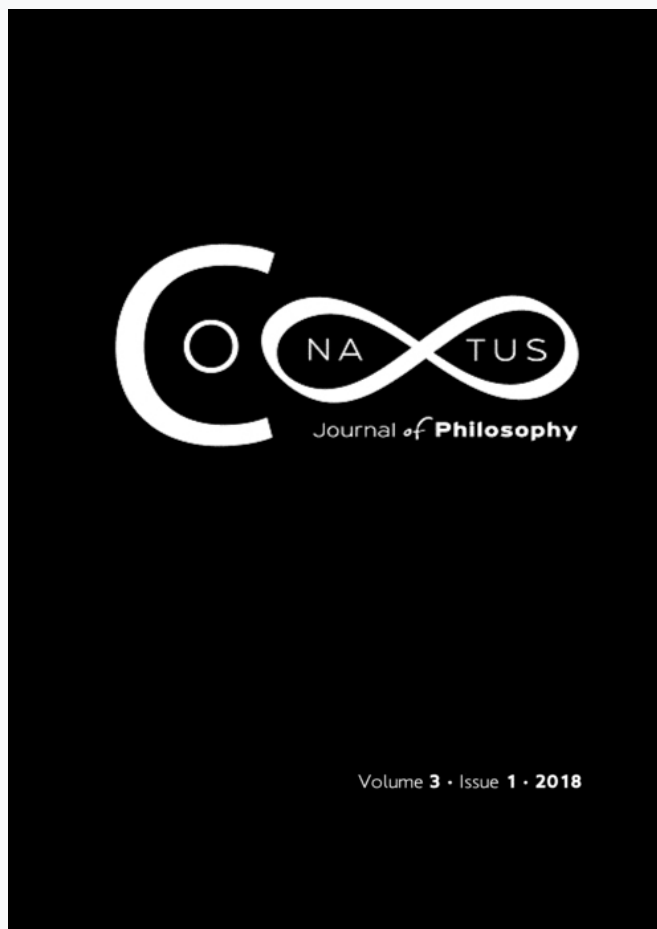


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In Varietate Concordia: Two Perspectives on the European Values

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Abstract

In the first chapter of the paper we elaborate on the attitude towards the Other in the European Union by discussing two adversative yet simultaneous processes taking place in the EU. The first tendency is a legacy from the centuries-lasting model of European unification against certain important Others. The second one refers to the aspiration of the supra-national European project to encourage in an unprecedented manner the co-existence with the otherness. We argue that this ambivalence results from the fact that the transformation of the attitude towards the otherness takes place with different tempo in the different social spheres. In the second chapter we develop further the reflection on the EU attitude towards the Other by focusing on the East European Other. We discuss the normative and de facto application of the European values both in the West and in the East part of the continent. In the last chapter we articulate two separate discourses framing the European values. The first one refers to the essentialist approach looking for a metaphysical reasoning of their universality by developing the common culture, history and spirit rhetoric. The second reading of the European values presents them in a more postmodern and debatable way and offers a mechanism for reconciling the heterogenic East-West European society.

Key-words: *European Union; European values; European identity; Eastern Europeans; Others; post-national citizenship; universality*

I. Introduction

When reflecting on the European values our initial assumption will be that they have a constitutive meaning for the European Union (EU) and its borders. This position is in compliance with the statement of Olli Rehn who defined the EU borders not only as a geographical concept but also as marking the virtual community of states that are ready to share certain values. In his capacity of being the European Commissioner for Enlargement he stated: "...the borders are defined by the consciousness of the Europeans. Geography demarcate the framework but fundamentally

– values outline the borders of Europe.”¹

Using as a point of departure the above-mentioned fundamental role of the shared moral regulative for the EU Member States the paper *aims* at examining the specificities of the process of consolidation around common European values of the so called “New Europe” and “Old Europe”. In order to achieve this aim the article is thematically developed in three chapters.

On a theoretical level, the main questions that will lead and structure the proposed research encompass the character of the European values – are they a Western concept or do they come as a result of the common East-European and West-European efforts to identify with a supranational community? How East and West traditions and historical experiences meet with regard to the common values?

In *methodological* respect the research will apply interdisciplinary approach. The complicated and multilayer nature of the object of the analysis – European identity in relation to the European public sphere implies exploration on different levels and from various perspectives. That is why research techniques from different social sciences will be applied: the philosophical reflection (phenomenology and semiotics) will be combined with political analysis and historical deconstruction of the concepts.

II. Attitude towards the Other in the EU

The point of departure of the first chapter is the understanding that the opposition “we-they” can be traced back to the medieval projects of European unification which aimed at protection of the Christian world from the “Muslim enemy”. Following this early antagonistic sample, the European idea was constructed around certain contradictions² – between Europe and Asia, Christianity and Islam, East and West, etc for many centuries. In this context the official politics towards difference in the EU manifested in its slogan “United in Diversity” presents a new paradigm – the European identity as a supranational project implies a new type of perception and openness for coexistence with and recognition of the difference of the others.

Thus if the traditional premodern society *does not allow* authentic communication with the alien and in order to become open to the Other the individual had to break his/her connection with the community as the only real world, that controls his/her perception and relationship with the different agents, modernity *allows* the individual to overcome the collective prejudices and to encounter the Other without the need for a dramatical escape from the *socium*. EU, in its turn, comes with the ambition to create

¹ Olli Rehn, “Europe is defined by its values, not by its borders”, *European Institute Official page*, 2005, <http://www.europe.bg/htmls/page.php?id=1535&category=223> [Оли Рен, “Ценностите определят Европа, а не границите”, Официална страница на Европейски институт, 2005] (In Bulgarian).

² One could go back even further to the Hellenes who perceived themselves as “western” as opposed to the “eastern” world of Persia, Egypt, Babylon, etc., this way laying the foundations for the future sense of belonging to a common European civilization.

such a social and political context so that citizens are *encouraged* to participate in multicultural interaction.

However, Guild's investigation of the legal aspects of the European identity and more specifically of the restricted policy towards immigrants in the Union demonstrates how the "other" in terms of the immigrant delimits the officially proclaimed recognition of the diversity in the Community.

Before going into details it is interesting to introduce at this point of the research the differentiation between two types of integration proposed by Habermas in his book *The Postnational Constellation*.³ The first is the "functional" one – it realizes a horizontal relation of exchanging and circulation of goods, information, people etc. with the purpose of achieving certain pragmatic results. Characteristic for this type of integration is that the others are not anymore aliens (like in the premodern times) but they are still perceived anonymously.

Completely different is the concept behind the second type of integration Habermas discusses. According to him, the "social integration" is possible because of the intersubjective sharing of common values and norms and it possesses existential density, that comes from the common collective identity of the members of the particular group. When designing policies promoting common identity and shared values construction the European project aims to provide such an existential meaning of the integration in the Community – from the functional exchange (of capitals, goods, people, information) in the economic and political sphere to the authentic organic (non mechanical) solidarity and interaction between the European citizens. Habermas states that succession of these two models of integration can be observed on the Old Continent since the Late Medieval Times.

The German philosopher concludes that the recognition of the "Others in their difference" could be one of the key aspects of the European identity.⁴ This would be a model identity construction that does not ignore or assimilate the aliens but respects their difference and shapes one's self-identification in a constant dialogue with the Others.

After presenting the two levels of integration we can come back to Guild's analysis of the relation "we- the others" in the context of the normative documents of the EU and observe their legal implication.⁵ Discussing the legal aspects of the European identity, she argues that giving a legal status of the immigrants in the EU in the mid 1990s of XXth century transformed them into citizens of the Union. This in its essence was an

³ Jurgen Habermas, *The Postnational Constellation. Political Essays* (Sofia: Kritika | Humanism, 2004), 122-123 [Юрген Хабермас, *Постнационалната констелация*. София: Критика и Хуманизъм, 2004] (in Bulgarian).

⁴ Jurgen Habermas and Jacques Derrida, "Feb. 15, or, What Binds Europeans Together: Plea for a Common Foreign Policy, Beginning in Core Europe", in *Old Europe, New Europe, Core Europe: Transatlantic Relations After the Iraq War*, ed. D. Levy, M. Pensky and J. Torpey (London: Verso, 2005), 9.

⁵ Elspeth Guild, *The Legal Elements of the European Identity. Citizenship and Migration Law* (The Hague: Kluwer Law International, 2004), 82-94.

act of transforming the otherness into ourness. Eliminating the differences between the immigrants, the citizens of other member-states and the citizens of the host country there is no need to apply strategies for integrating the difference within the “our” space.

According to Guild, the acceptance of the difference at the EU level is not yet a universal norm but it is rather limited to respect towards diversity *in the framework of the European space* (thus excluding the non-European other). One can notice implicit understanding of the other as a dangerous one standing behind certain EU provisions. She states that the EU integration concept that motivates the “integration tests” for foreigners has the purpose to provide indications to what degree foreign citizens are “civilized”. This way certain vision of society tends to dominate any other possible definitions of its organization. Such an approach aspires for “domestication” of the difference so that it becomes “ourness” before it is accepted.

From this perspective Guild differentiates three levels on which the “otherness” is perceived within the EU – (1) the “other” citizen of the West European countries that remained out of the EU, (2) the East European “other” and (3) the “others” coming from the “developing world”. According to her, the representatives of Norway, Liechtenstein and Switzerland are not treated as “others” but as “a little bit unsuccessful EU citizens”. The reason for this is because in these countries either the population refused to become part of the union through a referendum or such did not take place as the result of it would have been negative. The second group is the one with immigrants from Turkey, Central and Eastern Europe. While there are more restrictions for them than for the representatives of the first one, it is still more favoured than the last group with the representatives of the “Third world”.

The gradual transformation to more accepting attitude towards the difference within the EU could be observed through the legal term “discrimination” and some limitations of the anti-discrimination policy of the EU. Guild claims that although it is not directly stated, from the EU visa policy one can conclude that there is a discriminatory approach on the basis of race and religion. Other researchers express even more radical arguments for the EU openness towards foreign citizens. For example, Amin assume that “the non-white residents and citizens of the EU have no relation to the *Idea for Europe*”, which remains a unification ideal, based on the Christianity and Enlightenment, that aims at bridging the diversity of the European National cultures.⁶

However, from the perspective of a wider historical context it becomes apparent that the above-mentioned negative limitations refer to separate periods of the development of the Community policy and are not representative for the EU as a whole. Despite the critics of Guild, Amin and other researches towards the EU anti-discrimination politics, it has to be noted that the transformation in the attitude towards the different cannot be expected to come as a result of a single decision as it is a process that takes

⁶ Ash Amin, “Immigrants, Cosmopolitans and the Idea of Europe”, in *Interlocking Dimensions of European Integration. One Europe or Several?*, ed. H. Wallace, 280-301 (Basingtoke: Palgrave, 2001).

time. The struggle against discrimination was legally regulated (although in a very narrow way) already in 1957 in the Treaty of Rome and it has had to walk its way to June 2000 when the Council Directive 2000/43/EC was adopted implementing the principle of equal treatment between persons irrespective of racial or ethnic origin. The case with the preparation of the anti-discrimination law in the EU demonstrates that the speed of changes in the various social spheres is different. Several decades passed before the *legal reclamation* of the acceptance of the other became possible in the Law. But the transformation of the *collective consciousness* towards otherness takes place at even slower speed and hence some forms of discrimination still remain a part of the cultural sphere and a fact of the everyday life of the European citizens. The latter will be demonstrated in the next chapter of the article.

III. East-West reflections on the European values

The second chapter develops further the reflection on the EU attitude towards the Others by focusing on the East European Other. It explores the two-fold relation between European values and East Europe. On the one hand, it discusses the distinction “we-they” perceived by some “old” Europeans towards the “new” Europeans. On the other hand, it articulates the possibility to consolidate the different cultural traditions of the member states around common values. More particularly, the way East and West Europeans meet when discussing common moral norms is analysed in the chapter.

The negative stereotyping of the East Europeans practiced by political subjects in the “Old” Europe puts at danger fundamental European values and rights. There is substantial literature on the subject of the production of negative images of East Europe and the Balkans as a specific region in the South-East Europe (for example, Maria Todorova’s *Imagining the Balkans*). Although this is a very important area for research it is not the main object of our analysis and that is why here we will mention only one concrete case as it had a clear response from the European values perspective. In February 2012 the right-wing Dutch Freedom Party started a website inviting Dutch citizens to report against East European nationals who cause pollution, problems related to housing or simply competition on the job market.

Importantly, the website stereotyping in a negative manner Eastern Europeans was confronted with the common values and principles rhetoric by the major political parties in the EP. For example, Guy Verhofstadt, President of the Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe Group and the leaders of two political parties from the Netherlands issued a joint statement that condemns the Dutch website and demands its “immediate closure”. “The website, as stated by commissioner Reding, goes against all European values of dignity and liberty. Furthermore it risks destroying the very basis of the Union, which is non-discrimination and free movement.”⁷

⁷ Euractive, “EU slams Dutch website for instigating intolerance”, (2012), <https://www.euractiv.com/section/languages-culture/news/eu-slams-dutch-website-for-instigating-intolerance/>.

The website producing negative stereotypes suggests that European values are still in the normative EU realm and not yet always applied in the everyday practice in the Member States. It is an indication that the European model is uncertain if the mentality of European citizens allows stigmatization, discrimination or exclusion of whole groups of people from “its” European society. It is worth mentioning that the initiative turning Eastern nationals into second-class citizens happened in the Netherlands – one of the six founders of the European Coal and Steel Community who in 1950 united economically and politically in order to end violence between neighbours and to secure lasting peace. Therefore, it could be assumed that in the Western as well as in the Eastern part of Europe the understanding and application of the democratic values and EU principles is an ongoing process.

There are also particular cases illustrating the dynamics of the diffusion of ideas between the EU level and the local structures. Such points of resistance and even conflict can be observed between Christian, Muslim and secular cultural traditions, but also within the Christian world itself that was among the first factors giving birth to the European idea. After the introduction of the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs, EU has had to unify over a common foreign and security policy, which often requires decisions over moral dilemmas. In this regard, Cathleen Kantner argues that shared values are the necessary common ground for consensus and solidarity in areas such as social policy, security and defence, immigration, internal security etc. where national diversity clashes with European ambitions.⁸

She illustrates the importance of the shared values for the European governance in an ethically sensitive policy field like *Foreign and Defence Policy* by reminding the dissimilar perception of the US-led intervention in Iraq in 2003 in the EU Member states. Kantner summarises that regardless of the fact that public opinion across Europe was clearly against the war European institutions could not speak with one voice: “A deep – identity-related – split between (most of the) old and (some of the) new members seemed to emerge. (...) ... in countries like Poland strong moral arguments in favour of the intervention were put forward by politicians and even civil society actors. In Germany such a position was almost unthinkable. This illustrates that national views on foreign policy, especially questions of war and peace, are deeply shaped by collective experiences.”⁹

And while this discrepancy between the official EU attitude towards certain values and their response in the domestic cultural settings can be observed in each of the Member states, some researchers focus their attention on the applicability of the European values in “New Europe” in particular.

For example, Harmstone argues that as a result of the transition from “communist”

⁸ Cathleen Kantner, “Collective Identity as Shared Ethical Self-Understanding: The Case of the Emerging European Identity”, in *European Journal of Social Theory* 9, no. 4 (2006): 501-523, 504.

⁹ Ibid.

to “western” values the latter are perceived mainly instrumentally, “as the means to reach the desired goals” in Central Europe.¹⁰ The challenge is that while European values are recognized as non-negotiable European standards, the representatives of the various member states have often different economic, political and cultural background and consequently readiness to apply them.

According to her in the 1970s and 1980s of the 20th century began the erosion of “communist” values system and its replacement by “western” values such as democracy and market economy. However, the new values have been perceived primarily instrumentally - as a means to achieve certain objectives. With the change in the environment during and after the transitional period, Harmstone distinguishes three types of mentality - “the good and obedient worker” who remains politically passive and economically routinized, the “thieving-begging” mentality of the seekers after personal profit, and the “autonomous-entreprising” mentality that is characteristic for socially productive individualists. According to the author, the latter type, unlike the first two is not a legacy of the previous regime and arose with the emergence of new experiences after the changes.¹¹

For instance, the rule of law is a fundamental value of the Western European worldview and serves as a fundamental value for the European Community. According to her, although formally this principle is accepted, in practice in many Eastern countries who are already EU members, the law is understood instrumentally, and sometimes attempts can be observed to ignore or change it if inconsistent with national or personal interests. By contrast with this Eastern model, the western concept for the “rule of law” implies restrictions both regarding to those who are governed and those who are governing.

Nevertheless, she recognizes the possibility for a slow change of mentalities - the existence of the the third type itself demonstrates it. Harmstone concludes that there is possibility to create common ground between “Eastern” and “Western” experiences that would determine the success of the interiorization of the European values.

After the fall of the Iron Curtain a process of integrating Central and Eastern Europe in the Western European political and economic system has begun. However, the East-West equality can be questioned, since it occurs in a scheme where “West” is requesting, while the “East” has the obligation to fulfil the formal criteria for the EU membership. The introduction of the predicates “old” and “new” Europe referring respectively to the Western and Eastern Europe, is a dividing indicator differentiating these two areas. Even after they become members of the European Union, the newly accessed countries are faced with the challenge of the debate on the “two-speed” Europe¹² that divides again

¹⁰ Teresa Rakowska-Harmstone, “Dynamics of Transition”, in *New Europe. The Impact of the First Decade*, ed. Rakowska-Harmstone, Teresa, Piotr Dutkiewicz, and Agnieszka Orzelska (Warsaw: Collegium Civitas Press, 2006), 123.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² According to Habermas already the existence of the Eurozone indicates that Europe is moving on different speeds. See J. Habermas, *The Divided West* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2006), 52.

the continent not letting it to finally unite.

There has been a shift firstly in the academia and nowadays also within the EU institutions from the “two-speed” formula to the model of the “multi-speed” Europe. The multi-speed Europe would offer member states more freedom to form partial alliances and set policies when it is impossible reach a unanimous consensus in the EU. In this regard, the pathos of the Rome Declaration, signed by the leaders of 27 EU member states on 25 March 2017, is not already concerned with the deeper integration as much it is orientated towards the varied integration. The idea of a multi-speed Europe is perceived controversially in the EU – for some it has the potential to solve key issues like the migrant crisis or the European debt crisis as for others it would threaten the solidarity and unitedness among Europeans eventually leading to two separate Europes within the EU.

Koselleck’s understanding of the historical transformations could provide a possible understanding of the “East-West” dissimilarities and European diversity as a whole. According to the German theorist of history on the level of the political agreement the unification decision can be taken over a relatively short period (a year in the case of the German reunification). However, the deeply rooted cultural structural layers of the social body require decades and sometimes even generations to pass in order to be transformed.¹³ In this regard, the historically developed ideas in the Western European world that resulted in the creation of the EU in the XXth century have to be adapted in a larger context and to be communicated in the “New Europe” as well. Such a diffusion of ideas that concern the deep levels of the social body cannot be expected to happen instrumentally as a result of a political decision or legal obligation.

The possibility to meet and continually discuss the European diversity in a common public sphere seems to be vital in order to consolidate around a shared European identity and values.

IV. Two approaches towards European values

The third chapter presents an attempt to answer the above-posed questions articulating two separate discourses framing the European values. The first one refers to the essentialist approach looking for a metaphysical reasoning of the universality of the values by developing the common culture, history and human nature rhetoric. The problem that remains to be answered by this perspective is how such inherited in the European tradition values would be coordinated with the principle of diversity proclaimed in the EU with its multicultural reality?

The second reading of the European values presents them in a more postmodern and debatable way and offers a mechanism of reconciling the heterogenic East-West European society. It refers to the existential moment implying that the European values

¹³ Reinhart Koselleck, *Temporal layers. Studies in theory of history* (Sofia: House for Knowledge and Society, 2002) [Козелек, Р. 2002. Пластовете на времето. Изследвания по теория на историята. София: Дом на науките за човека и обществото].

should not be interpreted as framed by the dispositif of the unity (Foucault, Deleuze), as top-down invented concepts serving the purpose of fostering the European integration but they rather appear to be contextual and subject to public discussions (or communicative action in terms of Habermas).

On the conceptual level the idea of the European values refers to the understanding that there are universally applicable human principles. This view dates back to the cosmopolitan Enlightenment ethics and philosophy and culminates in Kant. According to him, man has a dual nature - the animal side and the rational side.¹⁴ The rational side of human nature uses reason to derive its principles (the moral law) this way making its moral principles objective and universally true. It is due to their ability to use reason that all people are equal and they must therefore never be treated as the means to an end (regardless if they choose to obey the moral law or not). At the same time, only human beings possess rational nature.¹⁵ For the German philosopher the rational capacity is that endows men with dignity, value and identity. Therefore, the rational nature is perceived as more important for the understanding of the human being than, for example, his cultural specificities or ethnic belonging.

The EU continues this rational spirit developing its liberal policies and the universal rights and values discourse. The European discourse that supports the substantial character of the values is initiated with the Declaration on the European Identity from 1973.¹⁶ In the document the possibility for common values in the EU is justified with the understanding that all Member States belong to the European civilization. This way by referring to the common culture or history it is prescribed to certain values that they are European a priori without additional reflection and arguments. In the same line of reasoning, the Declaration speaks about the “unity” as a fundament that guarantees the survival of the European civilization. The issue about the “unity” and the “united” as two different approaches (essentialist and existential) towards European values will be elaborated further in this chapter.

A few decades later in 2007 the European values are included in the Lisbon Treaty and this act gives them a legally binding status. In the Treaty they replace the term “European principles” that was used previously. This terminological change symbolically indicates the transformation to a more emotional rhetoric in the EU.¹⁷ According to Article 1a of the Treaty: “The Union is founded on the values of respect for human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, the rule of law and respect for human rights,

¹⁴ Immanuel Kant, “Religion Within the Limits of Reason Alone,” in *The Philosophy of Kant: Moral and Political Writings*, ed. Carl J. Friedrich. (New York: The Modern Library, 1949), 373.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 394.

¹⁶ Declaration on European Identity, in *Bulletin of the European Communities*, no. 12 (December 1973), 118-119.

¹⁷ Justine Lacroix, “Does Europe Need Common Values? Habermas vs Habermas”, in *European Journal of Political Theory* 8, no. 2 (2009): 141-156, 141-142.

including the rights of persons belonging to minorities.”¹⁸ The Lisbon Treaty continues the essentialist pathos about the universal values declaring that it draws inspiration from “...the cultural, religious and humanist inheritance of Europe, from which have developed the universal values of the inviolable and inalienable rights of the human person, freedom, democracy, equality and the rule of law.”¹⁹

In the academic sphere Habermas is one of the influential philosophers that in his later works insists for the integration of the European values in the European debate. He considers that they result from the historical roots and achievements of Europe.²⁰ However, there are a number of critical views on Habermas proposal. For example, Lacroix states that the attempts to define common values brings the risk to undermine the unique normative potential of the EU who has to organise specific National identities. In this respect she asks if indeed the European political project needs the support of the common values or rather of a group of principles of justice.²¹

Castiglione is also skeptical about the historical reconstruction of the European values as to him this way the degree of similarity is exaggerated. He warns that the proposed by Habermas European identity based on “our” values tends to have an exclusive character. Given the multicultural reality in the Union and the mobility of the immigrants, to insist for universal values could lead to social and cultural division and does not create uniting links among citizens.²²

Therefore, even if the contemporary European discourse on the shared values is well-grounded in the European intellectual tradition the claim for universal validity of the values faces challenges from the multicultural reality of the Union. It was analysed in the previous chapter how the practical application of the European values (when they are essentially understood) is troubled by the dissimilar cultural realms that compose the Union.

Delanty proposes interesting arguments for the reflection on the dilemma between, on the one hand, the discursive construction of the European values as universal on the basis of the European culture, history and civilization and, on the other hand, the principle of respect for (cultural) diversity.²³ Firstly, he discusses the normative status of the Idea for Europe. He distinguishes the cultural sphere from the ethics and locates the Idea for Europe in the first one. Following Habermas’ theory about the discourse

¹⁸ Lisbon Treaty amending the Treaty on European Union and the Treaty establishing the European Community, *Official Journal of the European Union*, 13 December 2007, Article 1a, <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/JOHtml.do?uri=OJ:C:2007:306:SOM:EN:HTML>.

¹⁹ *Ibid*, Preamble.

²⁰ Habermas and Derrida, 8.

²¹ Lacroix, 142.

²² Dario Castiglione, “Political identity in a community of strangers”, in *European Identity*, ed. Jeffrey Checkel and Peter Katzenstein (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 44-47.

²³ Gerard Delanty, *Inventing Europe: Idea, Identity, Reality* (Palgrave Macmillan, Basingstoke, 1995).

ethics that separates norms from values, Delanty defines the cultural value as particularistic unlike the ethical principles and norms that pretend for universality. From here he deduces that the cultural value of the European idea cannot have normative and universal character. He argues that the cultural Idea for Europe that has more limited cultural resources for creating meaning unreasonably pretends for universal ethical validity and evaluates (or defines) the non-European world.²⁴

He suggests alternative definition of the terms “universality” and “unity”. According to it universality does not necessarily imply uniformity and the intolerance of the European ethnoculturalism against the Other but could also be interpreted as plurality and difference. From the understanding of the universality not as looking for common characteristics (or values) but as acceptance and inclusion of the otherness, one can deduce a new definition of the unity. From this point of view the ideal “European unity” is not based on the universal values but on the new model of post-national citizenship. According to Delanty the post-national citizenship is neither “determined by birth, nor by nationality but by residence.”²⁵ Such a model of citizenship transcends the “particularist assumptions of culture and nationality”²⁶ and is founded on the participation and solidarity of the dissimilar Europeans who respect difference and could offer a basis for an inclusive European identity.

Therefore, the European values should not be interpreted as absolute as they will always present a subjective (even when if it is shared by the majority) perspective. In this regard, the European values are not to be understood as belonging to or a subgroup to the universal values but as an object for constant rational negotiation between citizens, the Member States and the European institutions. This does not change the status of the values as fundamental in the European identity construction but only desubstantiates them – from an absolute they become contextual concepts shaped in dialogue. In other words, the focus on them is shift – from their definition through the Kantian ethics as objective and necessary to their reading in the perspective of the postmodern contextual ethics.

It has to be noted that together with the discourse on the European values that describes them as universal there is an alternative tendency of their perception within the EU. This parallel discussion can be demonstrated through the historical development of the formulation of the EU logo. Initially it was accepted as “Unity in diversity” by the President of the European Parliament, Nicole Fontaine in 2000. After the ratification of the Constitution the motto was modified to “United in diversity”.

The “unity” can be interpreted as definite because it obliges – the “common” is already a priori given in the difference. Unlike it, “united” is not engaged with metaphysical universalities and it indicates that the agreement can be aspired regardless of the difference. Through language and the ability of human beings to understand each other

²⁴ Ibid, 12.

²⁵ Ibid, 162.

²⁶ Ibid.

they “unite” without a need for a metaphysical foundation for the European “unity” be it based on the common culture, history or human nature. This transformation indicates greater desubstantiality on a conceptual level because overcoming the essentialism of the “united” one has more freedom for his existential choice and self-creation.

In this line of reasoning the existential moment should not be interpreted as framed by the dispositif of the unity that implies that no matter how much I create myself it has to be limited by my unity with the other Europeans. “United” can be understood as the above-mentioned perspective of Delanty – in the sense of making common efforts, capable for co-authorship in the writing of the common European narrative. Such an interpretation can be supported by the Latin translation of the motto: “In varietate concordia”. “Concordia” could be understood not only as “unity” but also as “harmony”, “understanding” and even “peace” – in the Classical mythology Concordia is the goddess of the peace that comes after the battle. From such perspective the “unitedness” is not defined predicatively – there is no need one to abide to certain formally defined unification but it simply points to the fact of the joint efforts to take part in a common project despite the (predicative) difference. The de-substantialisation of the abstract category “unity” into the commitment of the “united” permits a reading of the European values not along certain universal validity that they would bring but in the sense of co-belonging of the European citizenship to a mutual project.

An indication how much the project for the “Future of Europe” is being build according to the ideas for dialogue and communicative rationality that are implicitly suggested by the transformation of the motto can be the actual politics. The criterion is the degree to which it encourages real co-participation of the citizens in the project (that has to be open and not predefined). In other words – this is the space for a real action by the citizens that goes beyond the declarative promises as well as the public sphere where problems resulting from the coexistence in a single European space can be discussed and negotiated.

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