

Future of Europe

The Four ‘Classical Federalisms’

FEDERICO OTTAVIO REHO

This paper aims to provide a critical analysis of the federalist doctrines that influenced the development of European integration. It argues that four federalist visions emerged at the dawn of European integration, each with its own specific ideological background and its own idea of what the federal Europe of the future should look like. The progressive federalism of Altiero Spinelli was different from the technocratic federalism of Jean Monnet, as much as the liberal federalism of Luigi Einaudi diverged from the personalist federalism of Christian Democrats. The paper also contends that the two federalist philosophies most influential throughout European integration—those of Spinelli and Monnet— are founded on a unitary view of sovereignty and care little about protecting and retaining local state identities. On the contrary, within the Christian Democratic tradition there developed a bottom-up, culturally rooted federalism that was mindful of national and regional autonomy and averse to the concept of absolute sovereignty, be it national or European. Today, it is from this tradition that we should draw inspiration to redesign a more legitimate EU.

Introduction

These are hard times for European integration—especially federal European integration. In the last years, we have witnessed growing efforts to tear the EU apart and to question the legitimacy of its institutions. Against this backdrop, nobody can tell whether—and in what form—any European integration drive will prevail in the years ahead. This paper argues that any such drive cannot bear the marks of centralised federalism, despite the great influence this stream of thought continues to wield in the most integrationist institutional circles. On the contrary, we urgently need to reconnect with a less technocratic and more culturally rooted federalism which is more pragmatic and more mindful of national and regional autonomy: in short, a federalism which is closer to the day-to-day concerns of a public increasingly hostile to elites they perceive to be distant and aloof. This kind of federalism existed in Europe long before the start of the integration process following the Second World War, and has persisted (latently at least) in the view of this process held by European federalists from the Christian Democratic tradition.

Federalism in the Anglo-American and Continental European traditions¹

The traditional approach to federalism conceptualises this framework as one possible way in which the modern state can be organised. US academic Preston King, for example, offers the following definition of federalism: ‘An institutional arrangement, taking the form of a sovereign state, and distinguished from other such states solely by the fact that its central government incorporates regional units in its decision procedure on some constitutionally entrenched basis.’² Under this view, the federal state—like all other forms of state—is based on the concept of sovereignty developed in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries by French scholar Jean Bodin and English philosopher Thomas Hobbes to indicate a power that is indivisible, supreme and absolute (*superiorem non recognoscens*, as the well-worn Latin adage of yesteryear puts it). The peculiarity of a federation would simply be that the attribute of indivisibility is weakened by sharing supreme powers between two or more mutually autonomous levels of government that have acquired constitutionally enshrined prerogatives.

This traditional interpretation also considers the founding documents of political federalism to be the famed *Federalist Papers*, a series of newspaper articles written by Alexander Hamilton, John Jay and James Madison between 1787 and 1788 to promote the ratification of the new US federal constitution. Writing in a social and political climate with a deep-seated aversion to centralisation, the authors subtly and tactfully defend the ultimate primacy, so to speak, of the Union while at the same time reassuring citizens about the individual US states’ continuing powers: ‘So long as the separate organization of the members not be abolished; so long as it exists, by a constitutional necessity, for local purposes; *though it should be in perfect subordination to the general authority of the union*, it would still be, in fact and in theory, an association of states, or a confederacy.’³ For this reason, when referring to the new federal system advocated by the *Federalist Papers*, some have spoken of a ‘centralized federalism’,⁴ or even of a constitution that is a composition of both federal and unitary features,⁵ as opposed to an older autonomist notion of federalism—which, they maintain, emphasis-

¹ This distinction between the two traditions comes from British scholar Michael Burgess (*Federalism and European Union: the Building of Europe, 1950–2000* (London and New York: Routledge, 2000), 1–21).

² Quoted in S. Collignon, *The European Republic: Reflections on the Political Economy of a Future Constitution*, Federal Trust for Education and Research (London, 2003), 72.

³ Quoted in T. Hueglin, ‘Federalism at the Crossroads: Old Meanings, New Significance’, *Canadian Journal of Political Science* 36/2 (2003), 280. My italics.

⁴ See, for example, W. H. Riker, *The Development of American Federalism* (Boston: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1987), 17–41.

⁵ See M. Diamond, ‘The Federalist’s View of Federalism’, in G. S. Benson (ed.), *Essays in Federalism*, Institute for Studies in Federalism (Claremont, 1961), 21–64.

es instead the prerogatives of the individual states and the prevalence of contractual, voluntary relations between them.⁶ These very lucid articles are usually (correctly) ascribed to the liberal stream of political thought that developed during the eighteenth century, starting with reflections on the English constitutional experience.

While accurate, this interpretation is also incomplete as it neglects a long non-liberal tradition of federalist thought. This tradition had already been developed and become influential in Europe centuries before the Hamiltonian reflections on the matter, and was inspired by the proto-federal political systems of the United Provinces (i.e. the Dutch Republic), Switzerland and Germany.⁷ It was marked by theological ideas and was much more holistic in nature than the liberal version described above. In the Protestant theology of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the idea grew of a political order organically constructed from the bottom up by means of covenantal relations set out in God's presence and undergirded by his authority. This cultural environment was very different from the liberalism of the following century. And it was in this context that Johannes Althusius (1557–1638), dubbed 'the first federalist',⁸ studied and worked. Althusius was a defender of a composite consensus-based political order arising from the associative free will of many natural, social and political communities. Althusius's first-hand involvement in the constitutional disputes regarding a new structure for the Holy Roman Empire after the Protestant Reformation meant that his covenantal federalism responded to the political needs of the time. It did this by squaring the unity of the empire with the autonomy of the individual princes and city states and consolidating the role of intermediate social and political bodies, in accordance with the principle of subsidiarity, which Althusius adopted from the medieval tradition and alluded to repeatedly.⁹ It is worth bearing in mind the main characteristics of this 'bottom-up' central European federalism, with its aversion to the concept of absolute sovereignty, as these will be useful as we now go on to discuss European federalism in more detail.

⁶ Martin Diamond claims that the authors of the *Federalist Papers* themselves regarded their system as a composition of federal and unitary features. It is also worth bearing in mind that before the US Constitution, the meaning attributed to the adjective 'federal' was similar, if not identical, to that of the adjective 'confederal'—indeed, so much so that in those writings the two terms are often used interchangeably.

⁷ See T. Hueglin, 'Federalism at the Crossroads', 276

⁸ See A. de Benoist, 'The First Federalist: Johannes Althusius', *Telos* 118 (2000), 25–58.

⁹ For an illuminating analysis of Althusius's thought and its relevance for today, see T. O. Hueglin, *Early Modern Concepts for a Late Modern World: Althusius on Community and Federalism* (Waterloo, Ontario: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1999).

The four ‘classical federalisms’ of European integration

When speaking about the history of European integration, it is customary today to use the term ‘founding fathers’ as if those concerned were a cohesive group of statesmen and visionaries with relatively homogeneous ideas, at least on European cooperation matters. Despite highly divergent political trajectories as well as personal and professional backgrounds, figures such as Konrad Adenauer, Alcide De Gasperi, Jean Monnet, Robert Schuman, Paul-Henri Spaak and Altiero Spinelli are considered to have shared a certain view of Europe as a federal political entity, on whose construction they loyally collaborated. However, all too often the emphasis rightly placed on a certain convergence of objectives and of the rhetoric used to justify them has masked the highly divergent cultural and political traditions that informed the founders’ views on federalism. These divergences were so substantial that in the post-war political scene they defined at least four distinct European federalist doctrines, each of them based to varying degrees on the two great federalist traditions indicated above, namely the Anglo-American and the Continental European.

The democratic-progressive federalism of Altiero Spinelli

The two most visible and influential brands of federalism in the process of European integration were without a doubt the democratic-progressive federalism of Italian Altiero Spinelli and the technocratic-functional federalism of Frenchman Jean Monnet. Spinelli repeatedly attacked Monnet’s functionalist doctrine, which he blamed for dangerously sidetracking Europe from its main path of true European federalism. This ‘prophet’, whose beliefs had crystallised when he was a wartime prisoner on the Italian island of Ventotene, opposed his ‘federalism’ to Monnet’s ‘functionalism’, considering the two to be completely irreconcilable doctrines. In fact, the difference in views between the French technocrat and the Italian visionary appear to have been mainly methodological in nature. Both men’s ultimate goal was to create a European federation based on the US model, but they devised different methods to get there.

The main characteristics of Spinelli’s brand of federalism can already be seen in the famed 1941 *Ventotene Manifesto*. From a political/institutional perspective, its distinguishing feature is surely the huge importance it attaches to the US federal model. Spinelli leaves no room for doubt about the fundamentally state-like nature of his federalist project: ‘What the European federalists felt was important about the US experience’, he writes, ‘is precisely its founders’ ability to understand *the real terms of state building*, which are always problems of building a force and determining its

limits'.¹⁰ Spinelli and the federalist school inspired by him stress the need to immediately create 'a secure and strong European power based on a democratic consensus among Europeans' as a vital institutional prerequisite to establishing an 'effective economic, military and diplomatic unit' in Europe.¹¹ This approach is founded on a unitary view of sovereignty, stresses the hierarchical nature of the relationship between federal and federated powers, and outlines a form of federalism the economist Stefan Collignon has labelled 'centralist' in a book defending its adoption by the EU.¹² Centralist federalists, fearing a constant threat of conflict (including war) that no established power would be able to tackle, look unfavourably on the existence of various governments with no clear hierarchical relationship between them. Therefore, the main intention of centralist federalism is to 'create an efficient centralised government, not to retain local state identities'.¹³

The 1789 US Constitution represented an ambiguous compromise between the supporters of the old autonomist federalism, in which we can discern many confederal features, and the proponents of a more unitary or 'national' model. While initially skewed towards protecting the individual states' autonomy at the expense of the central powers, in practice the balance of this constitutional compromise gradually shifted towards the federal authorities. Over time—and as a result of decisive transformations such as those arising from the American Civil War, Roosevelt's New Deal and the country's growing involvement in international affairs—the US federal system shed many of its genuinely federal features. It became a decentralised nation state, in which, however, the regional entities' powers are constitutionally enshrined. The idea that this could also be the fate of the European national communities, once they became part of a single federal unit, with their levels of autonomy and dynamism reduced to those of the US states or the German regions, does not seem to have been a concern for Spinelli's federalist school.

Moreover, the strong democratic/participatory tendencies of Spinelli's federalism also make it prone to centralisation from a less institutional and more purely political/cultural perspective. Spinelli's federal democracy is not one that is federalised from the bottom up through many competing and cooperating groups and authorities, and which is therefore democratic because it encourages the direct civic participation of the populace at local level. Instead, it is a political democracy in which citizens help to determine federal decisions by joining forces in federal political parties and developing a fed-

¹⁰ See A. Spinelli, *Il progetto europeo* [The European Project] (Bologna: Il Mulino, 1985), 151–62. My italics.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² See S. Collignon, *The European Republic*, 69–89.

¹³ Ibid., 74.

eral public arena, identity and political lexicon—a mechanism in fact very similar to that set in motion by modern nation states. The work of forcefully ‘nationalising the masses’ that was carried out by the nineteenth- and twentieth-century nation states—as a result of which, for instance, the Provençals and Bretons became French, and the Neapolitans and Piedmontese became Italian—led to the emergence of truly national mass political parties, thereby creating a shared public forum for debate and deliberation. Therefore, whether or not this is made explicit, a level of nationalisation of Europe’s masses is a necessary corollary of the democratic model offered by Spinelli’s federalism, as is evident from its supporters’ constant attempts to replicate at European level the decision-making mechanisms typical of national parliamentary democracies.

The liberal federalism of Robbins, Hayek and Einaudi

Liberal federalism is the predominant modern brand of federalism. There is no question that the mainspring of American federalism is of liberal origin. But this is not the whole story. Some of the most influential intellectual figures in the European federalist debates that paved the way for the integration process following the Second World War were clearly liberals. Although the chronic weakness of liberalism as a political force in Continental Europe in the post-war period meant that there were few liberal statesmen among the main founding fathers, liberal intellectuals’ influence was felt far beyond the limited confines of political liberalism. Here it will be enough to mention three names and the key characteristics of their federalism. British economist Lionel Robbins set out his stall with his pioneering analysis of how international economic liberalism was constantly threatened by the protectionist tendencies of political nationalism.¹⁴ The logical conclusion he drew was that interstate federalism was vital to safeguarding economic freedoms. Meanwhile, Austrian economist Friedrich von Hayek broke new ground by identifying the existence of specific economic mechanisms which, within a major continental federation, would curb government interventionism and promote the adoption of liberal economic policies.¹⁵ Finally, for similar reasons Italian economist and politician Luigi Einaudi was a passionate supporter of a European federation and played a decisive part in introducing the Anglo-American federalist tradition to Spinelli and his fellow prisoners on Ventotene.

From an institutional perspective, the liberal federalists’ model is clearly the US centralised federalist experience, which brings them closer to Spinelli’s federalism. However, given the lack of socialist in-

¹⁴ See L. Robbins, *The Economic Causes of War* (New York: Howard Fertig, 1968).

¹⁵ See F. A. von Hayek, ‘The Economic Conditions of Interstate Federalism’, in F. A. von Hayek, *Individualism and Economic Order* (University of Chicago Press, 1948), 255–72.

fluences on these thinkers, their federalism principally takes the form of a strong institutional system limited to a few sovereign functions such as diplomacy, defence and the powers required to safeguard the federation's economic integrity from the protectionist tendencies of the individual states. Above all, we find at the heart of liberal federalism the desire to put supranational authorities at the service of a major continental single market. The expectation was that this would yield competitive social and economic results, while also being characterised by the dispersion of power. Moreover, in many cases liberal mistrust of an excessively powerful central government prompts these authors to advocate the revitalisation of intrastate units of government, and therefore a growing number of centres of power.

The technocratic/functionalist federalism of Jean Monnet

Of the four 'classical federalisms', as I have chosen to call them, Jean Monnet's is perhaps the most influential but at the same time the hardest to trace back to a specific tradition of thought. 'Monnetism' is usually not even considered a European federalist doctrine, although its founder pursued a goal not dissimilar to that of Spinelli. In fact, Monnet's functionalism is an approach to integration rather than a specific constitutional model. Its core insight is the attempt to alter the context in which states' strategic preferences take shape, thereby leading them to gradually share sovereignty. In its proponents' view, this would then open the way to full federalisation. Two factors play a key role in the Monnetist unification strategy: the institutional structure and the role of economic interdependence.

The famous Monnet quote 'Nothing is possible without people; nothing is lasting without institutions' lies at the heart of the Monnetist approach. It is an approach that aims to transfer the exercise of certain powers—especially administrative powers and those related to economic regulation—to strong, autonomous supranational authorities, with the expectation that the interdependence of the various economic sectors and the necessities of economic integration will tend to feed an ongoing momentum towards integration. In other words, the Monnetist path to the creation of a European federation—unlike that of Spinelli—is not direct and is not meant to lead to the destination all at once. Instead, it is functional and indirect. The sovereignty of the states is not explicitly limited by creating a full-fledged federal power, but rather, gradually pooled by establishing a growing number of functional connections between them. The idea that a critical mass of such connections would one day inevitably lead to a federal transformation of Europe seems to have been little more than an act of faith—an accusation indeed that Spinelli repeatedly levelled at Monnet. However, the Frenchman appears to have held that integration limited to a few sectors would give rise to a process of economic osmosis guaranteed by institutions, with this, in his words, 'establishing de facto solidarity, from which a federation would gradually emerge. I have never believed that one fine day Europe would be created by some great political mutation'.¹⁶

While Spinelli's federalism is political and democratic, Monnet's functionalism is technocratic and elitist. Its technocratic character can be seen in the dominant role it gives to supranational authorities made up of professional bureaucrats—authorities which were, as far as possible, beyond the control of governments and parliaments. That Monnet's functionalism is elitist is evidenced, first, in its special mistrust of political representation in general and parliaments in particular. But this elitism can also be seen in the clear preference for economic and administrative elites being in the vanguard of the integration process, and in the belief that they would eventually drag along the masses, who were deemed not yet ready to leap on to the federalist bandwagon.¹⁷

While Monnet was in his own way a visionary of real genius, he seems to have been completely unfamiliar with the federalist doctrines and traditions of European and US history. He had not been a brilliant student, and it seems that his reading did not go much beyond the newspapers and the political and economic news of his time.¹⁸ However, it is not difficult to establish some interesting connections between his ideas and certain previous federalist writings. First and foremost, Monnet had lived in the US for a long time and had probably had the chance to observe the functioning of American federalism, whose gradual shift towards centralisation was gaining momentum in the 1920s and 1930s.

More generally, there are some striking similarities between Monnet's technocratic and economic federalism and the vision of a unified Europe developed by Henri de Saint-Simon in 1814, on the eve of the Congress of Vienna, whose proceedings he hoped to influence. While it is common knowledge that Saint-Simon predicted the advent of scientific/industrial society, what is often forgotten is that he also proposed establishing a federal Europe governed by shared institutions that were independent of national governments. Like his compatriot almost a century and a half later, this French thinker gave industry—or rather the commercial and productive forces in European societies—the task of forging in their day-to-day interactions a new international solidarity, and a strong continental power the task of educating the European masses in the new natural sciences and humanities. This shows that, just like Spinelli's federalism, Monnetist functionalism has strongly centralist connotations. We now come to a completely different brand of federalism, that of the Christian Democrats.

¹⁶ Quoted in M. Burgess, *Federalism and European Union*, 35.

¹⁷ For an analysis of the technocratic and elitist characteristics of Monnetist functionalism, see K. Featherstone, 'Jean Monnet and the "Democratic Deficit" in the European Union', *Journal of Common Market Studies* 32/2 (1994), 149–70.

¹⁸ This detail is mentioned in a footnote in R. Swedberg, 'Saint-Simon's Vision of a United Europe', *European Journal of Sociology* 35/1 (1994), 167.

The personalist federalism of the Christian Democrats

While Spinelli's federalism and its Monnetist counterpart are clearly associated with individual personalities who laid down their doctrines and played a key role in various phases of the European integration process, the Christian Democratic brand of federalism cannot be linked so directly with any particular thinker or man of action. Instead, it was the product of a specific intellectual climate, a tradition of thought and a political instinct shared by various statesmen and thinkers with leanings towards Christian Democratic politics in its various facets, in some cases more progressive and in others more liberal or conservative.

What binds them together, above all, is the influence of the personalist vision of humanity and society that had always been implicit in Christian theological teachings and came to be set forth more explicitly in Catholic social teaching. This is not the place for a detailed account of this teaching. Suffice it to say that it is based on a series of papal encyclicals and pronouncements starting with *Rerum Novarum* (1891). These doctrinal documents

constituted a philosophy of man and society which was rooted in pluralism, personalism, solidarity and subsidiarity. The Church did not formally address itself to federalism per se in these papal encyclicals, but in propounding a peculiarly organic view of society and its ethical-religious implications, it gave ecclesiastical authority to the central concepts which formed the basis of federal thought and action. The papal encyclicals, therefore, incorporated a set of assumptions and principles about man, the state and society which yielded a *particular brand of Continental European federalism* to be firmly integrated into the later Christian Democratic conception of European Union.¹⁹

It is not difficult to establish a link between this Catholic federalism—marked by a holistic vision of society and governed by the principle of subsidiarity protecting autonomous natural, social and political communities—and the old Protestant federalism of Johannes Althusius. The covenantal aspect is less developed here, but both doctrines seem to spurn a monolithic, centralised and exclusivist conception of the political order—the conception of the modern sovereign state—in favour of a society with many internal articulations, whose centre of gravity remains as close as possible to the area of direct personal, family and local action.

¹⁹ See M. Burgess, *Federalism and European Union*, 11. My italics.

At the time of *Rerum Novarum* and then again after the Second World War, such a vision was opposed to the exclusivist claims of the nationalist and bureaucratic/centralising states, both of them originating from a pagan view of the state that was incompatible with Christian personalism. There is another important channel, in addition to Catholic social teaching, through which these conceptions influenced the European vision of the Christian Democratic founding fathers, subtly differentiating it from the Spinellian and Monnetist schools, with which they also shared a commitment to the cause of European unity. This was the personalist philosophical movement.²⁰

The theory of personalism was developed in the 1930s in the writings of various intellectual figures, foremost among them being the Frenchman Emmanuel Mounier and the Swiss Denis de Rougemont.²¹ It is a comprehensive social and political theory starting out from the concept of individual human persons as free and responsible beings, who are nevertheless linked to their peers by a tight-knit network of interpersonal relationships establishing the civic initiatives and intermediate bodies that provide the lifeblood of a decent human society. Also known as 'integral federalism', personalism advocated radical federalisation both within nation states—which it denounced as Jacobinic, centralist and oppressive—and at interstate level.

The radical autonomy it affords every conceivable social and political formation and the adherence to the principle of subsidiarity characterise a type of federalism based on 'cooperation between independent decision-making centers and restructuring of the whole of society, both based on freely entered into contracts.'²² With this we return, in the heart of the twentieth century, to the old covenantal federalism of the Continental European tradition, with its unstinting attachment to regional identities, local freedoms, and the autonomy of the various units of government and of the intermediate bodies.

There is no doubt that personalism was the doctrine that had the greatest impact on Christian Democratic politics in the post-war period. All the Christian Democratic founding fathers experienced its influence in one way or another.²³ This explains in part why they focused on respect for cultural diversity and on national and regional autonomy within the framework of a putative Euro-

²⁰ Note that both the noun 'personalism' and the adjective 'personalist' are used here with two similar but not completely identical meanings. First, they are used to refer to the personalist character of Christian theology and doctrine in general. This derives from the personal nature of God in Christianity and the resulting centrality of the individual, as created 'in the image of God', in the Christian view of the social and political order. Second, they are applied with regard to a particular philosophical movement, namely the personalist movement that developed in the 1930s and 1940s.

²¹ A brief introduction to the relationship between personalism and federalism is provided in F. Kinsky, 'Personalism and Federalism', *Publius* 9/4 (1979), 131–56.

²² *Ibid.*, 152.

²³ See, for example, W. Kaiser, *Christian Democracy and the Origins of European Union* (Cambridge University Press, 2007).

pean federation, thereby creating a more minimalist and decentralised brand of federalism than the one advocated by Spinelli. Referring to De Gasperi and his federalist view, Italian historian and diplomat Sergio Romano has remarked that

the Europe he envisaged was probably an updated version of the ideal state the leading exponents of the Austro-Hungarian Empire tried to create before the Great War: various levels of autonomy, worthy of equal respect, but subject to the authority of an arbitrator and united by a number of shared basic instruments such as the army and the diplomatic service.²⁴

A similar European vision appears to have been shared by Konrad Adenauer, who was even open to more overtly confederal forms of continental cooperation such as those put forward by Charles de Gaulle.²⁵ Wilhelm Röpke—an economist and intellectual who influenced both Adenauer and his successor as German Chancellor, Ludwig Erhard—flatly rejected any suggestion that Europe could be saved simply by transferring sovereign power from the nation states to a European federation. In his view ‘the excess of sovereignty should be abolished instead of being transferred to a higher political and geographical unit’.²⁶ Röpke believed that a European federation would only succeed if it gave, as far as possible, free rein to national particularities; revitalised local communities; and adopted a strict policy of ‘decentrism’. The last-mentioned term was coined by Röpke himself to indicate a political, social and economic structure on a human scale which is the opposite of the bureaucratic/industrial megaliths represented by modern nation states—even those with a federal structure.²⁷

In short, we have here a European federalism whose boundaries are certainly more fluid than the types favoured by Spinelli or Monnet. At the same time, it has its own personality as a federalism with marked cultural and spiritual roots, more polycentric from the institutional perspective and more mindful of national and regional autonomy. While the forms of federalism inspired by Spinelli and Monnet definitely belong to the family of centralised federalism with its Anglo-American origins, the brand of federalism we have labelled ‘personalist’ appears more attuned to the Continental European federalism that is based on the biblical covenant, autonomy and subsidiarity. It might well be that this federalism should be given a new lease of life for the purpose of building the Europe of tomorrow.

²⁴ See S. Romano, ‘La visione internazionale di Alcide De Gasperi da Vienna a Roma’ [The International Vision of Alcide De Gasperi from Vienna to Rome], presentation given at the Fondazione Trentina Alcide De Gasperi, Pieve Tesino, 18 August 2008. My translation.

²⁵ More complex is the case of Robert Schuman, the author of the famous declaration which in May 1949 launched the first great functionalist experiment in European integration and which was largely inspired by Jean Monnet.

²⁶ Quoted in G. Majone, *Rethinking the Union of Europe Post-Crisis: Has Integration Gone Too Far?* (Cambridge University Press, 2014), 298.

²⁷ See W. Röpke, *A Humane Economy: The Social Framework of the Free Market* (Chicago: Henry Regnery Company, 1960). Röpke has a very positive view of the Swiss federal model in particular.

Conclusions

Now let us return to the starting point of this essay, namely the bedside of the new ‘sick man of Europe’: the EU itself and also, more generally, the process of integration that has given rise to it. The EU is no federation, and member states have always played the decisive role in its balances of power.²⁸ Nevertheless, at the beginnings of the process which created the EU, there were at least four distinct federalist doctrines. It is impossible to reconstruct in detail here the influence of each of them throughout the almost 70 years of European integration. However, it is not hard to discern that the two most centralist types have been dominant. Their dominance perhaps helps to explain the depressing unpopularity that has hit European integration in recent times.

Despite its undoubted contribution to the initial successes of European integration, Monnetist federalism supplied Europe with at least two poisoned chalices—from which the EU naively continues to drink. The first is that pressing functionalist reflex which has consistently led the EU’s elites to favour economic integration initiatives to achieve political goals, and then to present every advance in the integration process not as a political choice in need of public reflection and deliberation, but as an economic necessity which it would be futile to resist. An inherent part of this strategy is that peculiar Monnetist faith in the capacity of economic/functional integration to spontaneously produce over time the political consensus required for its long-term survival. This reached its peak with the introduction of the single currency. But the euro has not only failed to generate the political capital required to federalise the continent, but also severely dented the popularity of the integration process. The second is a certain predisposition to technocracy and regulation that those familiar with the European institutions know all too well. Deprived by Monnetist functionalism of the supreme political powers normally exercised by a federal government, those institutions have ended up investing much of their energy in a multitude of regulatory initiatives that have often provided substantial ammunition for their enemies.

The federalism of Altiero Spinelli, who clearly understood the limitations of Monnetism, was also very influential—and not always for the best. This remarkable visionary passed on to European integrationists active at both the national and supranational levels the state-centric vision of integration he had adopted from the classical exponents of centralist federalism. This meant that, inevitably, many of these integrationists—intent on continuing his work but lacking his common sense—made clumsy efforts to replicate at European level the aspects of hierarchical and geo-

²⁸ See A. Milward, *The European Rescue of the Nation-State* (London: Routledge, 1994).

graphical integration that are typical of the nation state and which were also adopted, in time, by American federalism.²⁹ Even worse, they began to also mimic the functioning of national parliamentary democracies, ending up naively equating the EU's legitimacy with its gradual parliamentarisation. From 1979 until 2014 this parliamentarisation steadily deepened, as did the gap between the Union and its citizens.

Liberal federalism, while less influential, has weightier successes to its name. Specifically, the consolidation of the European single market and the introduction of the principle of mutual recognition by the Court of Justice have restored to citizens many of the freedoms withdrawn by their governments in the aftermath of the Second World War, exactly as predicted by von Hayek.³⁰

Finally, we come to the Christian Democratic brand of federalism, whose impact on the process of European integration has not lived up to the tradition it belongs to. Its continuing influence is undoubtedly responsible for the relevance—from the time of the Maastricht Treaty onwards, albeit in a rather weak and limited form—of the principle of subsidiarity, a mainstay of Catholic social teaching. The creation of the Economic and Social Committee and then of the Committee of the Regions, two bodies without real powers, appear to be grudging concessions to the pluralistic and autonomist notion of representation of Christian Democratic federalism.

However, the Christian Democratic tradition has never fully realised the distinctive nature of its federalism and therefore has not been able to draw on it to make specific reform proposals for European integration. Developed at the dawn of the modern age with a view to preventing a monolithic, hierarchical and territorially based political order from sweeping away all traces of the polycentric, pluralistic and functional order of pre-modern Europe, this intriguing federalism could be surprisingly well suited to meeting the challenges of the post-modern world: a flexible, ever-changing world with a growing number of centres of power, each of them being increasingly autonomous and elusive. At the present time, as I have tried to illustrate in this brief analysis, this federalism may help the 'Old Continent' to rediscover a less vertical integration model that is more mindful of cultural diversity and closer to the people than is the EU of today.

²⁹ In this connection, Giandomenico Majone has noted that many community initiatives aimed at creating a new 'European consciousness' call to mind 'the techniques and methods used in the past by nationalist elites to forge Europe's existing nation states' (*Rethinking the Union of Europe Post-Crisis*, 66–7).

³⁰ See F. A. von Hayek, 'The Economic Conditions of Interstate Federalism'.

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