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ROBERT SCHUMAN'S CONCEPT OF "EUROPEAN COMMUNITY": WHAT LESSONS FOR EUROPE'S FUTURE?

Léonce BEKEMANS, PhD

Professor, Jean Monnet chair *ad personam*, University of Padua, Italy

leonce.bekemans@unipd.it

Victoria MARTÍN DE LA TORRE, PhD candidate

Sophia University Institute, Italy

vmartin73@hotmail.com

Abstract: *The European Union faces an existential crisis and for the first time there is a risk of dis-integration and growing nationalism. Despite the motto "united in diversity", diversity is often perceived as a threat. This study argues that revisiting the concept of "Community" in the Founding Fathers could give new impulse to the integration process and would allow for a reformulation of Europe's future based on the original principles and values. The human-centred political project of the Founding Fathers can be epitomised in Robert Schuman's definition of "Community".*

It is argued that the Social Teaching of the Catholic Church and Communitarian Personalism are the main sources of spiritual and intellectual inspiration for Robert Schuman, clearly reflected in his thinking and writing. Several texts by Schuman are analysed to identify the main features of Schuman's "European Community". This study argues that the "Community" requires a certain mind-set that can only be achieved through personal encounters and specific policies aimed at promoting trust and mutual understanding among the peoples of Europe.

Keywords: European Community, Robert Schuman, personalism, intercultural dialogue.

Introduction

The European Union is a community of values founded after World War II by six Western countries with the long-term goal of a political federation. This project ensured peace to its member

countries for over 70 years and expanded to today's Union of 28 Member States. However, the project is currently facing an existential crisis. On one hand, the Brexit referendum has for the first time opened the possibility of a "des-integration" process. On the other hand, nationalism, populism and xenophobia are on the rise.

The sense of community has been weakened over time. The motto of the European Union is "united in diversity", but diversity is often perceived as a threat. In fact, growing diversity within and between EU Member States makes it even more difficult to see what brings us together.

We argue that the original vision of the Founding Fathers could inspire a renewed impulse for integration, a refounding and reformulating of Europe's future. The Founding Fathers laid the foundations of a civilisational project based on values and on a human-centred political project. This vision can be epitomised in Robert Schuman's definition of "community".

In this contribution we argue that a united Europe could have been built in many ways, but the values and the life experiences of the Founding Fathers determined the specific shape of the integration process and defined its core values and principles. It also provided a cultural and spiritual frame on which the integration process has been based.

In order to find the essence of the "European Community", first we introduce briefly the concept of "community" as it is proposed in sociology. In a second part we present the historical and intellectual background in which Robert Schuman's concept of community was developed. The third and main part of the paper focuses specifically on Schuman, as one of the EU Founding Fathers: he is the political figure who most explicitly described his vision of a "European Community" and the only one who was officially declared a "Founding Father". In this final part, we introduce the most relevant aspects of Schuman's biography and his sources of intellectual and spiritual inspiration; and subsequently Schuman's writings are analysed in order to identify the main features of his concept of "community". At the end we draw some conclusions and suggest some lines of future research.

Defining the Concept of Community

The term "community" is a very complex one and has evolved over time. It lacks a clear conceptual definition and is used differently in everyday language as well as in several academic disciplines.

Sociology as a scientific discipline starts with the distinction between “community” and “society” introduced by Ferdinand Tönnies in his book *Gemeinschaft und Gesellschaft* (*Community and Society*), published in 1887. He compares traditional human groupings to new ways of social life brought by modernity. They represent two kinds of social relations: the “community” being the natural grouping in which a person is born and accepted, without pre-conditions, linked to a family and a land. This would be opposed to the “society”, a bigger group in which each person is a stranger to the other and relations are contractual and functional. The community is linked to stability and to the past, whereas society is linked to progress and to a conscious decision of the participants.

However, already in 1924, Helmuth Plessner analysed the danger of this concept in his book *The Limits of Community: A Critique of Social Radicalism*. He warned of the risks of rejecting modernity, the loss of human dignity and freedom being sacrificed to authoritarian regimes.

Since then, the positive normative approach of Tönnies has constantly been challenged as a dangerous archetype that can lead to exclusive particularism opposed to universal solidarity values. However, the sentimental nostalgia of the “community” can be traced to our days and is often exploited by populist and nationalistic movements.

The Concept of Community: a contextualisation

The origin of the European Communities: the “Community” method

After World War II, all associations advocating Europe’s unity met in The Hague for a three-day conference in which two different models of integration became clear, and they produced different organisations.¹ The model of cooperation between states based on international law gave birth to the Council of Europe in 1948; whereas the model based on sharing sovereignty and establishing common institutions and common laws that would prevail over national law gave birth to the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC) in 1951. According to the later model, a long-term political union would be achieved through sectorial economic integration in what was called

¹ The major organisations involved in European integration established in Western Europe after World War II are the European Union (EU), the Council of Europe, and the Western European Union (WEU) and the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE). Source: <https://www.cvce.eu>

“The Community”. After the ECSC, European Economic Community and the European Atomic Energy Community would follow in 1957.

The institutions shared by the three “Communities” were the High Authority (today the European Commission), the Council of Ministers (today Council of the EU) and the Common Assembly (today the European Parliament), as well as the European Court of Justice. The decision-making process through these institutions was called the “Community method”.

The integration process based on the “Community method”² was launched on 9 May 1950, with the so-called “Schuman Declaration”. That day, French foreign minister Robert Schuman offered to place the coal and steel production of France and Germany under a joint authority. He opened the invitation to all European democracies willing to join.

The Founding Fathers of the European Union

The Founding Fathers are considered to be the politicians who built the first European Communities. The main names are Robert Schuman, Jean Monnet (both from France), Konrad Adenauer (Germany), Alcide De Gasperi (Italy), Paul-Henri Spaak (Belgium), Joseph Bech (Luxembourg), and Johan Willem Beyen (Netherlands)³, although many other men and women directly or indirectly contributed to the project in the first half of the 20th century.

This was not the first attempt to unite Europe, but it was the first successful project to create a democratic unity based on the free decision of its constituent members. Their vision of Europe was shaped by their life experiences: they saw the end of the 19th century empires when they were young, they lived the First World War as young men, then the financial crisis of 29, the rise of totalitarian regimes and the destruction of World War II.

Some interesting common characteristics can be detected between these political figures. Schuman, De Gasperi and Adenauer came from bordering regions, while Spaak and Bech came from small countries that already started to integrate in the Benelux even before the European Communities. Their sense of patriotism also evolved over time, as well as the relation with the

² According to the EUR-Lex Glossary, as can be consulted at the following:

https://eur-lex.europa.eu/summary/glossary/community_intergovernmental_methods.html (from 2002) and https://eur-lex.europa.eu/summary/glossary/community_intergovernmental_methods.html

³ For more information see the European Union’s internet portal:

https://europa.eu/european-union/about-eu/history/founding-fathers_en

"foreigner", either because of changing nationality (Schuman and De Gasperi), or due to the experience of exile (Monnet, Spaak), and occupation (Adenauer) (Schirmann, 2008, p. 19-20). They also moved towards a sense of multiple identities.

In the 1930s there was a sense of civilisational decline, with many reflecting on the decline of the West, as announced by Oswald Spengler in 1918 and (*Der Untergang des Abendlandes*). At the time "the West" (*Occident* in French) was identified with the old Christendom while the term "Europe" was identified with the secularisation proclaimed by intellectuals such as Victor Hugo, Kant and Mazzini.

In April 1926 there was an influential article published in the Catholic journal *Abendlands* under the title "*Europa oder Abendland*" (Europe or the West), by Albert Lotz. The author explained that Europe was a society based on political and economic interests (*Gesellschaft*) whereas the "West" is a community of men who share the same faith and values (*Gemeinschaft*).

In this context, the *Gemeinschaft* was identified with old European monarchies and with Christianity. It is against this background that the group of the so-called "non-conformists of the 1930s" was created in France. (Loubet Del Bayle, 1969). Around these intellectual circles and their journals (*Ordre Nouveau, Esprit*) the philosophy of personalism developed, and it presented a new civilisational project that made Christian values compatible with a pluralistic democracy.

So the success of the European Communities was the outcome of the convergence of the secular Europe of the Enlightenment and a renewed concept of "profane Christendom" (Cheneaux, 2007; Schirmann, 2008; Papini, 1996).

These debates also turned around culture and "Europeanness". In 1937 the Belgian journalist Louis Dumont-Wilden had published the book *L'Esprit Européen*, highlighting what unites Europeans and advocating already a sort of federation. These reflections became even more pressing after WWII. Well-known intellectuals of their time organised a seminar in 1947 to discuss on the "European Spirit" (Benda, 1947).

The main intellectual and spiritual sources which influenced the Founding Fathers' generation are the Catholic Social Teaching and the philosophy of Communitarian Personalism, with both sources being also at the birth of Christian Democratic parties (Robert Schuman, Alcide De Gasperi, Konrad Adenauer, Paul Van Zeeland, Joseph Bech were all Catholic and Christian Democrats). Most scholars agree on the leadership of Christian Democrats in the creation of the European Communities in the 1950s, even if there were other secular sources.

The youth of the Founding Fathers was deeply influenced by the teachings of Pope Leo XIII, in particular by the encyclicals *Aeterni Patris*, (1879) and *Rerum Novarum* or Rights and Duties of Capital and Labour (1891). After Pope Pius IX's tough stand against modernity (with his *Syllabus of mistakes*), Pope Leo XIII encouraged Catholics, and French in particular, to rally the Church and the Republic, showing that Republican values should not be against the Church teachings. In *Aeterni Patris* he asked Catholics to go back to the "golden wisdom" of St. Thomas Aquinas to actualise the relation between faith and reason in the context of liberal democracies.

Saint Thomas Aquinas also inspired the personalist philosophers, who built on Aquinas' definition of the person. These thinkers criticised both individualism and collectivism as dehumanising materialisms, lacking the transcendent dimension of any person's fulfilment. In the 1930's and 1940's, they reacted against anti-Semitism and reflected on the acceptance of "otherness", with a strong emphasis on dialogue and relations.

The philosophy of personalism was also at the basis of European federalism and had a broad influence in the intellectual, social and political trends in Europe after the 1930s and during WW II, also through the Resistance Movements (Papini, 1981).

The concept of "community" at the time of the Founding Fathers

The concept was very much in vogue in 1930s and 1940s France, although it was an ambiguous notion that inspired both a revival of the "national community" and the European federalist movement. (Cohen, 1998)

On the one hand, the non-conformist and personalist thinkers advocated a "communitarian revolution" against the individualisation of capitalism and the collectivisation of socialism. These personalist thinkers understood the concept of community as the social context that would allow for personal fulfilment, open to transcendence and to diversity. However, they did not idealise rural communities or even the past. They wanted a new "*Renaissance*" to launch a spiritual renewal and create a "new order".

Marshall Pétain, on the other hand, promoted a revival of the French State around traditional values of family and duty to the community, what he also called a "communitarian revolution" with a strong emphasis on social links. However, this vision of "community" was far from the inclusive vision of the personalist philosophers and activists, because it fostered xenophobia, anti-

Semitism and established the parameter of what a “true” French could be, excluding Jewish, foreign-born and freemasons as not being loyal to the homeland (Baruch, 2017).

Robert Schuman’s Life, Thinking and Writing

Short biography

Schuman (1886-1963) was born in Luxembourg to a Luxembourgish mother and a French-born father. His father, Jean-Pierre Schuman, was a native of Lorraine, but following the war of 1870 this territory was annexed to Germany.

His biographers highlight that he was raised in a multilingual and multicultural environment, with French, German and Luxembourgish languages spoken at home. This multiculturalism and a deep Catholic education in the family are the two main pillars on which he built his personality.

Multiculturalism developed in Schuman a flexible and multi-layered concept of identity, far from any defensive nationalistic patriotism. Schuman always felt much attached to the Lorraine, his “*Heimat*” (home region or “*pétite patrie*”), and a border region between France, Germany, Luxembourg and Belgium. He had relatives and friends in all these countries, and this life experienced determined his concept of identity as concentric circles which start with the family and grow until the human family. He always defended the specific identity and traditions of Alsace and Lorraine against Jacobine French centralism, but at the same time he rejected any move for independence and never even participated in a local movement for more political autonomy. He believed that there could be compatible layers of identity at the local, regional, national and also European level, and these are not mutually exclusive (Lejeune, 2013, p.81).

Schuman studied Law in Germany and was a member of several Catholic youth organisations created to implement Pope Leo XIII’s encyclicals. The bishop of Metz, Mgr. Willibrord Benzler, invited Schuman to set up the French section of *Volksverein* in the Alsace. (Lejeune 2013, p. 53). Bishop Benzler became Schuman’s mentor and encouraged the young lawyer to study St. Thomas Aquinas. As an adult, he would always keep in touch with Benzler. The bishop had been the abbot of the Benedictine Maria Laach monastery, and Schuman used to go there to retreats. This is where he had the opportunity to become friends with Catholic personalist thinkers such as Jacques Maritain and Romano Guardini with whom he could discuss about Europe (Krijtenburg, 2016).

All biographers agree on the deep influence of St. Thomas Aquinas and the Catholic Social Doctrine. Fimister goes as far as to say that “Schuman was the perfect Catholic politician that Leo [XIII] had in mind” (Fimister, 2008, p. 27). Schuman’s biographer René Lejeune states that Schuman “never ceased to [study Thomas Aquinas] until the end of his life [...] he mastered Thomism to the point where he could debate in Latin with specialists” (Lejeune, 2013, p. 55). Schuman also read philosophers who inspired the personalists, such as Henri Bergson and Maurice Blondel (mainly his “philosophy of action”) (Krijtenburg, 2012).

In any case, Maritain is the only author mentioned by Robert Schuman in his book *For Europe* (Schuman 2010, p.43). Maritain was one of the main philosophers who engaged in an actualisation of St. Thomas it what was called Neo-Scholasticism. Schuman was attracted to Maritain’s proposal for a political Catholicism compatible with modernity and with freedom of conscience (Lejeune, 2013; Cheneaux, 2007). Following Henri Bergson, both Maritain and Schuman believe that the root of democracy is evangelical, as it is embedded in the absolute dignity of each man/woman, made in God’s image, and in the equality of all men/women. This view on democracy and human dignity lead Maritain and Schuman to accept a non-confessional and plural State. The role of the State is to provide the means for every person to fulfil his/her divine vocation to enter in relation with the Absolute. Therefore, the spiritual input is one of the elements of democracy (Fimister, 2008; Krijtenburg 2012; Cheneaux, 2006, 2007; Viotto, 2004).

Schuman’s writings

During his active life in politics Robert Schuman wrote some articles and gave some speeches and conferences. All along his life he wrote private letters in which he reflects about his life and his actions, but also about Europe. At the end of his life wrote a short book with his thoughts about Europe, based on notes and documents that he had written previously. It was published shortly after his death in 1963 under the title *For Europe*.

For the purpose of this article, we have analysed several letters, conferences, speeches, articles, the “Schuman Declaration” and *For Europe*, searching for the meaning and the main features of Schuman’s European community. The chronological order and phased development reflect the most relevant and explicit texts/events about Europe and the community in the first place, followed by other texts which reinforce and back the core quotes.

An analysis of “community”

1) Before 9 May 1950

Long before the 9-May Declaration Schuman reflects on the peaceful future of the continent in private letters, recalling its shared cultural roots. In 1942 he wrote a letter to his friend Georges Ditch, a lawyer in Thionville. Schuman says that peace would only be achieved through European unity, and this had to be done through democratic terms, based on the free will of nations and for mutual cooperation (A. Muñoz in Schirmann 2008, p. 43).

Also in 1942 he wrote a letter to Robert Rochefort, speaking on the need to develop a European spirit:

“Such a spirit is thus needed, which means that we need to be aware of our specifically European common patrimony and we need to have the will to safeguard and develop it.”⁴

On 16 May 1949 Schuman gave a speech in the Festival Hall, in Strasbourg, a few days after the signature of the Treaty establishing the Council of Europe. His idea of a European spirit is clearly illustrated in following quotations:

“I do not have any intention of drawing a geographical line of demarcation between Europe and ‘non-Europe’. There is another valid way of setting limits: that which distinguishes those who have the European spirit and those who do not.

“The European spirit signifies being conscious of belonging to a cultural family and to have a willingness to serve that community in the spirit of total mutuality, without any hidden motives of hegemony or the selfish exploitation of others. The 19th century saw feudal ideas being opposed and, with the rise of a national spirit, nationalities asserting themselves. Our century, that has witnessed the catastrophes resulting in the unending clash of nationalities and nationalisms, must attempt and succeed in reconciling nations in a supranational association. This would safeguard the diversities and aspirations of each nation while coordinating them in the same manner as the regions are coordinated within the unity of the nation.”⁵

⁴ Schuman, R. “L’Europe est une Communauté Spirituelle et culturelle,” In L’Annuaire Européen I / The European Yearbook I (1955), 19. In Krijtenburg 2012, p. 14.

⁵ Translated from French by D.H. Price in *Schuman or Monnet? The Real Architect of Europe*, Bron Communications , 2003.

From these first European related texts we can draw some preliminary conclusions. Schuman defines the “European Community” not as a geographical or limited area, but as a certain spirit. It is an on-going process in which Europe actively defines itself, being the actor that shapes its own future. The European spirit reflects a common cultural heritage and the will of the parts to serve the whole. It implies a whole that transcends nationality without erasing the nation state. He already speaks of a “supranational association”.

2) The Schuman Declaration⁶

The Declaration highlights that European community-building is a process, not an end, which is to be achieved "*through concrete achievements which first create a de facto solidarity*". This process is based on the fusion of national interests:

"There will be realised simply and speedily that fusion of interest which is indispensable to the establishment of a common economic system; it may be the leaven from which may grow a wider and deeper community between countries long opposed to one another by sanguinary divisions."

3) Foreword to the book by Paul Reuter "*La Communauté Européenne du Charbon et de l'Acier*" (1953)⁷

This is the first text in which Schuman gives a more nuanced and detailed explanation of the final aims and motivations of the Schuman Declaration. The most important points are the three innovations introduced by the Declaration and the Treaty: the High Authority, the “supranational” character and a new way of negotiating. The federation stated in the Schuman Declaration will not be a super-state or a confederation. It will be something new, reflected in the term "supranational".⁸ Schuman himself gives his own definition of supranational:

"No other word would have better reflected the new idea that we tried to express, distinguishing it from all other categories traditionally accepted. The supranational stands at an equal distance from, on one

⁶ https://europa.eu/european-union/about-eu/symbols/europe-day/schuman-declaration_en

⁷ Paul Reuter, a lawyer from the Lorraine, was part of the team who worked with Jean Monnet in the drafting of the Schuman Declaration.

⁸ The Oxford English Dictionary (2nd edition, 1989) defines "supranational" as "*Having power, authority, or influence that overrides or transcends national boundaries, governments, or institutions.*" According to this dictionary, the first known use dates back to 1908 and refers to the Catholic Church. (In Fimister 2008 : 23)

*hand, the international individualism which considers national sovereignty as intangible [...] and on the other hand federalism of States which are subordinated to a Super-State [...] ”.*⁹

The Community was established through a Treaty that was negotiated over nine months. Schuman states that:

*“This was not a traditional negotiation, with the usual merchandising inspired by national preoccupations. Delegates and experts put themselves at the service of one and the same idea, and the Treaty became the undivided piece in which each one has his part of merit ”.*¹⁰

4) Lecture at the College of Europe (22 -23 October 1953)

The main message of the lecture is that the community is a process for which the spirits need to be mature. Therefore, *“the spirit had to be changed”* (*“Il fallait changer l’esprit”*) as a first step to change the dynamic between France and Germany.

He underlines that the concept of “community” is a ground-breaking change introduced in the existing political conceptions. The “Community is a “core idea”, *“une idée force”*, only comparable to a scientific breakthrough: “Its achievement not only remains as a new asset for the scientific field, but it also paves the way for further progress, better adapted to the needs of a more developed era.”

5) Article “A European state of mind is possible?” (1955)

In this article, Robert Schuman retakes the idea of the “European spirit” (*“un état d’esprit européen”*) as the main constitutive element of the community. Any institutional advancement needs to be preceded by the proper *“état d’esprit”*, which can be translated as “state of mind” or “mind-set”. This change can only be achieved through personal human exchanges:

⁹ Own translation from Reuter, P. (1953) *La Communauté Européenne du Charbon et de l’Acier*. Paris, Librairie Générale de Droit et de Jurisprudence: *“Aucun autre vocable ne saurait mieux rendre l’idée nouvelle qu’il s’agit d’exprimer, en la distinguant de toutes les catégories traditionnellement admises. Le supranational se situe à égale distance entre d’une part, l’individualisme international qui considère comme intangible la souveraineté nationale et n’accepte comme limitations de la souveraineté que des obligations contractuelles, occasionnelles et révocables ; d’autre part, le fédéralisme d’Etats qui se subordonnent à un Super-Etat doté d’une souveraineté territoriale propre”.*

¹⁰ Own translation (idem): *“Ce n’était pas une négociation de type classique, avec les habituels marchandages qu’inspirent des préoccupations nationales. Délégués et experts se sont mis au service d’une même idée, et le Traité est devenu une oeuvre indivise dans laquelle chacun a sa part de mérite”.*

*“The true European spirit is becoming aware of the realities, the possibilities and the duties, in front of which we find ourselves, all of us, above borders, beyond our antagonisms and resentments”.*¹¹

*“I place at the forefront of these effective progresses those that we owe to human contacts. Learn to know each other, as we are, with our qualities and our faults, our affinities and disparities, our prejudices and our routines, this is the first condition for any rapprochement. There is no trust without frankness, no agreement built on misconceptions. By multiplying the encounters, we create a favourable climate and we lay the foundation for a common action”.*¹²

6) Abbey of Fleury’s Newsletter: *“What the Community means for a Christian”*

In August 1958 Schuman wrote a contribution for the newsletter of the Abbey of Fleury, *“Ce que signifie la Communauté européenne pour le Chrétien?”* at the request of the Abbey. He gives a very precise definition of what he understands by “community”:

*“It supposes first of all freedom of choice, the free adherence of the participating collectivities. Constraint, whatever it may be, is excluded by definition. Moreover, the community proposes to each partner the same objective as the philosophy of St. Thomas has called the Common Good. This is situated outside of all egotistical purposes, the good of each and the good of all and conversely. Finally the means of attaining these objectives are agreement, and mutual understanding, without hegemony or privilege or subordination”.*¹³

He continues to explain how such relations, which used to be limited to the frame of a state, are now applied also to the new union of states:

“Such impartial equality must be guaranteed by the authority of an arbiter which ensures the constitutional conformity of laws and regulation. The opinion of the arbiter imposes itself upon all the powers of the state, on parliament and on the government as on the courts. The arbiter must exercise a

¹¹ Own translation from Schuman, R. (1955) : *“Un état d’esprit européen est-il possible?”* *Écrits de Paris* no.75 : *“Le véritable esprit européen est la prise de conscience des réalités, des possibilités et des devoirs, en présence desquels nous nous trouvons ainsi placés les uns et les autres, par-dessus les frontières, au delà de nos antagonismes et de nos ressentiments”.*

¹² Own translation (idem): *“Je place au tout premier rang de ces progrès effectifs ceux que nous devons aux contacts humains. Apprendre à nous connaître, tels que nous sommes, avec nos qualités et nos défauts, nos affinités et nos disparités, nos préjugés et nos routines, est la condition première de tout rapprochement. Il n’est pas de confiance sans franchise, pas d’entente construite sur des malentendus. En multipliant les rencontres, nous créons un climat favorable et nous jetons en même temps les bases d’une action commune”.*

¹³ English translation in Fimister, A.P. (2008), p. 200.

special and altogether independent jurisdiction. Thus understood the idea of community is a pledge of liberty for the citizen and of discipline and stability for society within the framework of the same state, unitary or composite. For some years, more exactly since 1950, we have applied the same ideas in the relations between states until then sovereign and completely independent."¹⁴

The main elements in this definition of community are the objective of the common good, which is more than the addition of the individual interests; having no selfish motivation; the equality between the members; and searching mutual understanding as the means to reach the objective.

7) *"For Europe" ("Pour l'Europe")*

In this book, Schuman further elaborates on some of the concepts he introduced in earlier texts. Here follows a thorough text analysis in reference to these key concepts:

The concept of "supranational", which is inspired by the organic unity between the whole and the parts in the philosophy of St. Thomas Aquinas, and to the common good. Schuman presents supranationality as opposed to an empire, because it respects freedom and cherishes diversity: "*it is respectful of distinctive features*" (*For Europe*, p. 36). He defines how the Community works, why it is supranational, and why it "protects" from the nation-state:

"The basic principle which was being implemented for the first time, even on an international level, was the principle of community: a community of quasi-unlimited duration, which could not be cancelled. [...] This is what we mean by supranational authority, protected by a supranational jurisdiction. It owes its existence to the national legislators' concordat votes, but from the moment when it actually came into existence, the community led a life separate from the dangers and extravagance of national policy." (p. 100-101)

"The idea is not to merge States to create a Super State. Our European States are a historical reality. From a psychological point of view it would be impossible to do away with them. Their diversity is a good thing and we do not intend to level them down or equalize them. [...] To our mind, European policy is certainly not in contradiction with the patriotic ideal. It encourages the particular nature and characteristics of each of its states and fosters the sound love for one's own country which is a love that does not go in detriment of other countries. It wants to attain a unity in the fullness of its diversity." (p. 16)

¹⁴ Idem, p. 200.

He further adds that the nation state is transcended by merging individual interests in search of the common good:

“We are not, and we shall never be, given to deny our mother country; we shall never forget our duties towards it. But beyond each country, we increasingly and clearly acknowledge the existence of a common good, superior to national interest. A common good into which our countries’ individual interests are merged.” (For Europe, p. 30.)

"Therefore, taking the 'national' as a starting point, we shall have to consider this as part of a whole in which matters will finally concur and complement each other". (For Europe, p. 109)

Secondly, he explains that the concept of interdependence strengthens the building of a common destiny:

"Every one of us must be firmly convinced that we need each other, irrespective of the rank or the power we might hold." (For Europe, p. 19)

"The consequence of this interdependence is that it is impossible to remain indifferent to the fortunate or unfortunate lot of a people. For a European with capacity to think it is no longer possible to rejoice spitefully over his neighbour's misfortune; everyone is united for better or for worse in a common destiny." (For Europe, p. 31)

"Instead of the nationalism and the mistrustful independence of the past, we shall bind together the interests, the decisions and the destiny of this new community of formerly rival states." (For Europe, p. 34)

In sum, the common destiny builds the community and gives it a soul:

“This ‘whole’ cannot and must not remain an economic and technical enterprise: it needs a soul, the conscience of its historical affinities and of its responsibilities, in the present and in the future, and a political will at the service of the same human ideal.” (For Europe, p. 58)

Thirdly, Schuman conceives culture at the heart of the Community. Therefore, he argues for the need of a cultural dialogue and exchanges to consolidate a policy based on solidarity and “progressive confidence”. (*For Europe*, p. 34). Following quotations in the book refer to the importance of a broadly defined socio-cultural context in Community-building:

"Before being a military alliance or an economic entity, Europe must be a cultural community in the most elevated sense of the term." (*For Europe*, p. 29)

"We shall have to replace all the tendencies inherited from the past with the notion of solidarity, that is to say the conviction that the real interest of all lies in acknowledging and accepting the interdependency of all. Egoism does not pay any more." (*For Europe*, p. 35)

"What Europe wants is to uplift the rigidity of its borders. They should become the lines of contact where the material and cultural exchanges take place". (*For Europe*, p. 26-27)

"But there is more to it an just breaking the barriers: co-operation must be organised, which presupposes a great number of personal contacts: exchanges and training courses, conferences and field trips, tours, exhibitions, young manuals and intellectual workers' meetings." (*For Europe*, p. 37)

"Painful memories of the Occupation are obstacles to the natural trend to favour the idea since the wounds are far from being healed. Getting to know each other, as we really are, with our qualities and our failings, our affinities and our differences, our prejudices and our habits, is the essential requirement for any form of rapprochement. There is no possible confidence without honesty, and harmony cannot be built on misunderstanding." (*For Europe*, p. 90)

Assessment

The main elements of Schuman’s concept of a European Community can be summarised as follows:

The person is at the centre of human progress. The Community must therefore look both at the material and the spiritual dimension of the person. In sum, Unity in Diversity reflects the unity of the parts in a whole. The same way that persons are unique and still dependent of a human community, States can be unique and still part of a bigger whole, a bigger community, as advocated by personalist philosophers and the Papal Magisterium.

Culture is the basis for political integration. Europe is an “*état d’esprit*”, a mind-set, that will be acquired over time through personal contacts and cannot be imposed by the institutions. Therefore, the need not only to soften or erase borders in order to transform them into points of contact, but also to actively organise these personal exchanges. Such a change of mind-set would aim at building trust and mutual understanding, raising awareness of things we have in common and learning to appreciate and valuing differences and particularities.

The “Community” as a political project must be democratic and non-confessional, pluralistic and based on the absolute dignity of every person. Because it is supranational, it transcends the nation state without erasing it by reinventing the concept of sovereignty. The Community is open to the world for the common good, in solidarity with the one human family (following St. Thomas’ teachings but also the Pontifical Magisterium). The participation of persons and groups should be encouraged beyond the institutions and the state in order to make the Community “alive”. Along with participation, the principles of subsidiarity and responsibility are to be promoted.

Conclusions

From our analysis it is clear that the concept of “community” has deep philosophical and spiritual roots for Robert Schuman and the EU Founding Fathers. Even though the legal personality of the Community/Communities disappeared over time, the concept of “community” still recalls a certain quality of relations between the members of the EU, both the nation states and the persons living in them. The ideal type of relations of the “community” and the appreciation of regional and local particularities show some similarities between Schuman and Tönnies. However, in Schuman’s vision, the “community” is not limited to a small group or a geographical area. Also, even if it is based on a shared history and culture, it should be oriented to the future, to the common good, and build on creative forces.

Undoubtedly, Schuman and the Founding Fathers put “culture” and a certain “mind-set” at the core of the Community, rather than any geographical or political definition. Therefore, a deeper analysis of the concept and policy relevance of “culture”, cultural diversity and diversity management policies would be important for future research.

The concept of multiple identities and the image of the concentric circles of “communities” - from the blood family to the entire human family- is a starting point to reflect on a more complex approach to European identity and to European integration (Bekemans, 2014).

Diversity in Europe today is very different from diversity at the time of the Founding Fathers, but some important principles remain valid: mainly the respect of personal freedom, human dignity, pluralism and also the need to increase personal contacts to strengthen social bonds. As stated by Schuman, only a dialogue that transforms mind-sets and allows for mutual understanding will contribute to build a true “European Community”. Therefore, an analysis of European projects for intercultural dialogue would prove useful to measure the extent to which this kind of “transforming” exchanges is taking place in Europe today (Bekemans, 2012, 2014).

The approach of Schuman and the Founding Fathers overcomes several academic controversies and oppositions. On one hand, they go beyond the traditional opposition between “community” and “society” in Sociology by proposing the goal of bringing community-quality relations to the broader society and even to relations between States. The approach also overcomes the opposition between federalists and intergovernmentalists or realists in the field of European integration studies. A new concept is being proposed, equally distant from the traditional inter-state relations and from the idea of a super-state: the “supranational”. The tools to overcome this opposition are the principles of Social teaching: subsidiarity and participation.

The European Community is an open-ending and unique process whose main goal is the transformation of the participants to merge their interests towards the common good without losing their specific identity, but enriching it as an added value.

This is why theories of European integration could also shed light on how to build on Schuman’s concept of “Community”. The Multi-level Governance approach to integration (Bekemans, 2013, p. 89-107) and its cosmopolitan perspective (Bekemans, 2013, p. 109-129) seem to be the best suited to analyse the political “European Community” as presented by Robert Schuman because it moves from the either/or frame to the and/and frame. In line with Schuman and the Founding Fathers it presents a way to “transcend” the nation state without erasing it and to observe a more complex reality of today’s identities and sense of belonging. Like Schuman and the Founding Fathers, this approach also allows for creativity and for overcoming traditional concepts to adapt to new realities. In this sense, the concept of progress as human-made and the philosophy of action can provide interesting insights as to how to re-orientate the EU towards the future without nostalgia for the past.

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