups or, in this case, the perspective of extension, by composition, of the political bodies, meet the constitutive problem that one could formulate as such: to find the optimum defined by the maximization of the benefits of variety under constraint of overall coherence. In other words: to arbitrate between the gains of positive externality of variety and the costs of dyscompositions or centrifugal tendencies - which follow from the setting in coexistence of parties whose reports of mutual compatibility are not guaranteed *ex ante*. It is this type of question, linked to the powerful viability of a composition of initial heterogeneities, that must imperatively be posed in order to decide the possibility of overtaking abroad. For a long time, the European vulgate has for a long time held the perspective of the United States of Europe, the present treaties being only a transitional stage on the path of "an ever closer union", an adequately vague formulation, but whose filigree was, however, quite clear - at least until the shocks of the constitutional referendums of 2005, and of course of the current crisis.

The dead ends of the cosmopolitan-federal idea

The idea of the United States of Europe, however, is by no means self-evident. And one will take the measure to this fact rather curious, and even frankly paradoxical, that there is on this question of the European political construction, a whole Kantian trend, generally of the most optimistics when it is necessary to consider the post-national overtaking, which claims a "realistic" (unusual!) position to... reject the idea of a European state³. The objection of Jean-Marc Ferry is very representative of this

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2 I admit without difficulty that all this must seem a little hermetic and do not speak much to the reader who is not used to Spinozistic problems of the body and the union of bodies. On this subject, and in the absence of power to be able to say more here, the best is to read Sévérac 2011.

3 It is true that Kant, in the Idea of a universal history from a cosmopolitan point of view, expressly declares himself against the project of the world state, and gives a completely different meaning (say, to make it simple that of a free cooperative association of states) to the cosmopolitan perspective.

trend, against the European constructivism of state starts from a finding - whose relevance is obvious - the disappearance of the "instruments" that historically had permitted the construction of the peoples and nations in the case of European nation-states⁴: neither the school medium, irreversibly misguided in professional formation, nor the military obligation, fainting at the same time as the army of conscription, nor the fiscal obligation, circumscribed by multiple channels of escape, are no longer available to support, if not by an extended national construction process, at least in-depth integration. In any case, continues Jean-Marc Ferry, it is the State that has "produced" the nations, but... there is no European State - and one thinks at that moment that one would have imagined the European Kantian optimism for once to be more sensitive to the charms of the dialectic...

Instead of a State in the full sense of the term, the best that Europe could hope for would be of the order of a cosmopolitan construction, but in the strict Kantian sense of the idea, that is to say, articulating internal political rights (*jus civitatis*), a law of the people (*jus gentium*), a name which designates (*counter-intuitively*) all the procedures regulating inter-state relations (in the usual way of treaties), surmounted by a cosmopolitical right (*jus cosmopoliticum*), but extended far beyond the narrow Kantian definition as a right of universal hospitality and the circulation of people, to include fundamental rights (such as human rights, enforceable by individuals to their own states) and individual rights of political participation, transferable from one European nation to another.

But one thing is the definition of fundamental rights, another is the institutional arrangement for concretely pursue *common policies* - economic and social policies in specific. But from this point of view - and there is a manifest Kantian relapse - nothing is proposed but the cooperative goodwill of the States, probably led by the maxims of practical reason, and penetrated by the higher interests of harmony inter-States, to guarantee the coherence of a federative European construction (more than federal: a federation of nation States respectively maintained in their integrity, rather than a federal State strictly speaking). It will take nothing less than the mysterious forces of practical reason to hold the State powers to commitments in paper, and to make them conform to rules even if they are their own. Spinoza, more lucid, states in these terms in the *Theologico-Political Treatise* about the fatal instability of bilateral or multilateral contracts: "while men promise and commit to keep their word with assured marks of sincerity, no one, however, can with certainty trust others *if nothing else is added to the promise*, since everyone, by right of nature, can act deceitfully, and is bound to respect pacts only by hope of greater good or for fear of greater evil"⁵. And to add immediately: "we

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4 Ferry 2005a; Ferry 2005b.

5 Spinoza, XVI, 7, 1999, emphasizes mine.

conclude that a pact can have strength only in regard to its utility; this one removed, the pact is at the same time suppressed". For example, in 2003, Germany and France cease to find a clear usefulness in respect of the Stability Pact - and are free from it at once (*Nota Bene*: so we did not wait for Greece to sit on European economic treaties...)

As the advent of practical reason is unfortunately not yet on the agenda of the day, it is necessary to accept the Spinozian idea that agents only hold themselves commitments if they are determined by their interest or *well by an external force* that will constrain them. The great absentee of the cosmopolitan construction of the distant successors of Kant, attached to the idea of a European federation of nation-States, is the force that enforces the commitments - the Anglo-Saxons have a word to say it which we miss: *enforcement*. Where is the *enforcement* authority, the authority that gives strength to the oaths on paper, and what is its real power? As long as this question has not been answered, it is to be feared that any political architecture conceived in a chamber remains null and void - unless surreptitiously summon forces outside of the proper political community, in the manner of the present eurozone which has instituted the capital market as a third power of *enforcement*, it is true of an unparalleled power...

Enforcement, imperium, State

Except for this kind of particularly vicious recourse, the *lastingly* force that holds the parties involved in association, that is what, *very generally*, one could call a State - but, and this is the important point, without prejudice to extremely varied forms that it may take. Where does this force come from, and what is its origin in the *last instance*? Spinoza's answer is as clear as it is astonishing: this force, in the last analysis, is... ours, that which he calls the "power of the multitude" (*potentia multitudinis*), conceived as a composition of individual powers, but as it is empowered to dominate each of the individual powers. Composite power incommensurably superior to the power of its components, the *potentia multitudinis* is the principle of an effect of immanent transcendence by which the product of composition rises above its constituents, to dominate them all, even though, in the last analysis, it comes only from them⁶. It is this immanent power of the multitude that the institutions of State capture and from which they derive the power to reign, according to a mechanism of dispossession that had already been glimpsed by La Boetie: the eyes with which the state is watching you, he said, are your eyes! The arms with which it strikes you are your arms! - but in the *last analysis*, that is to say, at the end of an invisible capture that separates the multitude from itself ... and turns against itself its own power!

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⁶ See Lordon 2013.

This is the power that Spinoza makes the principle of the State: "this right that defines the power of the multitude, I call *imperium*" (*Political Treaty*, II, 17), and it is useful to preserve for a moment the Latin term of origin, *imperium*, to show the significant diversity, the non-antagonistic plurality of the translations that it can receive: "sovereignty" for Charles Ramond⁷, "State" for Pierre-François Moreau⁸. This oscillation is in itself conceptually interesting, then leads to a possible definition of the State in the straight line of (TP, II, 17). State: the institutionalized field of exercise of the imperium, or sovereignty, this right that defines the power of the multitude.

The advantage of this definition, which is very conceptual and abstract, consists precisely in the fact that, by its very generality, it does not prejudice in any way the many forms that the exercise of *imperium* can take: the circulations and captures of power of the multitude can, *a priori*, flow into the arrangements of the centralized unitary state, of the federal state... or of any other form that a fertile political imagination could conceive, that of History, for example, which is not lacking.

In any case, Jean-Marc Ferry is right to clearly mark the difference between the federal State and the cosmopolitan⁹ project of the federation of nation States, and we now know exactly what separates the second from the first: the composition of power capable of *supporting* a real power of enforcement, that is, of *actually* holding the constituent parts of a political whole to its common law. Where there is this power, there is a State; where it is absent, there is none. And correlatively: in one case viability, on the other, chronic instability and the permanent threat of decomposition in case of "stress" by exogenous or endogenous shocks.

If it can at the very least work towards a transnational consolidation of fundamental rights - and again... the question of *enforcement* is not less acute about them - the cosmopolitical constitution of a European federation of nation-States does not solve in itself the much more prosaic problem, but the much more significant problem of the conduct of common policies. If we therefore continue to explore an alternative term to national configurations, it is not at all certain that this unusual "modest"¹⁰ Kantianism offers us a viable solution in the "federative"¹¹ configuration. And if the European cosmopolitan federation turns out to be unviable, perhaps it is necessary to resume, strictly speaking, "the question of the European State" (title of the book by Jean-Marc Ferry) that its author even closes rather quickly by declaring it without any possible solution. In fact,

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⁷ Spinoza 2005.

⁸ Spinoza 1999.

⁹ Always in the Kantian sense of the term.

¹⁰ But, let us say it again, rigorously.

¹¹ As opposed to federalist.

I have no intention of claiming here that it has one - nor that it does not have one! My only - conceptual - project is to propose the terms in which the problem of the European State could be formulated anew, and these terms are those of a general economy of power and sovereignty.

One of Jean-Marc Ferry's objections to a hypothetical European State paradoxically offers a good starting point. The objection emphasizes the impossibility of going beyond the current nation-States and their respective historical legacies to merge them into a "moral community"¹² which, alone attached to a legal community with which it coincides, can form an authentic political community. It is in this field that the problem must be unfolded, for example, by starting from a surprisingly reserved term for business law, whereas, appropriately adapted, it would suit political philosophy so well: the *affectio societatis*, this personal affinity that the fund raisers who come together to form a capital society... and with this important difference in the present case that a "society", rigorously understood, is only a *collection* of individuals when it comes to thinking here is of the order of a political *community*, that is to say, a collective *totality*, citizen in this case, but more than the sum of its parts, irreducible to a simple juxtaposition of "members", therefore not bound by an *affectio societatis* but say, analogically, by an *affectio civitatis*, which is an *affectio communalis*.

Peuple et affect commun

In order not to succumb to the wager of claiming to add anything relevant to the enormity of what has already been said about the nation, there is a possible way of circumventing (or doubling) the abundant historiography of the formation of the nations by more conceptual ways and in particular, starting from this firm reminder that Spinoza makes in the *theological-political treatise*: "Nature does not create a people". It will first be noted that one can not break more categorically with the essentialist or ethnicizing conceptions of the nation. We will then see a rather good news: nothing in this matter is fixed for eternity because, if it is not nature but, let's say for short, that history makes them, this means that just as they are, the people can get rid of themselves, and also be rebuild themselves. In particular, there is nothing to prevent us from considering the hypothesis of the formation of a people's people - it is even, as Hobsbawm¹³ has shown, a configuration commonly practiced by history. So, of course, it is not obvious that the idea of a European people is *anything but* absurd.

Nature does not create a people, so as says Spinoza, but no more the adhesions of contractualist rationality - according to the model of the voluntary, free and transparent association that has given their

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12 Ferry 2005b

13 Hobsbawm 1992.

character to the various schemes of the "social contract". So what? TP¹⁴, VI, 1: "Since men are led by affect more than by reason, it follows that the multitude naturally agrees and wants to be led as by one soul under the guidance not of reason but of some common affect". The political communities, the national communities, are essentially passionate communities.

There are, however, several pitfalls in this statement. One must beware in the first place of the singular: the common affect that offers to the community (the assembled multitude) its cohesive principle is a *composite* affect - or an affective compound. It is *about* ways: ways of feeling, of thinking and judging - of judging good and bad, right and wrong, licit and illicit. The common affect is, for its part, the principle of a moral collective order. But to what extension? Judging good and bad, but of what? In what ways? Of which delimited set of actions? Spinoza certainly does not say that the ways of judging everything must be common! The *Theological-Political Treatise* even explicitly says the opposite, which is explicitly designed to defend the freedom of opinions - so as their differences. There is consequently no totalitarianism of the common affect, no aim of absolute homogenization of the multitude. Moreover, the strict stato-nationalist point of view tends to systematically underestimate the cultural variance and the internal moral, including in the case of nation-States deemed to be very unitary, cultural diversity correlated (among others) to geographical diversity. Let us think, for example, in the case of France to the differences of ways of the North and the South, mountain "countries" and "countries" of sea, oceanic sea or closed sea, to say nothing of all overdeterminations of geography by history, etc. To say that there is no totalitarianism of the common affect is to recognize from the outset, that the collective passional complexion is necessarily an articulation of the diverse and the common. But a *hierarchical* articulation: an articulation of the various *under* the common. It is the quasi-tautological definition of a collective entity, by the factual criterion of its mere existence, which poses the primacy of the common over the various. Without this primacy which holds together the various parts, no collective persists but, at best, the simple temporary coexistence of the diverse under the species of the unbound juxtaposition - and most often the re-scattering.

Common Global Affects, common local affects (or the data of the viability of a collective body)

The maintenance of the existence of the collective entity thus passes through a certain power relation between "global" common affects and "local" common affects, lower-scale common affects - and it is necessarily forms - constituent subsets of membership - where the "local"

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14 *Traité politique*, here in the translation of Charles Ramond.

is defined not only in geographical terms but also, for example, in terms of social (political and ideological) space. Thus, in addition to (regional) subproperties that are properly regionalist, there are common (under-) affects of social position, defined in particular in terms of material interests - what might be called common class affects. The overall entity therefore holds only if the global common affect outweighs the local common affects, the affect of belonging to the whole over the affects of belonging to the parts.

The primacy of the common over the various is then measured by the degree of problematization, or rather *deproblematization* of the local. The local can never be quite so *deproblematized*. But it can be to a considerable degree. For example, certain regions of France tolerate the dynamics of economic involution, cultural attrition and desertification without following the formation of violent local reactionary passions, in any case nothing that could call into question the global (national) affect of community amongst the populations concerned. Thus, the Creuse or the Ardèche accept in the heart of France declines, and even abandonments, that no nation would accept within an integrated Europe, and it is so only by the balance in each case between global common affects and local common (sub) affects. Conversely, the persistence of automatic interregional financial transfers, linked to the dominant weight of the central budget, objectively leads the richest regions to support the poorest, but without these contributions being experienced by the contributors as a *contingent* burden of which they would have been unjustly ballasted, by this way to feed an acrimonious protest.

For not posing the problem in these terms, the speeches that call with tremolos for the "solidarity" (financial) of the European peoples ("we should show solidarity with Greece") or, on the contrary, which stigmatize the "selfishness" of Germany, is condemned to the last degree of political inanity - by dissolution in an appalling moralistic broth. In truth, these discourses are the very symptom of the European Union's political inadequacy because, precisely, internal financial transfers to a genuinely integrated political community (and whatever the form of this integration) are no longer the effect of any moral impulse of the populations concerned but that of a political institutionalization granted by the very fact of their common global membership. We can say, if we really want, that the Ile-de-France region is "solidary" with the Limousin region, but provided we do not stay too long in this moral wonder, except to miss the important point: if they are solidarity, the inter-regional financial transfers are mainly of *instituted* solidarity... that is to say of politics. Of the policy allowed by a certain configuration of collective affects, notably by the primacy of the national affect on the regional affects, as it deproblematizes, and hence demoralizes, transfers that take place out of the consciousness or the attention of their agents - it can not be said, for example, that this is the case of the financial aid that Germany pays to Greece and other countries in the South in difficulty (and it can not be said either that

these deproblematizations can be regarded as irreversible achievements: reproblemation is always likely to take place again, as in Italy, in the relations of the North and the South, a characteristic sign that the unity of the national totality is dangerously put to the test).

Correlatively, it makes no sense to stigmatize the "egoism" of the Germans. Because we do not see by what miracle the Germans should feel an immediate feeling of community with other populations with whom... they do not make notoriously community - except in the *wishful thinking* of the Europeanist spirits. It is the lack of community, that is to say, the common affect of global membership, which leads to problematization - to live as a problem, as something that is not self-evident - private contributions of political institutionalization and consequently, returned to the impetus of morality - "solidarity" - and ... to its hazards. That the Germans (or any other European people in their position as creditor) consider that there is room for debate, perhaps even to conceal, concerning a financial effort that does not enter into their contract social - all the more, if one is to remember that even the efforts that enter through the tax are subject to sharp and permanent rediscussions¹⁵ - it is still the most legitimate thing of the world, and we do not see in the name of what, these problematizations, including reticence, should be the subject of a moral stigmatization. But as always, occupying the magisterial ground of uplifting values, and moving the problems there, is the best way not to see the profound political shortcomings of the non-European community, "Union" of words but certainly not of fact, since it would be necessary for it to be a European common affect superior than the national common affects - and that it was obviously unable to produce it so far. There is no third term: either parties recognize a common membership strong enough that transfers can be politically instituted, and hence deproblematized (as much as they can be because taxation, which is the form institute of solidarity, is always subject to rediscussion); this membership does not exist, and these transfers are abandoned to the vagaries of morality known as "solidarity" - but while we are not surprised at their volatility, and sometimes their (predictable) bad will.

Thus, and almost tautologically, a collective entity exists, and does not remain in existence, unless the global common affects prevail over the "regional" common affects. There is, of course, no guarantee that these scales will always remain in their interval-instructions, and nothing excludes that the power ratio between the global affect and the lower-order affects does not come under its critical thresholds - whatever the nature of these affects of lower rank, and not only local in the geographical sense of the term. If for example, it is an under-affect class that prevails, we have a revolutionary civil war - the Russian revolution expelled a part of the population with which it was no longer possible to maintain the global

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¹⁵With the exception that these are generally conducted on the basis of social stratification data and not local divisions.

entity, the Versailles exterminate or deport the Communards. If they are properly regionalist sub-affects, we have a split and the formation of two or more peoples from one: a hot version of Yugoslavia; a cold version of Czechoslovakia - and who does not see, at the very heart of present-day Europe, the powerful work of these centrifugal regionalist forces, in Spain (Catalonia), Italy (Lombardy), Belgium (Flanders), the United Kingdom (Scotland). In any case, it is the old assemblage that is undone by the erosion of its cohesive (affective) principle, dominated in power by the tendencies to locality and divergence, and the possibility of decomposition is permanently on the horizon of any political community.

The possibility of an "supplementary step"

What about the inverse process of extension by composition? This is typically the problem faced by a hypothetical European State, a problem of the formation of a common affect under which a European multitude could come to be assembled, and which would be powerful enough to dominate the national common affects - becomes local. Or, as always: compose the various under a new common higher rank. What is, or what are the objects on which could precipitate the common affect constitutive of a European people? The hypothesis sketched here holds that one of these objects could be the very idea of popular sovereignty, that is to say, that which is deeply in crisis in the present European Union and which, conversely, could be the lever of its regeneration. The apparent paradox perhaps comes from the common vision, which starts from a constituted people, previously given, to go to their sovereignty as a subsequent predicate. Whereas it would be here, conversely, to conceive the active claim of sovereignty by a community as the *operator of its constitution in people*.

Indeed, we can hold popular sovereignty, that is to say the assertion of communities as masters of their own destiny, for the fundamental fact of political modernity (in fact for its very definition), as it has historically developed on the European continent. And paraphrasing Spinoza, one could say that it is the primary political affect of these societies, their primary political passion. One can then wonder if this idea of claiming for popular sovereignty is not shared to the point of being constitutive of a European political imaginary and, consequently, the possible matter of a sufficient common affect. The question of its sufficiency is obviously central. But for the moment we can already note this. Firstly, this is not an abstract model in which, *ex nihilo*, the position of a claim to collective sovereignty alone would have to support the formation of the political community. It is a *historical* situation, that is to say a current configuration *but carried by a past*, endowed as such with its power of determination. But we find contradictory things in this power of determination. For if the different European peoples were constituted by him in the objective difference of their complexions, by other traits they have also been made quite near -

perhaps *enough* so that the common sovereign claim can constitute the *additional step* that constitutes them as a people of peoples.

Secondly, it was necessary to go through sufficiently abstract and general conceptualizations of the State and the nation to avoid that their definitions remain in the orbit of their present historical achievements, both contingent... and always capable of reinvention. It was particularly necessary not to fall into the conceptual misconception of Ulrich Beck for whom "what is called into question in the field of political theory, it is the national paradigm as well as any approach to the European question pertaining to a methodological nationalism"¹⁶. Obviously, but it should not be too much to ask a supposed "political theoretician", one comes out of this misinterpretation only on the condition of having for "State" and "nation" concepts sufficiently general to admit a plurality (moreover indeterminate *ex ante*) forms susceptible of being deployed by history, beyond what we have before our eyes say for two centuries. Thus, as one can call "State" any institutional realization of the *imperium*, "that right which defines the power of the multitude", in the same way we can call "nation", or say "nation in the modern sense of the term" all collective claim of the principle of sovereignty (to the extent of a domain largely covering the necessities of common life¹⁷). It is necessary to repeat the specific operation accomplished by this definition of the "modern nation", in fact in the direct line of the French Revolution, by reversing the relation which subsequently predicts of sovereignty a previously constituted community into a relation which *produces* the (*political*) community from a first claim of sovereignty.

Under these definitions of the nation and the State, there is a *priori* no need to abandon the national-State paradigm to think about a possible future of the European Union. For, except for the cosmopolitan-federative hypothesis, but of which we have seen what condemns it without appeal (the lack of *enforcement*), modern politics does not come out, and can not leave the nation-state - provided of course that one understands it sufficiently abstractly - with which it is essentially connected. There is no political ensemble without a force to hold its parts to its common law, this force is the *imperium*, in its Spinozist definition, and *imperium* is the general name of "State". As for the nation, in any case in the modern sense of the term, it is defined by the common desire to master a collective destiny - and from this point of view, even the most horizontal, the most a-centric, the most reticular, the least representative, should still be called "nation"!

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¹⁶ Beck 2003, p. 80 ; see also this in Habermas 2000.

¹⁷ A bowling club can declare itself "sovereign" but, covering only the activity of playing bowl, it would have a hard time claiming to be a nation...

The conditions of passionate possibility of a European "law of the majority"

There remains the question of the power sufficiency of a European common affect crystallized around the idea of popular sovereignty, around the idea of a "decision in common". The criterion of this sufficiency resides in the ability to remake the groupings, and to trace the lines of division, to replace the present dominant divisions, which are the compartmental divisions of the present nations, with transversal divisions: of social positions, of classes, of ideological affiliations, etc. But restructuring the groups and to redo the lines is by no means self-evident - and in any case is within the reach of any decree. In a hypothetical European state, as in any current nation-State for that matter, would remain a conflictual intersection between the common affects of global membership and the common affects of lower-level groupings - but which ones? Common social-political affections or common regional (i.e., veto-national) affects? In other words, given the differences and reconciliations already produced by history, can a claim for popular sovereignty on a European scale constitute the *additional step* sufficient to produce a common affect, itself capable of to induce the formation of common transversal political sub-affects, which would outweigh the common-national sub-affects, and would be dominated by the European neo-national common affect? Which is nothing other than the question of the passionate conditions of the acceptance of the majority law.

To this - decisive - question, the answer is ... indeterminate! It is never given only by history, but *ex post*. The whole question is whether certain current national idiosyncrasies, objects of powerful local common affects, would tolerate being challenged under a law of the European majority - which could be the case if it concerned areas of common policy. Haphazardly: economic policy, including monetary policy. Or the thought experiment of imagining the reopening of the principles of monetary policy, i.e. the status of the ECB, thus, the possibility that it is no longer independent, the existence and level of inflation targets, the impossibility or the possibility of monetary financing of fiscal deficits, the constraints of balancing budgets, etc. Question: Germany, which imposed its obsessions and its own monetary dogma on the whole euro area, would it accept, in these matters which have for it a character of quasi-sanctity, to comply with a law of the European majority who would contradict it? It is the question of idiosyncrasies, that is to say, common local affects that is posed here. All is well as long as these idiosyncrasies can be accommodated in subsidiarity dispositives. The problem arises when they touch on areas of common interest - notoriously the case with regard to economic policy and monetary policy.

For those who consider that the intermediate political configurations, including the cosmopolitical form of the federation of nation-States are not viable, but which do not give up the prospect of the

European state, this is typically the kind of very concrete question that must imperatively be posed, except to remain in the register of cheap generalities - "peace" - which do political experimentations subsequent to catastrophic destinies. Needless to say, any negative response immediately condemns the very idea of European political integration. With economic policy, however, we consider one of the most important subjects of European common life... and one of the most likely to give rise to a case of unsurpassed local resistance, at least in the medium term.

It was therefore a bit of a lie to announce the only project to conceptually rephrase the problem of the European state without the intention of deciding it in one way or another. Because the reformulation produces of itself its cases of solution. Between which we will have to choose.

Or keep the current perimeter of Europe - the 28 of the Union or the 17 of the eurozone - but renounce a real politics of integration, which, by definition, should include all the questions of economic policy, and this while the most important of these questions are exposed to a clear veto by one of the countries and thus prohibited from reintegrating the perimeter of ordinary political deliberation governed by a law of the transversal majority. In this configuration, no European State, no European political integration - which does not mean more "Europe" at all, but a Europe reduced to more modest ambitions, and conceived as a network of various co-operations, without aim of building a European sovereignty, therefore without encroaching on the national sovereignties.

Or perhaps a less pessimistic lesson to be drawn from this decisive test of the monetary question would lead one to think that one can perhaps make a European State ... but not with anyone. And obviously, for now, not with Germany. One could very well judge that, given the centrality of Germany, both geographically and historically, the very idea of a European State that does not understand it, would inflict a sort of politically inconceivable vexation. In these circumstances, the alternative brought to its simplest expression, opposes, on the one hand, a viable European state... but without Germany, and for this very reason unimaginable, and on the other hand, a European state at full strength with Germany... but not viable - and from such a dilemma we can only come out with abstention.

The opportunity, in any case, is given to call political philosophy to cure itself of its scholastic illusions: the formal and abstract mechanisms of fundamental rights, of participation, and even of the common demand for sovereignty, have their limits, or their concrete conditions of possibility, namely sufficient proximities - an antechamber, if you will, of a European *affectio civitatis* - which make transversal redistribution feasible - that is to say the exercise of the law of the majority on areas of common interest. If it is to help how to think the end of the confiscation of the capital-institutional apparatus and restore - in fact establish - a popular sovereignty on a European scale, a critical political

philosophy would win to abandon its spontaneous attractors of the great universalisms for the more modest exploration of concrete affinities, and of the common affects that they could possibly support.

Translated by: Rodrigo Gonsalves

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