Realistic Solidarity for the real EU

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ABSTRACT

This paper tackles the notion of solidarity in the EU from a realistic perspective and aims at clarifying two common flaws in the arguments of many who invoke it: vagueness and utopianism. I have two aims: to clarify the concept of solidarity, and to offer a realistic justification for its application to the EU. To make sense of the heterogeneous history of the concept, I suggest distinguishing it from charity, which is spontaneous and universal, and from fraternity, which relates to a mere emotional sense of fellow-feeling. This less demanding conception of solidarity can be realistically defended as instrumental to stabilizing political cooperation within the EU, and as such it is in the long-term enlightened self-interest of all its members.

Keywords: Realism, Solidarity, Fraternity, Charity, Stability

This paper has been written in the context of the RESCEU Project (Reconciling economic and social Europe, www.resceu.eu), funded by the European Research Council (Advanced Grant no. 340534).

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this paper is to establish what conception of solidarity in the European Union can be defended from a realistic standpoint.

In this paper, I am not interested only in the idea of solidarity, but also in how to apply this idea to the EU. Some commentators deny that this is possible, others deny that it is desirable. As I shall argue, I believe that more solidarity would benefit the EU as a whole, and I am cautiously optimistic that solidarity can be seen as a realistic goal.

This issue is particularly salient because calls for more solidarity resound loudly and clearly in the public debate, particularly in times of crisis. Politicians, public intellectuals, and academics alike evoke the issue. Jean-Claude Juncker entitled his 2015 'State of the Union' speech: 'Time for Honesty, Unity and Solidarity' (Juncker, 2015) and in his 2016 speech he claimed that 'solidarity is the glue that keeps our Union together' (Juncker, 2016: 6), reminding us that the word 'solidarity' is mentioned 16 times in the treaties. In a recent book, an influential philosopher like Habermas considers the 'decisive question […] how far the populations of the Eurozone now find themselves in a historic setting which calls for 'solidarity' (Habermas, 2015: 20). Finally, the issue of solidarity is often invoked by academics: some political scientists see social welfare measures as tools for state building (Ferrera, 2005), and some political philosophers see it as a requirement of justice. However, these exhortations are often either rather vague or implausibly idealistic, and this paper attempts to remedy both flaws.

First, the concept of solidarity has diverse meanings. It is not always clear what is meant by 'solidarity', whose theoretical meaning is 'overshadowed by its appellative function' (Bayertz, 1999), and it is 'sometimes used as a nebulous concept that is not defined at all' (Stjernø, 2009: 2). Solidarity is, for example, often indiscriminately assimilated to benevolence or fraternity,

with which it shares its historical roots (Bayertz, 1999; Brunkhorst, 2005; Stjernø, 2009) but from which it is ultimately different (Sangiovanni, 2015). A first aim of this paper is therefore to do some 'conceptual cleansing' and provide a convincing and useful rational reconstruction of the notion of solidarity. Recently, some promising conceptualizations have been put forward (Nicolaïdis and Viehoff, 2012; Sangiovanni, 2015), particularly in regard to the EU (Ferrera, 2014; Sangiovanni, 2013). This paper intends to contribute to this debate.

A second problem with these calls for solidarity is that, while they may be appealing to moral and political philosophers, they have little political purchase among European and national citizens (Ferrera, 2016a). The second aim of this paper is therefore to provide a realistic justification for solidarity. If solidarity is the important ideal which eminent political philosophers claim it to be, it must be understood in a guise that is politically workable, lest it remain a mere idea. Particularly, solidarity must be justified *qua* 'political value' (Ferrera, 2016b) in a context-sensitive way (Sangiovanni, 2016).

I. WHY POLITICAL REALISM?

The developing strand of normative political realism offers promising ground for investigating the question of solidarity in the EU, because such an urgent and practical question cannot indulge the luxury of theorizing detached from reality. While full justification of political realism falls outside the scope of this paper, I will offer some general considerations in favour of it and discuss three ways in which it specifically benefits the object of the paper.

The relationship between realism and idealism is a long controversy which goes back to Thucydides (Thucydides, 1954) and Machiavelli (Machiavelli, 2010), and has been recently resumed by philosophers questioning the dominant strand of the Rawlsian tradition of liberalism (Galston, 2010). It is not a straightforward task, however, to spell out what it means for a justification to be realistic because the literature is still developing. Some critics maintain

that it is impossible to justify a normative claim from a realist perspective, because consistent realism can only be 'complacent' towards the *status quo*, and they reject even the slightest moral improvements as unrealistic (Estlund, 2014: 123). In other words, a realistic justification of solidarity cannot recommend more solidarity than people are actually willing to give. These criticisms echo Rousseau's famous rebuttal against those who judged his proposals too radical: '«Propose what can be done», they never stop repeating to me. It is as if I were told, «Propose doing what is done»' (Rousseau, 1979: 34). If Rousseau's riposte is correct, it is not possible to justify anything beyond the *status quo* from the point of view of political realism. Others think, on the contrary, that it makes sense to conceive political realism as a genuinely normative project (Rossi and Sleat, 2014), and even liberalism (Sleat, 2013) and the value of liberty (Hall, 2015) or equality (Jubb, 2015) can be grounded in a realistic way. Some even go so far as to say that realism can in principle 'demand the impossible' because it is 'empirically informed, but not necessarily marred by status quo bias' (Rossi, 2015: 5). The claim is that the risk of a status quo bias can be minimized if one correctly distinguishes empirical analysis from common sense, and relies only on the former. In any case, it is better to depend on facts than on moral intuitions, which are more vulnerable to ideological distortions.

According to political realism, ideal theories are mistaken because they start from an ideal blueprint of the perfect society, and only then do they investigate if and how this can be reached from the actual standpoint. One usual, though controversial, criticism that realists raise against Rawls is that he starts from idealized free and equal individuals behind a 'veil of ignorance' (Rawls, 1971: 118) and has them agree on what principles should rule society on the assumption that all will later comply with them. More substantially, many realists object to utopian projects by subscribing to a different view of politics as revolving around two 'circumstances of politics' (Waldron, 1999: 101) without which politics is neither possible nor necessary. These are the presence of conflicts, and the need for some degree of order (Burelli,

2016), which is considered the first requirement to raise any other normative question (Williams, 2005). A realistic conception of solidarity must be aware of this nature of politics.

Contrary to ideal theorizing, a realistic normative theory should start from an empirically informed *status quo.* It muststart from 'an interpretation of both the point and purpose of the institutions for which the principles are needed, and the relations among participants in those institutions' (Sangiovanni, 2008: 164), which of the possible causal paths may lead to positive change, instead of imagining an ideal final state and then trying to figure out how to implement it in the real world. This need not end up in the 'complacent realism' (Estlund, 2014) of a status quo bias, for it is rather compatible with radical change (Rossi, 2015) as long as it is causally reachable from the current world.

Although these brief general considerations cannot provide a complete justification for the paradigm of political realism, there are three practical advantages in investigating the question of solidarity for the EU within a realistic framework.

First, it resolves the worry about feasibility: a realistic political theory needs to generate prescriptions which are politically possible. The importance of this point is not exclusive to political realists, since it is shared by Rawlsian liberals who focus on 'non-ideal theory' (Valentini, 2012). While it is a mistake to reduce all realism to a methodological worry about feasibility conditions (Sleat, 2014), there is no denying that it is an important feature of it. Insofar as we start from an accurate empirical representation of the EU, we can investigate what options are available to remedy the current predicament.

A second important point is that, by starting from the empirical *status quo* of the EU, we devise a notion of solidarity which is fit for its object: the EU. For political realists, political values like solidarity cannot be applied deductively in a categorical way to any possible political context. An ideal cannot be a-historically projected onto any given society in the same way regardless of

the circumstances (Geuss, 2008; Williams, 2005). A second advantage of grounding normative theorizing in the empirical *status quo* is – quite obviously – that it generates principles which are highly sensitive to the context. A realistic conception of solidarity for the EU can and should be expected to differ from one applicable to nation-states, social movements, or natural families; and political realism assures precisely that.

Finally, assessing causal paths for improving on the *status quo* entails paying responsible attention to all consequences of changes, which is something political realists are often keen to emphasise (Weber, 2013). In our case, realism inclines us to seek a notion of responsible solidarity whose consequences do not threaten itself or other important political goods.

Even without a full theoretical argument for assuming this realistic standpoint, these three 'pragmatic' (Hüller, 2015: 2) advantages count in favour of exploring the question of solidarity in the EU with a realist approach.

II. THE COMPLICATED HISTORY OF SOLIDARITY

Any discussion of solidarity should have a clear conception of what solidarity is, particularly if one wants to avoid emotional appeals to vague moral ideals. The first aim of this paper is therefore to clarify the notion of solidarity.

In his impressive history of the concept, Hauke Brunkhorst (2005) explores the roots of solidarity in Roman civil law, in the idea of fraternity in Aristotle, and in Jewish and Christian culture, culminating with the republican ideas of the French Revolution. Steinar Stjernø (2009) integrates this analysis with respect to the labour-movement account of solidarity and the Catholic view, which are at least as important in forging today's conception. While employing different theoretical frameworks, both these thorough reconstructions of solidarity's long heritage emphasise the plurality of meanings rather than unifying them. After reviewing many

conceptions of solidarity, Stjerno concludes that 'we are forced to admit that there is a high degree of variation within each variable and that each combination changes the meaning of the concept being studied' (Stjernø, 2009: 89).

The term 'solidarity' can be traced back to Roman law, where the expression '*Obligatio in Solidum*' referred to the obligation to repay the debts of relatives in full. Since its origin, it expressed this sense of 'being linked in one moral community' (Bayertz, 1999). The original meaning of solidarity is the feeling of belonging with others, which acts as an 'inner cement holding together a society' (Bayertz, 1999: 9). 'Appeals to solidarity refer to an interest in the integrity of a shared form of life that includes one's own well-being' (Habermas, 2015: 23). As Stephen Lukes observes. it is more clearly understood in opposition to '*fluidarity*', i.e. a 'lack of stable social relationships or bonds or connections, an absence of community or fellow-feeling' (Lukes, 1999).

Originally, it had a natural or biological meaning mostly denoting relations of fraternity or kinship. After the Greeks and the Christians, however, it acquired a more universal meaning, starting to refer a more general sentiment of belonging together with the whole human race as 'sons of God'.

Max Scheler, for example, reformulates this universalistic strand of solidarity by linking it to responsibility. He claims that each individual is co-responsible, 'mitverantwortlich' (Henckmann, 1998: 131) for the actions and desires, faults and merits of each other.

This universalistic reading is problematic from the point of view of political realism, because it does not seem widely supported by empirical analysis. Strong bonds of solidarity always seem to have an exclusionary dimension, and define a community by distinguishing peers from strangers. As Richard Rorty puts it: 'our sense of solidarity is strongest when those with whom solidarity is expressed are thought of as 'one of us', where 'us' means something smaller and

more local than the human race' (Rorty, 1989: 191). Stjernø observes that almost all examples of solidarity imply some excluded others, because its concept entails a 'relationship between an 'I' and its identifications with a 'we', and the relationship between a 'we' and a 'they' ' (Stjernø, 2009: 17–18).

Yet the most common contemporary meaning of solidarity is 'redistribution of resources in favour of those in need' (Bayertz, 1999), or, more elaborately, 'the preparedness to share resources with others by personal contribution to those in struggle or in need and through taxation and redistribution organized by the state' (Stjernø, 2009: 2). Although there have been occasional spontaneous transfers of resources towards the worst off, and even voluntary social insurance schemes, solidarity requires the institutionalization of the welfare state, which allows for an expanded audience. This in turns produces a number of advantages: reducing the price of insurance, and eliminating its connection to individual risk allows for both vertical and horizontal redistribution (Ferrera, 2005). This redistributive interpretation of solidarity can be traced back to the concept of fraternity and fellow-feeling in the French Revolution, and was formalized in article 21 of the Declaration of Human Rights of 1739 as the 'holy duty to support the unfortunate members of society'. It was then that the term 'solidarity' was coined by Pierre Leroux in opposition to 'charity' and 'compassion' (Leroux, 1840). Here the personal and spontaneous dimension of solidarity is abandoned in favour of an institutional design which can provide more efficiently for those in need. While previously the feeling of kinship and fraternity provided for some spontaneous gestures of benevolence and even voluntary forms of social insurance (Brunkhorst, 2005), it is in this ideational turning point that the link between solidarity and the welfare state solidifies.

In the modern world, therefore, the meaning of solidarity has been linked to economic considerations: to recall Durkheim's distinction, from a 'mechanical solidarity', the agreement in conscience among the members of a simple community, to 'organic solidarity' (Durkheim,

2014). The need for organic solidarity arises in complex societies with the division of labour because individuals acknowledge that they need others in order to provide what they cannot produce themselves. Their economic interaction creates space for a sense of organic belonging and should prompt a genuine, yet partly self-interested, concern about other people's wellbeing. Floris de Witte calls this 'market solidarity' and claims that within the EU 'it is the interdependence between the worker and the host state in the division of labour that engenders a normative obligation of the latter to extend all social entitlements to cover the worker' (Witte, 2015: 88). Given the high level of economic interdependence, and especially the commitment to foster a transnational market, the EU should undertake also some form of 'transnational solidarity' (Sangiovanni, 2013: 217). As Habermas evocatively puts it: 'simultaneously transcending the nation state paradigm without renouncing the social questions' (Habermas, 2012: 10).

The term in fact has a very mixed history, testifying to its variegated meaning and usage. In moral and political philosophy, it is common for important concepts like 'justice', 'liberty' and 'equality' to be contested, given the plurality of conceptions that refer to them. However, for solidarity the problem is not excessive theorizing. As Bayertz remarks, solidarity's 'heterogeneity does not stem from an abundance of competitive *theories*'(Bayertz, 1999: 3), but from precisely the opposite: It 'has seldom been the object of an elaborated theory' (Bayertz, 1999: 4).

III. CLARIFYING THE CONCEPT OF SOLIDARITY

These rich yet incoherent historical roots require a reconceptualization of solidarity if we want to make analytical use of it. This unfortunately will not encompass all the common occurrences of the term, since these are noticeably inconsistent in natural language. I will focus on providing a coherent account which is as faithful as possible to the historical roots of the concept, and which can be realistic enough to be politically workable.

A promising way to improve the sharpness of the concept is to draw a distinction between two similar concepts: charity and fraternity. While this is by no means the only way to reconceptualise solidarity, it is grounded in the literature and provides a realistic framework for defence of the idea. There is no doubt that the history of solidarity is related and intermingled with charity and fraternity. Nonetheless, it is beneficial to draw a conceptual distinction between them.

Solidarity can be distinguished from the Christian notion of charity in two respects: first, it is not universal in scope; second, it is compulsory and institutional rather than spontaneous and individual. Pierre Leroux coined the term solidarity 'expressly as a term to oppose compassion and charity' (Bayertz, 1999: 23)

Charity[1], particularly in its Catholic version, is distinctively universal and grounded on the maxim 'Love thy neighbour'. The idea of the 'brotherhood of man' entails a universal moral obligation towards all human beings because they are all 'children of God'. Solidarity, on the contrary, is potentially divisive. The idea is that an 'I' is able to identify strongly with a group 'we' only against another group's 'they'. This is particularly true of later conceptions of solidarity found in the writings of Leroux, Marx and Weber. In these conceptions, solidarity is

[1] Since the nineteenth century, the Catholic Church has referred more to solidarity than charity. However, it maintains the notion's universal scope, and the personal relations which characterized charity *vis à vis* other conceptions of it.

the force that binds a group of people together by opposition with other groups. Thus, on this view, solidarity is a 'force that includes and excludes […] solidarity integrates and divides' (Stjernø, 2009: 85). A universal notion of solidarity would be criticisable as 'moralistic' in that as it would be grounded on a demanding and controversial categorical imperative on whose basis few people would be willing to act. As I shall argue later, this less ambitious understanding of solidarity may prove to be a workable political value instead.

A second important difference between charity and solidarity is that, while charity values personal and spontaneous gestures of help, solidarity lays the foundation for an institutional framework which provides for the unfortunate in an impersonal and mandatory way. No one can freely decide not to contribute to the welfare state, but s/he is not bound to help others directly. As Bayertz puts it 'morally motivated care is voluntary and, more often than not, involves a personal relationship between the donor and the recipient; in contrast, state social services are coerced from the donor and remain anonymous' (Bayertz, 1999: 24).

Solidarity shares some important features with fraternity. 'Like solidarity, fraternity is exclusive, 'insofar as it is based on the differentiability of our brothers (and sisters) from all other human beings who are not children of the same parents' (Bayertz, 1999: 8). However, once again it is useful to draw a distinction. Solidarity implies an asymmetry of resources, and is thus different from fraternity, which makes no such assumption. Moreover, fraternity is often understood in the sense of an emotional 'fellow-feeling' which binds us and induces us to help one another, even when we are equal. By contrast, solidarity is a political obligation to help the less fortunate. On this view, solidarity properly understood means 'redistributive solidarity' rather than 'civic solidarity' or 'democratic solidarity' (Kymlicka and Banting, 2015: 2–3).

This is an important distinction. Solidarity is often discussed conflating two distinct senses of the word: 'solidarity as a set of feelings' and 'solidarity as a set of transfers' (Parijs, 2004: 375).

While the former sense refers to 'motivation', the second implies an 'obligation' (Taylor, 2015: 129). This confusion is not necessarily misplaced because the two meanings are intimately linked, both conceptually and historically. It is clearly the case, for example, that 'Solidarity as a set of feelings might be one cause or condition of solidarity as a set of transfers' (Parijs, 2004: 375). However, the relation also works in reverse: redistributive policies contribute to reinforcing feelings of solidarity (Beer, de and Koster, 2009). Some authors maintain that the relation between solidarity as a set of feelings and solidarity as a set of transfers constitutes a virtuous circle that, once set in motion, accelerates its momentum.

The following table shows that solidarity has a place as a partial obligation towards the unfortunate in society.

	Universal	**Partial**
Emotional feeling	Brotherhood of god	Fraternity
Obligation	Charity	Solidarity

It might be objected that I am committing a fallacy of 'essentialism' here by propounding a notion of solidarity which excludes universal, voluntary or individual forms of solidarity. If this is true, then the concept of solidarity that I am proposing is deeply revisionist. This criticism is partially correct, but it would apply to any rational reconstruction of the concept of solidarity insofar as any coherent conception would fail to encompass the rich and variegated heritage of this idea. It is important to draw these dividing lines among solidarity, charity and fraternity because if we take the history of the concept at face value, we end up with incoherent and unworkable notions.

The manner in which I have suggested drawing this distinction has two advantages.

First, it preserves the original link between solidarity and the welfare state, which is currently the most common meaning. Solidarity's exclusionary, institutional and asymmetrical dimensions mark the link that Leroux draws since coinage of the term between solidarity and the welfare state, and which is increasingly prevalent in the current literature.

Secondly, it gives solidarity a realistic bite. If solidarity were conceived as a universal duty of assistance, it would undermine the welfare state in favour of a moralistic cosmopolitan global justice. In other words, it needs the exclusionary dimension: 'the welfare state here is tied to an image of social membership, not universal humanitarianism' (Kymlicka, 2015: 5). One could reject this view, and indeed some have observed that, under some interpretations, solidarity has been seen as a universalistic ideal. For example, Rainer Bauböck observes that 'progressive appeals for solidarity have often targeted outsiders as well as insiders. "Long live international solidarity" was the most popular slogan at the left wing street manifestations of my student years' (Bauböck, 2016: 1). However, this extension leads to a utopian version of the concept, completely detached from the many descriptive elements in the above-summarized empirical literature that links solidarity and exclusion. Moreover, such a universal duty of assistance would be a highly demanding ideal that few individuals could be actually motivated to pursue. Bayertz points in the right direction when he says that a 'realistic ethics [of solidarity] cannot simply deny the limits of sympathy between human beings' (Bayertz, 1999: 9). The key difference involved here is the range of the obligation. This more modest view of solidarity fits with recent conceptions that link solidarity and reciprocity. Sangiovanni, for example, argues that 'solidarity requires us to be in a cooperative relation of some kind with others, to share a struggle for some objective, which we can only reach by acting together' (Sangiovanni, 2015). This means that solidarity is a special kind of obligation which does not commit us to helping the unfortunate on the other side of the world as the more demanding obligation of charity would.

IV. REALISTIC JUSTIFICATION OF SOLIDARITY

This more modest conception of solidarity can be realistically justified by viewing it as instrumental to the maintenance of a legitimate political order.

Political realists are keen to emphasise both the conflictual nature of humans and the necessity for a political order. As Waldron argues, conflicts only matter if there is an underlying need for some 'concerted course of action' (Waldron, 1999: 103), thus implying a commitment to the idea that 'the consequences of non-coordination are or would be wholly unacceptable' (Galston, 2010: 391). However, contrary to moralistic conceptions, the need for order envisioned by realists does not aim at the elimination of conflict, which is instead recognized as a permanent element of politics. Rather, it aims at its containment. This means that politics establishes institutional constraints directed at the authoritative arbitration of conflict through centralized enforcement. More realistically, one should conceive politics in terms of Weber's familiar definition: 'the monopoly of legitimate physical violence within a particular territory' (Weber, 2013: 33) In this way, conflicts persist and are part of the political realm. However, their potential violence is defused and they propagate to other spheres. As Ferrera puts it: 'The basic task of politics is to manage inter-institutional conflicts in order to safeguard the foundations of the political community and provide it with a sense of direction' (Ferrera, 2014: 223).

On this view, solidarity can be interpreted as a political value because it is instrumental to stabilizing the political community, to the benefit of all its members. Indeed, some authors, for instance Bryan Turner and Chris Rojek, have contributed to the understanding of solidarity as a sociological concept by explicitly framing it within the wider question of social order (Turner and Rojek, 2001). And indeed it can be stated that 'Fourier, Leroux, Comte and Durkheim primarily understood the idea of solidarity as a means of restoring harmony and social integration in society' (Stjernø, 2009: 39).

It is clearly in the interest of the 'worst off', that some solidarity occurs and alleviates their unfortunate status. Less obviously, it is also in the interest of the 'best off', since it stabilizes the cooperative system, which benefits them, and leads to better gains in the long run. In this sense, solidarity implies an exchange between transfers of resources and 'output-oriented legitimacy' (Scharpf, 1999: 126). This sets in motion the virtuous circle of solidarity: 'first […] a minimum level of solidarity is a condition for fiscal equalization [...] Second [...] Equalization only contributes to the legitimacy of a polity if not only the net recipients, but also the net contributors regard it as necessary. [...] Third, legitimacy strengthened in such a way contributes to solidarity and makes the circle come to a close' (Mueller and Keil, 2013: 128–129). Thus conceived, realistic solidarity is a matter of legitimacy, not of justice, and thus would favour realism's emphasis on the priority of the former over the latter (Wendt, 2016).

This argument is not based on narrow mutual advantage or strict reciprocity. Its basis is a kind of loose reciprocity whereby all actors gain; yet the quantity and quality of what they gain is different. While the worse off gain material benefits, the better off gain willing compliance with the cooperative system. The gains may not be equal, but as long as everybody gains something there is no need to worry about this. This goes beyond petty calculations of immediate mutual advantage, and towards a loose reciprocity similar to the Weberian notion of 'sober brotherhood', where physical proximity, through developing interdependence and the constant fear of common risks, leads to a kind of reciprocity.

This idea of solidarity as enlightened reciprocity in pursuit of the same goals has been criticised by Kolers. What I call reciprocity should be more properly termed 'acting in unison'. While 'solidarity is consistent with every participant's actually sharing the same ends and means' (Kolers, 2012: 365), still 'the essential condition of solidarity is acting with others, even if one disagrees with the group's chosen ends or means' (Kolers, 2012: 365). This criticism highlights a justified worry that the deep feeling of solidarity is not something that can be grounded on

extemporary goals. Solidarity, however, can be motivated by essential concerns rooted in the long-term self-interested desire? to 'motivate people to accept the strains of commitment involved in building and maintaining a decent, good or just society, particularly in contexts of diversity' (Kymlicka and Banting, 2015: 5). A realistic view of solidarity can do precisely this.

Solidarity thus understood has been historically a very realistic idea because it was needed to temper and allow the implementation of the most influential nineteenth-century social utopia, that of a market entirely capable of self-regulation. A similar utopia today hinges on the EU, as some seem convinced that a purely economic union, based on a single unified market, can be stable because everybody gains from it in the long term. This is a fallacious belief because it underestimates distributional concerns and overestimates the aggregate gains from economic cooperation. Accordingly, a institutionalized solidarity would be an enabling corrective to this system which is more likely to benefit every member in the long run.

V. ROOTING SOLIDARITY IN THE EMPIRICAL *STATUS QUO*

Considering the issue of solidarity in regard to the European Union requires us to adapt this general conception to the EU's distinctive nature.

The kind of institution that the European Union embodies is a question much debated in the literature and evocatively alluded to as defining 'the nature of the beast' (Risse-Kappen, 1996), given its mixed nature of being 'less than a federation, more than a regime' (Wallace, 1983). Luuk Van Middelaar contends that much confusion on the issue is due to the fact that the question is often framed as a false dichotomy (Middelaar, 2014). Europe is seen as either a federation (or rather an on-going project directed towards a fully-fledged federation) or as a mere international organization, like the WTO or the UN, in which fully independent sovereign states play a bargaining game to advance their individual interests. Both these interpretations are correct, because they are not alternative views of the same thing, but instead different

spheres that 'encompass each other like concentric globes' (Middelaar, 2014: 12). There is the external sphere, in which 'Europe' is a geopolitical term that vaguely indicates a variegated assortment of sovereign states vying for power and promoting their international interest. The only political space in this view is national, and national governments are the only political actors. Then there is the internal sphere of the "Community", a legal entity created by the Treaty of 1951 and intended to supersede member states. As founder Robert Schuman declared at the time of the treaty's signing: 'there will be no confrontations between national interests that need arbitration or reconciliation; these organs are at the service of a supranational community with objectives and interests that are distinct from those of each of the participating nations'. The key political actors in this community are the Parliament and the Commission. According to Middelaar, both these interpretations are partial. Indeed, between the external and internal spheres there lies an 'intermediate' one. This is the sphere of the Member States, when they discover that their independence is limited by a growing common interest, with the costs of opting out, and the viscosity of the legal ties. Here, the main political actor is the European Council. It is in this intermediate space, created by the interplay between the forces in the internal and external spheres of Europe, that the political engine of the European Union resides.

This analysis, however, does not sufficiently emphasise another crucial factor: that all the States which compose the European Union are democracies. This led Philippe Van Parijs to coin the concept of '*demoicrasis*' (Van Parijs, 1997), with the intention of criticising the fact that European institutions are accountable to a plurality of *demoi* and not to a single *demos*. This idea has been more recently conceptualized by Kalypso Nicolaïdis (Nicolaïdis, 2003, 2004) as a normative proposal: a proper aspiration for European progress. However, this new ontology of Europe has also gained traction among political scientists (Nicolaïdis, 2012; Bellamy, 2013; Cheneval and Schimmelfennig, 2013; Cheneval et al., 2015; Hüller, 2015). The idea is quite

simple, and not controversial as a descriptive account. States are the main actors of the European Union, but the project needs to be democratically authorized by, and be accountable to, each of the national *demoi*, which remain the unquestionable masters. This is presented as a 'third way' (Nicolaïdis, 2012: 248) between intergovernamentalism and federalism, both of which are seen as inadequate 'state-centric' accounts of the European Union. The claim is that we should resist the temptation to 'cross the Rubicon' (Nicolaïdis, 2013: 365) between these two shores.

From a normative perspective, however, it is unclear what consequences are to be drawn from the conception of the EU as a demoicracy. It purports to include a commitment to non-domination of other distinct *demoi*, without any centralizing democratic dissolution into a single European *demos*. According to critics (Ronzoni, 2016), however, there is a tension between maintaining the independence and liberty of the *demoi* and securing them from dominating interference. This may be interpreted as a mere moral recommendation, but in this case demoicracy gets closer to the shore of intergovernamentalism. Otherwise, it can be viewed as a need for institutional safeguards; in which case we get closer to federalism.

Notwithstanding demoicracy's puzzling normative consequences, it seems to me to fit the European Union well as a descriptive notion, and thus can be used to illustrate the kind of solidarity proposed by realists. There is a strong affinity between demoicracy and realism which many commentators have noticed. Hüller, for example, argues that 'realist conditions gives conceptions of demoicracy a desirable practical bite' (Hüller, 2015: 2) Likewise, Ronzoni (2016) connects Nicolaidis's normative inductivism, which bases normative recommendations not on abstract principles but on 'the deep texture of European history, law, and politics' (Nicolaïdis, 2013: 357), with Sangiovanni's 'practice dependent' approach, according to which they are drawn from the point and purpose of the institution as interpreted by its participants (Sangiovanni, 2008).

VI. DOUBLE NATURE OF SOLIDARITY IN THE EU

This view of the European Union as the intermediate locus of power between intergovernmental and federalist institutions is the appropriate context for a realistic conception of solidarity.

The realist's inclination towards the maintenance of orderly cooperation, which justifies solidarity, particularly fits the EU insofar as this 'was meant to give the European system of states a stable status as a peace union. Hence, the overriding requirements of stable social order within and stable inter-societal order among states have come to be intrinsically connected in Europe over the last half century' (Cheneval and Nicolaidis, 2016: 16).

The aim of such realistic solidarity is to keep all the people together inside the Euro-polity. This assumes a specific connotation when coupled with the empirical *status quo* which grounds our normative analysis. In the European demoicracy, as we have seen, the actors are the states, not individual persons. This means that the primary concern for a realistic solidarity in the EU is to keep all the *demoi* together inside the demoicracy. The same argument applies. Material resources ought to be transferred from the advantaged states to the disadvantaged ones, and this is in the interest of both. The rich states stand to gain willing compliance with the cooperative system from which they benefit, and the cost should be outweighed in the long-term.

Given the absence of a sense of solidarity in the EU, some doubt that the 'duty to accept solidaristic sacrifices derived from the premises of essential sameness' applies (Scharpf, 1999: 12). However, my proposal is a realistic normative claim that solidarity is in the interest of both rich and poor, even in the absence of such a disposition, because it is indeed necessary for the long-term survival of the EU polity, from which all will profit. This means, however, that

redistribution of resources should be carefully implemented as a top-down decision which will eventually generate feelings of solidarity and reinforce transfers of solidarity.

Realistic solidarity at the national level usually targets individual persons. In order to strengthen the cooperative system, the less advantaged need to be compensated with material benefits in order to maintain their willing compliance. The more advantaged individuals should find this rational because the benefits for the institution will foster their own interest in the long term. This concern, however, seems less central in a demoicracy, insofar as its institutions are only directly accountable to the *demos*, not to its individual citizens. Thus, the burdens and duty to shelter the most vulnerable members of the society should accordingly lie more with the *demos* itself, rather than with the demoicracy. However, it is still indirectly important to keep together states, which are instrumental to the demoicracy, as argued in Viehoff's recent proposal for a European basic social minimum (Viehoff, 2016), because a collapse of one state would necessarily affect the others. after all, a demoicracy will be born when 'the demoi of Europe recognise that they unavoidably affect one another's democratic health in problematic ways, and that this generates reciprocal obligations' (Ronzoni, 2016).

The hybrid dimension of the EU as a demoicracy provides a realistic justification for the two perspectives on solidarity in Europe invoked by Frank Vandenbroucke: 'a pan-European notion of solidarity and solidarity within national welfare states. The pan-European notion of solidarity refers to upward economic convergence and cohesion on a European scale and to the specific solidarity that is needed to sustain the monetary union. But it also refers to the rights of individuals to improve their own lives by working in a Member State other than the one of which they are nationals; or the rights of patients to benefit, under certain conditions, from medical care in Member States other than their state of residence. Solidarity within national welfare states refers to social insurance, income redistribution and the balance of social rights and obligations' (Vandenbroucke, 2015: 5).

VII. LIMITS OF A REALISTIC SOLIDARITY

This realistic conception of solidarity for the EU has some limitations which are the flipside of its advantages. Mainly, the focus on consequences and the context, which made it possible to tailor a conception of solidarity fit for the EU and wary of its consequences, renders a categorical view of solidarity impossible to sustain ('more solidarity, always!'). Thus, if one wants to defend such a conception, political realism is clearly not the right frame. However, it may not be reasonable to adopt this view if one agrees that there are instances where the consequences of more solidarity are wholly undesirable, so that even if there is a *prima face* reason to implement it, it is not what should be done (i.e. when solidarity is likely to lead to a breakdown of the political order).

Political realism's emphasis on the empirical grounding also elucidates and focuses on the possible consequences of the policies at play. As Ferrera notes, 'in his discussion of politics, Weber pointed to 'irresponsibility" as the worst sin that can be committed by a politician: his or her failure to consider the consequences of actions' (Ferrera, 2014: 227).

Realism is generally sensitive to the context. Hence no principle can be safely endorsed categorically and straightforwardly applied to every situation. Solidarity is realistically justifiable as a political good for the European Union because its consequences on average solidify the cooperative order among member states. However, this is not always the case. It may happen that, due to lack of trust, solidarity produces a 'tangible danger of excessive and destructive polarization' (Ferrera 2016). As Vandenbroucke notes, 'there is one crucial precondition: to build a social union, we need a stronger sense of common purpose and, as a corollary, a real sense of reciprocity' (Vandenbroucke, 2015: 8).

Solidarity endorsed irrespectively of its consequences is 'irresponsible solidarity', and it is self-defeating insofar as its realization depends on the political institution that it destabilizes. Even if

one sees solidarity as a normative requirement which ought to be implemented notwithstanding its consequences, it still requires a political institution to implement it. However, if among its consequences there is a crucial destabilization of the polity itself, then efforts to implement it undermine their own success. This is why excessively ambitious normative demands are doomed to failure.

Imagine the imposition of a requirement of solidarity according to which there is a universal obligation to use the resources of the political institution to help the less fortunate wherever they are in the world. Given the current disposition of citizens, and feasibility constraints, any attempt to implement this requirement would undermine the existence of the polity. However, this would result in less people being helped than actually would be if a more modest normative aim were adopted – for example, one focusing on the less fortunate within the country's borders (Miller, 2016). Such a universal solidarity is a kind of irresponsible solidarity.

However, one must also be careful not to err on the other side of the spectrum. Complete absence of solidarity has highly negative consequences as well, since it accelerates the breakdown of the social ties that keep the political institution together. If the worst off do not see any, or little, advantage in cooperating, they may be tempted to opt out of the cooperative system. Therefore, such a case of 'irresponsible indifference' appears highly disadvantageous, even for those who believe it to be in their own interest. For example, beggar-thy-neighbour economic policies that foster national welfare, by externalizing costs to fellow *demoi*, risk undermining the political roots of their economic system. If the economic system destroys the institutional framework that allows it to flourish, it destroys itself as well.

In our quest for responsible solidarity, we should be wary about both the extremes of irresponsible solidarity and irresponsible indifference. A solidarity embraced regardless of its consequences is irresponsible and self-defeating because it destabilizes the political order on

whose existence it depends for its implementation. Solidarity is responsible when it is implemented in the amount appropriate to strengthen the political order and benefit all its participants. The absence of solidarity is irresponsible if its consequences destabilize the framework of cooperation by inducing the disadvantaged to exit the system.

What is the appropriate balance of responsible solidarity for the current European predicament is a contextual empirical question which falls outside the scope of this paper. Many social scientists seem to believe that there is room for improvement (Ferrera, 2014; Vandenbroucke and others, 2014), even though the political space is dwindling due to the many crises. What I have hoped to show in this paper is that invoking more solidarity for the European Union is not an unrealistic moral idea, but is in fact the only way to be realistic about the European Union and its future prospects.

VIII. CONCLUSIONS

The main purpose of this paper has been to provide a clear and realistic grounding for the normative exhortations to more solidarity in the EU.

First, I explained why it is important to consider solidarity through the sober lenses of political realism. Realism suggests a need to embed the analysis in the empirical *status quo*, which provides feasible, context-sensitive, and responsible prescriptions.

Second, I briefly explored the historical roots of the notion of solidarity and observed that it has a plurality of different meanings difficult to keep within the boundaries of a coherent concept.

Third, I proposed separating solidarity from charity because it is not universal but only emerges in relation to some kind of cooperative venture. Moreover, I kept solidarity distinct from fraternity, which conveys the meaning of an emotional fellow-feeling rather than that of a set of institutional transfers.

Fourth, from these premises I proposed a realistic justification of reciprocity involving its instrumentality to the creation and stabilization of a political order. This makes it a kind of 'primary good', insofar as it benefits both the worse off and the better off if these are enlightened enough to consider the long-term consequences of their cooperative relations.

Fifth, I investigated solidarity in the appropriate context and argued that, for the EU, it may be recognized in the demoicratic status of the intermediate sphere, where *demoi* are the relevant political actors.

Sixth, I observed that tailoring this notion to the intermediate sphere of demoicratic European institutions reveals the double nature of solidarity at European level: between states and between individuals. I also noted that the demoicratic standpoint puts more emphasis on territorial solidarity.

Seventh, and finally, my exploration revealed some limits of any realistic conception of solidarity as well. It is not always the case that solidarity strengthens the political order, but only generally so. In some instances, it may have negative consequences and weaken the political society with excessive demands. A 'golden mean' between irresponsible solidarity and irresponsible indifference should always be the target of contextual political analysis.

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