

THE EUROPEAN UNION AND THE CHALLENGE OF THE DEMOCRATIC COSMOPOLIS

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Abstract: *This article seeks to clarify the crisis currently experienced by the European Union and to explore possible avenues for overcoming it. Taking Cosmo-systemic Gnoseology as the method of analysis, the article presents three theoretical models considered pivotal for organizing post-state-centric reality, with the aim of addressing the challenge that the prospect of the democratic cosmopolis poses for the EU. It is argued that an axiologically neutral position presupposes liberating thought from the dominant political and constitutional ideology of modernity. This, in turn, requires that, before the article's central problem is addressed, reflexive questions be posed about how modern thought conceives the notion of politics, both at the intra-societal and at the inter-state level. The article then analyses, first, Thomas Hobbes's theoretical approach to the Christian commonwealth; second, Immanuel Kant's federation of free states; and third, Rigas Velestinlis's oecumenical state. These three models of political constitution are assessed for their points of similarity and difference with the present structure of the EU, as well as for the possibilities they open up for finding effective solutions to the crisis it faces. On this basis, the article determines whether any of these theoretical models can respond to contemporary political developments and to the fundamental challenge that European integration poses in terms of democracy. The analysis concludes that the pre-modern and early-modern horizons of Hobbes and Kant cannot resolve the EU's existential impasse, and that Velestinlis's cosmopolitical model offers the more promising constitutional orientation for a genuinely democratic European integration.*

Keywords: *European Union, crisis, anthropocentrism, democracy, state-centrism, cosmopolis.*

INTRODUCTION

The course followed by the EU, especially after the global financial crisis¹, has generated intense concerns and questions regarding its political character, its bureaucratic structures, and the role of the individual state entities and the peoples that operate within it². These concerns have been intensified by the complex geopolitical environment of recent years, with Russia's invasion of Ukraine and the geostrategic confrontation between the United States and China. In other words, within this threatening and at the same time unstable environment, the EU is called upon, first, to survive, and second, to emerge stronger from a multi-factorial crisis. Naturally, both the question of survival and

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¹ On the phenomenon of the global financial crisis, its causes, and its consequences for Europe, see Varoufakis (2013).

² Certain issues concerning the mode of political organization and the power relations that develop within the institutions of the EU are analysed Habermas (2009). Also, on Jean Monnet's contribution to advancing the vision of the EU, see Troitiño (2017).

that of strengthening must be linked to an axiological object. If we take into account the historical origins of European civilization, which trace back to anthropocentric reality — that is, to societies that conquer freedom, a phenomenon that first appears in ancient Greece — this axiological object can be none other than freedom, indeed in its universal form (individual, social/economic, political). Consequently, the notion of the survival and strengthening of the EU must be dissociated from the survival and strengthening of the organized interests of the market economy and of bureaucratic mechanisms, and must instead be linked to the freedom of European societies³. In light of this, we could argue that the EU is perhaps living through the greatest existential crisis of its history. According to ancient Greek usage, the term crisis denotes that liminal moment at which an organism afflicted by illness will either perish or recover. Recovery, however, presupposes exact knowledge: first, of the organism that is ill; second, of its immediate and wider environment; and third, of the means available to help overcome the crisis.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The recognition of the European Union's existential crisis, together with the prospect of overcoming it through democratic transformation, entails a substantial rejection of the definitions of concepts and typological categories advanced by modern political thought. Contogeorgis' (2006-2021) work lays the foundations for a new approach to social and political phenomena, based on the conception of the biological evolution of societies. From this perspective, social and political institutions are assessed according to the stage of development experienced by the cosmosystem. Consequently, the recognition of the crisis permeating the EU in its entirety could be interpreted as a consequence of the particular cosmosystemic variables governing our era, rather than through the superficial lens of purely economic or ideological variables, as some philosophers and economists such as Touraine (2014), Varoufakis (2016), and Stiglitz (2016) appear to believe. Such approaches, while capable of capturing certain dimensions of the crisis, are nevertheless unable to provide compelling reasons for its deeper causes.

Among the many bibliographic sources available to us, one should note the recently published work of (Rhinard et al. 2023). The authors argue that the combination of structural weaknesses and contingent events has caused significant shocks to the European project, for the management of which they propose a set of institutional reforms. Of particular interest in this respect is also Webber's work (2018), which focuses, among other things, on the weight of Germany's political conduct in the inability to address effectively the serious imbalances within the EU. Even if these reflective works contain diagnostic insights that describe, to a considerable extent, the multidimensional character of the European crisis, they lack a comprehensive and guiding theoretical perspective capable of linking the structural problems of European institutions with the dynamics of the cosmosystemic evolution of societies.

Judt's (2011) work regarding the future of the EU is one of lasting significance, since it identifies certain objective difficulties capable of undermining the European integration project. Judt's scepticism regarding the prospects of European integration appears to stem from his inability to view the EU's future, first, through the lens of its

³ Certain authors argue that the EU is not the outcome of any idealist vision, but purely of self-interested and utilitarian priorities. See, indicatively, Judt (2011). Also, on the manner in which the European inter-state system was constructed, see the first two chapters of Kissinger (2014).

representative and democratic transformation, and second, through that of the post-statist cosmopolis.

Finally, Habermas' (2009) attempt to approach the problem of the EU crisis within an interpretive framework inspired by Kant, while presenting certain radical political elements absent from similar studies, is, in our view, ultimately confined within the conceptual boundaries of modern political thought. As a result, the notions of democracy and representation, which occupy a significant place in his argument, lose their dynamism and strategic value.

METHODOLOGICAL OBSERVATIONS⁴

Wishing to move beyond the ideology that has, from time to time, been produced to legitimize the EU both at the level of values and at the level of pursued aims, we shall confine ourselves to factual, and therefore empirically verifiable/falsifiable, elements that define its reality ontologically. In this sense, we must distance ourselves from those theoretical approaches that judge the political systems of individual states, as well as the manner of governance of the EU, through the prism of modern ideology, which presents the monarchically-governed oligarchy of our time as democracy⁵. Consequently, this existential crisis is to be located not, as many claim, in a democratic deficit, but in the complete absence of democracy (Amarantos 2025a). We must therefore ask whether the democratic path, passing through the stage of representation, could lead the EU to overcome its existential impasses. Naturally, insofar as we are speaking of a supra-state entity such as the EU, we must also reflect on the constitutional character both of the individual member states and of the composite super-polity as a whole. At this point certain clarifications are needed. We define democracy as the possession by citizens of full political competence, which entails the constitution of society into a *dēmos* and the exercise by that *dēmos* of the legislative, governmental, and judicial functions. By contrast, elections for the selection of rulers who monopolize the political power of a society constitute, by definition, the polity of monarchically-governed oligarchy⁶. According to the method of Cosmo-systemic Gnoseology that we follow here, we must reject as false the modern distinction between direct and indirect democracy. Democracy

⁴ On the method of Cosmo-systemic Gnoseology in general, see Contogeorgis (2017), Contogeorgis (2006–2021) and Amarantos (2022).

⁵ *"One of the fundamental consequences of this development is modern thought's persistence — instead of occupying itself with the creation of general gnoseological categories on the basis of which it might evaluate the real, whether historical or lived, socio-political phenomenon — in elevating its own era into a general category, attributing to it universal properties, and then claiming for it the function of the culmination of the anthropocentric totality. This occurs with virtually the entire set of concepts pertaining to the nature of the modern world. Politics is defined not by its nature, but by virtue of the way it happens to be structured in our era: that is, as authority or as power. The political system is taken as the tautological equivalent of the state. One could enumerate countless examples with regard to concepts such as freedom, right, property, capital, labour, authority, power, democracy, representation, the nation, the world system, etc."* (Contogeorgis 2007, 21).

⁶ We speak of monarchically-governed oligarchy insofar as, in contemporary Western regimes — whether prime-ministerial or presidential in character — the holder of governmental/executive power, assisted by power groups, exercises dominion over the political system as a whole, over the state, and ultimately over society. Citizens, for their part, are granted only individual freedom and specific social/economic and political rights.

constitutes a specific constitutional phenomenon and, like every real phenomenon, cannot possess indirect existence. This modern invention was designed to legitimize, in the consciousness of societies, monarchically-governed oligarchy by presenting it as a form of “indirect democracy” (Contogeorgis 2007). Likewise, the institution of elections does not constitute an exclusive characteristic of democracy, nor is it capable of defining it. We should recall that the principal method for the selection of magistrates in ancient Athenian democracy was not election but the lot. The institution of elections could be employed in a great many regimes without any of them, in any sense, being characterized as democratic. We could therefore argue that the political leaderships of the states that make up the EU bear the character of monarchically-governed oligarchy.

As for the EU itself, we shall adopt George Contogeorgis’s observation that it “constitutes a political system without a state,” while its organs — apart from the European Parliament, whose contribution to policy-making is not decisive — do not possess the electoral legitimation enjoyed by the political institutions found within the individual states (Contogeorgis 2019). Consequently, the functioning of the EU is significantly affected by the logic of power that generally governs the inter-state system during the phase of state-centrism (Mearsheimer 2014, Ifestos 2023). In other words, the power relations of the inter-state order are imported into the EU’s political system, determining the framework of the policies pursued. In this way, the more powerful states that are members of the Union are able to impose their will on the weaker ones. Phenomena of this kind lead to a widening of inequalities among societies, resulting in a weakening of cohesion and the emergence of divisive tendencies. The overall situation is aggravated by the intense control exercised by the market economy over the groups of bureaucrats who staff the EU’s institutions, owing to the fact that the final institutional arbiter of their action is not the societies themselves, but organized interest groups. Speaking overall, the supra-state institution of the EU, having adopted a model of pre-anthropocentric governance, appears to be cut off from the interests of European societies.

THE ISSUE OF SOCIAL EVOLUTION AND FREEDOM

At this point we must open a parenthesis in order to define the pivotal concept of anthropocentrism and, by extension, of the anthropocentric cosmosystem. According to Cosmo-systemic Gnoseology, societies constitute organisms defined by a particular evolutionary dynamic in each case, associated with specific stages through which they pass in spiral fashion. The spiral evolution of societies, which encompasses not only progress but also regression and stagnation, is governed by the law of necessity (Contogeorgis 2017). In terms of freedom, we could distinguish two basic units of analysis for societies. First, we have the despotic cosmosystem, in which freedom is absent, and which is further distinguished into the stage of private despotism (feudal structures) and the stage of state despotism (the absolutist state). We also have the anthropocentric cosmosystem, which in its early stage is characterized by the emergence of individual freedom and the polity of monarchically-governed oligarchy, while in its mature stage it is distinguished by the conquest of individual, social/economic, and political freedom (universal freedom) and by the polity of democracy. The representative system is defined, in constitutional terms, as an intermediate stage between early and mature anthropocentrism. By representation we mean the relation whereby political personnel are obliged to conform to the will of society constituted into a *dēmos*. We could therefore argue that each stage of social evolution determines the totality of the material

and spiritual preconditions of a society — that is, it determines the axiological, institutional, and ideological spectrum within and through which social subjects are called upon to act.

THE POLITICAL NATURE OF THE EU

Having made these necessary clarifications, we are now in a position to pronounce on the nature of the EU's political reality, so as then to seek possible ways out of the existential crisis it is experiencing.

We shall thus venture the hypothesis that the political nature of the EU might resemble both the model of the "Christian commonwealth" envisioned in *Leviathan* by Thomas Hobbes, and the "federation of free states" advocated by Immanuel Kant. We consider these two theoretical undertakings to broadly delimit the possibilities of modernity's horizon of understanding with regard to the formation of a supranational order. Hobbes's proposal, although exceptionally early for our own time, we believe develops a system of ideas that still influences Western state and supra-state reality today. Kant's work *Perpetual Peace*, more elaborated with regard to its supra-state concerns, constitutes a point of reference, at least for Western thought. In what follows, through the development of the respective theories of Hobbes and Kant, we shall attempt to identify the central similarities of their theoretical models with the structure and functioning of the EU.

THE CHRISTIAN COMMONWEALTH OF THOMAS HOBBS

As we have argued elsewhere, in Hobbes's thought — irrespective of the degree to which he himself was conscious of this fact — three different world-images converge, each bearing the axiological weight of three different evolutionary stages: those of private despotism, state despotism, and early anthropocentrism (Amarantos 2025b). In this sense, Hobbes's thought belongs both to the past of the modern world and to its present⁷. Certainly, the dominant element of Hobbesian political thought is determined by the stage of state despotism, since it is guided by the pursuit of the philosophical legitimization of the absolutist state⁸.

As the starting point of his approach, he posits human individuality within the so-called state of nature, in which universal war prevails⁹. At this point we should make certain clarifications regarding Hobbes's understanding of the state of nature. The human beings of the state of nature are beings characterized by natural equality with respect to

⁷ Modern society, from the standpoint of Cosmo-systemic Gnoseology, belongs to the stage of early anthropocentrism.

⁸ Although Hobbes begins by presenting the possible forms of political organization that can arise through the social contract, remaining at a purely descriptive level of analysis, he subsequently departs from axiologically neutral description and takes a clear stance in favour of monarchy (Hobbes 1996).

⁹ As Hobbes (1996) himself states, the reference to the concept of the state of nature does not imply reference to any specific, historically documented period. It is, rather, a philosophical device that allows Hobbes to develop his political thought. If, however, we were to insist on seeking a correspondence between the Hobbesian state of nature and some specific historical reality, we have the impression that our inquiry should be directed toward the sphere of Western feudalism, that is, of private despotism.

bodily and mental capacities¹⁰. They also possess the element of reason, through which they are able to decode the natural laws established by God the Creator. The natural laws were created by God to serve the ideal of peace and progress among human beings. In this condition of the state of nature, however, the natural laws merely exist and are in no way enforced. On the contrary, we might say that human passions lead toward their violation¹¹. We could therefore argue that the consequences of natural equality among human beings, combined with the absence of state authority, form the ground upon which the phenomenon of universal war arises.

Universal war should not be understood so much as an ever-present state of armed conflict, but rather as a form of readiness for war, given that in the state of nature there is no all-powerful authority capable of instituting and, through sanctions, enforcing the law. The absence of an all-powerful authority capable of securing mutual respect among human beings, the observance of private covenants, and, finally, the prohibition of violence and fraud as means of resolving disputes and realizing individual will, constitutes the generative cause of universal war.

For the English philosopher, the overcoming of universal war can ideally be achieved through the constitution of the all-powerful state, *Leviathan*, in which the sovereign exercises authority of an absolutist type. We see that Hobbes chooses the name of a mythical monster from the Old Testament to represent that all-powerful state mechanism capable of imposing itself upon individual wills and setting the terms of lawful governance. The constitution of the state *Leviathan* can be achieved either through a social contract, in which natural individuals renounce their natural freedom and accept the sovereign's absolutist authority, or through conquest by another state entity (Amarantos 2025a). For Hobbes, as later for Hegel in the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, conquest essentially entails a contract of submission concluded in practice between the conqueror and the conquered, since otherwise the defeated party would choose death rather than submission. At this point we can identify an interesting point of interweaving between domestic politics and the field of the inter-state order, to which Hobbes will return when he discusses the Christian commonwealth.

The state *Leviathan* is placed under the absolute control of a sovereign, who may be either a democratic assembly, an oligarchic group, or, finally, an absolute monarch. The monarch constitutes the indicated political solution for the creation and preservation of a political community. Hobbes's philosophy deals primarily with the problem of intra-societal political organization. Nevertheless, he does not fail to develop certain ideas concerning the possible constitution of a supra-societal political entity, within which the individual monarchs, together with their states, might be subsumed, so as to safeguard the inter-state system from the negative consequences of the state of nature — that is, of

¹⁰ Hobbes, of course, does not mean that natural human beings are ontologically identical, but that the differences in their capacities are not so decisive as to allow one to dominate the other definitively (Amarantos 2025b)

¹¹ "For the laws of nature (as justice, equity, modesty, mercy, and (in sum) doing of others, as we would be done to,) of themselves, without the terror of some power, to cause them to be observed, are contrary to our natural passions, that carry us to partiality, pride, revenge and the like. And covenants, without the sword, are but words, and of no strength to secure a man at all. Therefore notwithstanding the laws of nature (which every one hath then kept, when he has the will to keep them, when he can do it safely) if there be no power erected, or not great enough for our security; every man will, and may lawfully rely on his own strength and art, for caution against all other men." (Hobbes 1996, 111)

universal war. Naturally, the model of supra-state organization that Thomas Hobbes has in mind is suffused with a philosophically elaborated Christian metaphysical perspective. Thus, this supra-state organization presupposes, first, that the monarchs and states to be housed within it will accept the truth of Christian doctrine, and, second, that they will have accepted their submission to the head of the universal Christian Church. From the manner in which Hobbes (1996) develops his argument, we can discern that the authority of the individual sovereign states will not cease to exist, but that supreme authority will certainly be held by the supra-state sovereign.

At this point it is useful to distinguish the differences, and above all the similarities, between the supra-state community envisioned by the English philosopher and the political nature of the EU. Beginning with the essential differences, we would say that the EU does not refer to a union of a metaphysical character, such as the one Hobbes envisioned. Likewise, in the Hobbesian “Christian political community,” individual subjects lack, both at the level of the Leviathan states and at the level of the supra-polity, individual freedom and the totality of their political and social rights. By contrast, in both the EU and its member states, individual subjects possess individual freedom and are bearers of social and political rights¹². The first common element concerns the total absence of societies from the process of political decision-making. We saw that, according to Hobbes’s thought, individual subjects, from the moment they leave the state of nature and enter the state Leviathan, lose any right to involvement in politics. As for the participation of social subjects in the political processes of the EU and of the member states, this is limited, in the case of the former, to legitimizing the low political significance of the European Parliament, and, in the case of the latter, to legitimizing the system of monarchically-governed oligarchy as a whole — that is, citizens arbitrate among party organizations as to which will capture the state’s political hegemony. As for the question of who exercises the substantive leadership of the EU, we could answer briefly and plainly: the more powerful states. In other words, just as in Hobbes’s Christian community a form of super-authority is formed that possesses no legitimation whatsoever from society, so too in the case of the EU’s leadership forms of arbitrary authority develop that are imposed on the states as a whole. Consequently, the type of sovereignty that develops at the level of the EU’s leadership could be characterized as pre-modern, and as such akin to the model of Hobbesian constitutional conception. A second important similarity we can identify concerns the preservation of the internal power structure of the member states, even if this has entered a trajectory of weakening owing to the authority developing at the supra-state level.

THE FEDERATION OF FREE STATES OF IMMANUEL KANT

As we are able to observe, Immanuel Kant, like Thomas Hobbes, regards the state of nature as an extremely dangerous condition, in which the threat of war is

¹² At this point we must once again move beyond the dominant version of modern ideology, according to which rights are identified with freedom. By freedom we mean autonomy — that is, the capacity of the human subject to set the terms of life, both individual and collective. This is an achievement that presupposes the existence of anthropocentric societies. Rights, by contrast, constitute, in a sense, a kind of substitute within anthropocentrism in those fields where freedom has not yet been conquered, as for example in the economy and in politics during the stage of early anthropocentrism (Contogeorgis 2007).

constantly looming (Kant 1903). Evidently, the state of nature characterizes not only the pre-social reality of individual subjects, but also the state-centric condition, when a superordinate political authority is absent.

For Kant, the response to the problem of the state of nature and the constant threat of war at the inter-state level is the “federation of free states.” The basis of this federation, for Kant, can be none other than republican-organized states. Republican society constitutes, for the German philosopher, the highest form of constitutional organization, since it secures the representation of the general will. Kant, in his effort to elevate the republican polity, is led to a misinterpretation of the democratic regime, which he classifies among despotic regimes, on the grounds that, unlike republicanism, in democracy the legislative and executive powers are not distinguished. In Kant’s own words: “Of these three forms of a state, democracy, in the proper sense of the word, is of necessity despotism, because it establishes an executive power, since all decree regarding — and, if need be, against — any individual who dissents from them. Therefore the ‘whole people,’ so-called, who carry their measure are really not all, but only a majority: so that here the universal will is in contradiction with itself and with the principle of freedom” (Kant 1903, 125). At this point, Kant appears unaware that in democracy the political stake does not concern extensions of power but functions, since, owing to the conquest of universal freedom, the subject of sovereignty is absent. Nor does the German philosopher take into account the procedural prerequisite of democracy for decision-making. Decisions are not simply the product of the majority prevailing over competing opinions, since the democratic process presupposes the constitution of society into a *dēmos*, which, before proceeding to the use of the majority rule, deliberates and synthesizes differences. For this reason, in democracy what forms are not minorities in the modern sense, but dissenting minorities within a unified body. Kant, by contrast, overlooks the fact that in the republican polity, decision-making not only obeys the majority rule, but that this rule is exercised among the few holders of legislative power. Furthermore, we must regard as mistaken Kant’s position that the republican regime is representative of the general will, insofar as citizens, beyond electoral legitimation, do not possess the right to recall, control, and punish their political rulers. In conclusion, we would argue that Kant, owing to the early anthropocentric era in which he lived, is unable to grasp something that the ancient Greek thinkers could perfectly well discern with regard to democracy: namely, that the *dēmos* of the polis was capable of shaping distinct fields of political function in order to serve universal freedom. From this perspective, in ancient democracy the assembly of the *dēmos* exercises the legislative function, magistrates chosen as a rule by lot exercise governmental power, and courts staffed by citizens exercise the judicial function (see Aristotle 1935, 2013).

Having offered this brief critique of Immanuel Kant’s positions, we return to the core of his argument on the question of the free federation of states. According to his positions, then, the republican polity not only constitutes the best way of settling a society’s internal affairs, but at the same time forms the foundation for promoting peace among states and, consequently, for building the federation of free states. His argument runs as follows: in the republican regime, the consent of citizens is required for the conduct of war. This means that, since it is the citizens who will bear the damages and cost of war, they will consent to a war far more reluctantly than would, for example, a monarch, who would incur almost no loss to his own well-being (Kant 1903). This argument is flawed on at least two counts. The first concerns the very functioning of citizens’ consent within the republican polity. Consent is treated by Kant as logically

following from the supposedly representative character of the republican regime. This, however, is a logically mistaken inference insofar as, as we showed in an earlier paragraph, it rests on a false premise — namely, that representation is secured through election. Since elections alone do not guarantee that the will of society is represented, the whole argument must be judged unfounded. The second point concerns the very stance of citizens in the event of war when they possess the genuine capacity to participate in politics, as is the case in democracy. As George Contogeorgis showed in his study *Democracy and War in Thucydides*, democratic systems are actually more prone to war, because, owing to the development of universal freedom, economic demands increase to such a degree that the domestic economy is unable to satisfy them, with the result that these societies turn to the inter-state sphere to satisfy them, provoking polarizations that lead to war (Contogeorgis 2022). Having thus clarified the question of the appropriate constitutional organization for individual societies, Kant proposes that they preserve their independence while simultaneously entering into an alliance of peace whose central purpose will be to bring war to an end forever¹³. Kant considers that, while the desirable response to the phenomenon of war would be the creation of a world state of republican character, his realism requires the acceptance of a less radical solution — that of the free federation of states — since he himself expresses fears that a world state would inevitably lead to monarchical government and, from there, to anarchy (Kant 1903). Behind Kantian realism, of course, lies his philosophy of history, and in particular “the realm of the ends of nature,” which, while it prevents the creation of a world state by dividing human beings through different languages and religions, at the same time unites them under the guiding principle of self-interest by means of the economy. Kant himself maintains that “this guarantee is given by no less a power than the great artist nature (*natura daedala rerum*) in whose mechanical course is clearly exhibited a predetermined design to make harmony spring from human discord, even against the will of man” (Kant 1903, 100). Thus, within this framework, between the condition of the state of war in inter-state relations and world monarchy, Kant favours the solution of an expanding alliance of republican states whose chief concern will be the prevention of war.

Returning to the comparison between the structure of the EU and the Kantian federation of free states, we could say that the kindred elements are even more pronounced than in the corresponding theoretical approach of Hobbes. The first kindred element concerns the preservation of the state independence of the federation’s members. The second element relates to the particular importance enjoyed by the economic factor

¹³ Hence there must be an alliance of a particular kind which we may call a covenant of peace (*foedus pacificum*) which would differ from a treaty of peace (*pactum pacis*) in this respect, that the latter merely puts an end to one war, while the former would seek to put an end to war for ever. This alliance does not aim at the gain of any power whatsoever of the state, but merely at the preservation and security of the freedom of the state for itself and of other allied states at the same time. The latter do not, however, require, for this reason, to submit themselves like individuals in the state of nature to public laws and coercion. The practicability or objective reality of this idea of federation which is to extend gradually over all states and so lead to perpetual peace can be shewn. For, if Fortune ordains that a powerful and enlightened people should form a republic — which by its very nature is inclined to perpetual peace — this would serve as a centre of federal union for other states wishing to join, and thus secure conditions of freedom among the states in accordance with the idea of the law of nations. Gradually, through different unions of this kind, the federation would extend further and further (Kant 1903).

(mutual self-interest) with respect to this union¹⁴. The third element has to do with the republican polity, which, if in Kant's time it constituted a vision, in our own time constitutes a reality for the greater part of the planet. Finally, the fourth element concerns the logic of the federation's progressive expansion, even if this is confined to the European continent.

As for the significant differences, we would say that Kant was not concerned with the constitution of a European federation of states, but of a world alliance, since his exclusive concern was to diagnose the basic preconditions for founding perpetual peace.

Having reached this point, we could argue that we now stand at a particularly pivotal juncture of our study, since we are now in a position to ask whether the classical models of inter-state organization that appear to define the climate of the horizon of understanding of the EU's structure and purposes are capable of leading it to overcome its existential crisis. As we have attempted to demonstrate through a series of constitutional and political arguments, this horizon of understanding is exceedingly outdated and unable to grasp the challenges of the twenty-first century. Let us not forget that Hobbes wrote *Leviathan* in the mid-seventeenth century, during the stage of state despotism, while Kant wrote his work *Perpetual Peace* toward the end of the eighteenth century, at a time when modern humanity was entering early anthropocentrism — that is, societies with individual freedom. A further question we may pose is whether it would be sufficient, in order to overcome the EU's existential impasse, to attempt to modernize these classical theoretical approaches, or whether we should instead seek the way out elsewhere.

We judge that, owing to the torrential pace of developments both within states and in the inter-state reality, the solution cannot be found in an attempt to modernize theoretical proposals that have been superseded by cosmosystemic evolution.

THE COSMOPOLITICAL PROJECT OF RIGAS VELESTINLIS

We must turn to an entirely different theoretical approach, whose organizing principles and logic (though not necessarily its content) we could put forward as a possible solution to the EU's existential crisis. Rigas Velesinlis does not merely, as several scholars claim, follow and disseminate some of the most radical ideas of the French Revolution, but, engaging in dialogue with them, surpasses them in progressiveness¹⁵. Whereas the ideas even of the most radical wing of the French revolutionaries called for the overthrow of monarchy and the establishment, at the level of the nation-state, of republicanism — that is, of monarchically-governed oligarchy — Velesinlis's thought was oriented toward the idea of the democratic polity projected onto an oecumenical/cosmopolitical framework.

To begin with, we should clarify that, unlike Hobbes and Kant, Velesinlis's supra-state project does not aim at a planetary reordering of inter-state relations, but at the re-founding of the Byzantine cosmopolis. Likewise, whereas for Hobbes and Kant the post-state-centric system they envision is constituted on the large scale of the nation-

¹⁴ It should not be forgotten at this point that the EU's first steps were taken under the organizational framework of the European Coal and Steel Community (1951) and the European Economic Community (1958).

¹⁵ On the dialogue that Rigas Velesinlis conducted with the ideas of the Enlightenment and the French Revolution, and on the radicalism of his thought even in relation to the most subversive visions of the Western world, see Contogeorgis (2008).

state, for the Greek thinker the fundamental social unit is the commune (*koinon*) — that is, the city-state. Moving beyond these differentiations, significant in content but not in form, Rigas Velestinlis's constitutional project unfolds on two levels: on the one hand, the level of the communes and confederations of communes, and, on the other, the level of the cosmopolity as a whole. In other words, the communes and confederated communes, on the one hand, preserve their internal autonomy — and hence their plurality of forms — while, on the other hand, in their relations with other communes and with the metropolitan centre, they operate on terms of partnership. At the level of the cosmopolity as a whole, the preconditions are established for the overall oversight of the cosmopolitical state, for foreign policy, and for the harmonization of relations among the individual constitutional entities. The centre of cosmopolitical and constitutional function and cohesion is, according to Rigas Velestinlis (1797/2021), the “sovereign people” (αὐτοκράτωρ λαός), that is, the totality of those who inhabit the territory of the cosmopolitical state. We speak of a cosmopolitical state because the citizen holds political status both at the level of the city-commune and at the level of the cosmopolity as a whole; he is therefore at once a citizen and a cosmopolitan. More specifically, his political status is fully developed under the terms of democracy, while his cosmopolitical status develops under the terms of the principal in the system of representation (Contogeorgis 2008). Consequently, Rigas Velestinlis's constitutional project incorporates as basic constitutional parameters, first, democracy, as the direct participation of citizens in the decision-making process at the level of the cities. There, in accordance with Articles 11–20 contained in “The Principle of Legislated Action and the Soul of Administration,” his positions on the development of democracy within the communes are set out, through the constitution of local assemblies of the *dēmos*, the so-called “primary assemblies,” in which citizens convene, deliberate, and vote on matters within the competence of the commune (Velestinlis 1797/2021, 95–97). Second, representation — that is, he establishes the relation of society as principal and of political personnel as agent at the level of the oecumenical cosmopolis: the citizens who take part in the primary assemblies elect representatives to the cosmopolitical assembly, or, in Velestinlis's own words, the “Legislative Body” (1797/2021, 105). This body is composed of 750 members and is in turn divided into the Council of the 500, which submits legislative proposals, and the Council of Elders (250 in number), who either ratify or annul the proposed laws. Likewise, as stated in Article 59: “Article 59. — Forty days after the dispatch of the proposed law, if in half of the provinces plus one, a tenth of the primary assemblies (that is, sixty citizens) of each province, duly constituted, has not opposed it, the written proposed law is accepted and ratified, thenceforth to be known as Law” (Velestinlis 1797/2021, 115). The representative relation between society and central/cosmopolitical authority is further confirmed by Article 115, which provides that: “— If in more than half of the provinces of the Republic, a tenth part of the primary assemblies of each of them, convened according to the aforesaid rules (11, 12, 13), request that the act of legislative administration be reconsidered, or that some of its articles be changed, then the Legislative Body has the duty to convene the primary assemblies of all the other provinces of the Republic as well, in order to ascertain whether a General National Assembly should be convened” (Velestinlis 1797/2021, 135). We observe, then, that the cosmopolitical dimension in Rigas Velestinlis's thought does not constitute a mere rhetorical figure, but an essential facet of the political reality of his supra-state scheme. Consequently, society is able to determine, to a significant degree, the course of the legislative power's initiatives.

Finally, as for the executive power, this is constituted by the so-called Executive Directory, composed of five members, whose competencies are confined, under Article 65, to the execution of the laws of the Legislative Body. The election of the members and the duration of the Executive Directory's term follow the following procedure: Article 63. — The Executive Assembly of each province (37, 38) nominates one candidate, and the Legislative Body elects the members of the Directory from the general list of names. Article 64. — Half [the members] change every year. From this we understand that even in the election of the executive power of the cosmopolitical reality, society holds, in combination with the other parameters, a significant role.

CONCLUSIONS

Following all of the preceding analysis, we consider that Rigas Velesinlis's proposal contains the answers both to the appropriate mode of constitutional organization of the individual state entities, and to the prospect of a genuinely democratic European integration. Rigas Velesinlis places societies within the political sphere on the terms of democracy and renders them competent to determine their own future. Moreover, the introduction of the representative relation between societies and political personnel at the supra-state level can substantially weaken the power of organized economic interests and of the bureaucracy that significantly influence EU policies. It can also lead to greater cohesion among the peoples that make it up, since, through the cosmopolitical parameter — that is, the combination of intra-state democracy and supra-state representation — the conflict between the interests of the citizen of the member state and the citizen of the EU would be lifted. Indeed, given that, owing to technological progress, the communicative capacities of contemporary societies have acquired possibilities inaccessible in the past — such as, for example, that of remote political intervention — citizens organized into digital *dēmoi* will be able to convene, submit their opinions, deliberate, and decide on matters concerning their political reality. Consequently, Rigas Velesinlis's cosmopolitical project, modernized so as to respond to today's social needs and capacities, could contribute to the cause of European integration and thus render the EU a significant geopolitical factor within the planetary inter-state order.

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