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Jean Monnet – Revisiting the Past of the EU for Better Understanding the Present

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Abstract: This article presents some key-aspects of the political vision of Monnet, as one of the founding fathers of EU, but also as an original and under evaluated thinker. The biographic descriptions present Monnet as a French businessman, a banker, a diplomat, a politician, and a cosmopolitan personality. His name is related to the conception of the Schuman Declaration, which in May 1950 invited the occidental countries to start the European project. Some specialists appreciate his contribution as decisive for the first European community, for the post-war international bipolar order; others tend to reveal the myth build on his image, as a legitimating European myth. But we consider that Monnet's political ideas have a theoretical signification and continue to be valuable today, even if the large world order context is different. One can interrogate the current European Union entity by the lens of the political and sociological ideas of Monnet on classical items such social change, solidarity, community, international relations, revealing that the past could help to explain or interpret the new challenges.

Keywords: European Union; Jean Monnet; International Relations; social change

1. Monnet – Founding Father of European Project and Original Thinker

The European Union is in its seventh decade of existence. It is a complex regional organization, a mixture of functionalist, intergovernmental, confederal elements, which has gone through important developments in the sense of deepening and expansion. A look at the moment of creation of this European project is useful in the current context, marked by challenges, novelty elements, and various crises. One of the founding fathers of the EU is Jean Monnet, a prominent figure in the gallery of European founding myths, businessman, banker, diplomat, author of the famous Schuman Plan proposed by France in 1950 to occidental European states, which resulted in the first European community, the ECSC. Of course, Monnet has been written about in an admiring or critical key, but beyond these academic analyses that have their explanatory value, we find interesting a panorama look at his thinking, a thinking with valences of political sociology. Monnet rejected associating his method with a constructed body of thought, scientific analysis, or ideological background. His memoirs attest to this reservation, which he explicitly states (Monnet, 1976, pp. 34-35). Monnet was a pragmatist, a voluntarist. Theories were of no interest to him in the sense of their strictly intellectual contemplation.

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It was not attached to any doctrine, political party, or federalist project in the maximalist sense and theorized in fields such as political science or law; as he himself declared, he had "no time to think in abstract terms", being guided by "the necessity of resolving some serious situation" (Monnet, 1976, pp. 34-35). Thus, he says, "... reflection cannot be separated from action. Action was all around me" (Monnet, 1976, pp. 34-35).

Formally, the current benchmarks for applying this label of theorist to him are missing. It is well known that he abandoned his studies early, as is often mentioned the advice – followed by that way – that his father gave him to form knowledge by looking directly at the surrounding reality, to deprive himself of the guide and filter in books (Monnet, 1976, pp. 34-35).

In the absence of these current formal landmarks that make it possible to fit someone into the academic field, Monnet is sometimes said to have been a self-taught theorist, who approached from the pragmatic perspective and his own life experience issues that proved to be of great interest for philosophical, political, sociological thinking. Other times it is shown that this rejection of academism is the equivalent of a "claimed self-sufficiency" (Joly, 2007), which holds together the civilizing myth with and about Monnet.

In other views, Monnet would have been primarily a technocrat or an economic expert. A practical spirit, for whom action proceeds from observations and not from predetermined concepts, for whom experience is everything and theory not much (Chévènement, 1966, p. 18).

Likewise, Monnet, far from being an orator to captivate the masses, was neither a faithful and constant writer. It was not until 1968 that he began to seriously consider the proposal to write his Memoirs, based on various notes, notes, comments recovered for use for this purpose.

But his Memoirs could allow to claim that Monnet was an original thinker, "as a sober recognition of the authenticity of the fact that without Monnet's ingenious personality nothing might have happened" (Maine, 1967, p. 351)

2. Methodological Approach

Our approach is based on the sociological method of the social documents. This method is a qualitative one, and its aim is not to verify or test empirical data, but to emphasis deep aspects of the social life reflected in personal documents as autobiographical writings. This method is an descriptive/explicative instrument, that captures the liaison between the individual and the society. As Daniel Bertaux (1980) claims, the social documents contain "sociological fields" (*gisements sociologiques*) – an analogy with the geological layers of soil resources – that can be investigated in order to understand the circumstances of a certain time. In the case of personalities which influenced the social evolution in a concrete and large domain, the social document method emphasizes the contribution to an important social process. The creation of the first European community – the European coal and steel community – constitutes an example of a social process with important consequences in the European continent political, economical, social evolution and in the concrete life of a large populations, configuring divers but convergent national societies.

Monnet was an active part of this process. The academic literature explains his role and contribution as a diplomat, business man, public servant to the creation of the first European occidental community.

The study in this register of Monnet aims to highlight, as far as possible, conceptual elements within the framework of political sociology, with reference to the European construction. We aim to highlight the

significance and importance of its contribution to understanding large-scale phenomena and processes in society, such as those related to the European construction; especially when it comes to personalities, these contributions are all the more relevant in their direct consequences for a wider social group (Giddens, 2010). The Memoirs of Monnet can be considered as scientific autobiography, in which it is important to focus mainly on his contribution to a social construct as the European Community.

Political sociology is a branch of sociology whose object is to study the political phenomenon, with its processes, dynamics, evolutions, trends, courts, institutions, actors. Among these, a sub-branch investigates political ideas as types of social ideas, sometimes generating social projects applicable to given social entities. This is the subfield of political sociology in which we try to frame Monnet's theoretical contribution to the European construction. We will glimpse among Monnet's concerns topics of acute topicality that have not yet been answered.

3. Monnet – Reflections on the Social Change

In our opinion, the central concept in Jean Monnet's sociological thought applied to the concrete case of the European construction is that of "social change". Towards this converge the other notions/concepts that Monnet circulates in his writings, either to diagnose a present state or to indicate an object to touch or a method to follow. The main objective of this personality was to organize the transition from one order of relations between states to a new one, built on the denial of "taboos": sovereignty, state, border; in this gearing of change, Monnet includes not only large structures – states, societies, continents, regions; He also refers to the level of individual life, which he intuits as the deepest layer of a social process, where the social fabric of the new order is built. Solidarity, in fact, refers precisely to a new kind of glue that holds together its European project – otherwise blamed for its elitist character – on all its levels.

Central to Monnet is the realization that change is not natural for the human being. "Every change strikes at the misunderstood habits and interests of those concerned" (Roussel, 1996 –Monnet. *Letter to René Pléven,* 1950), says Monnet. Change encounters an inertia that places individuals in a comfort zone, even when this comfort becomes only apparent and begins to have negative consequences. The degeneration of these negative consequences to the point where a crisis occurs is the factor that ultimately makes obvious the need for change, but does not necessarily activate the elements that concretely set it in motion. The therapeutic role of seizures is highlighted; They reveal tensions, problems, inadequacies between habits and developments in society that periods of social calm mask in the form of established norms and institutions: "As always, wisdom and reforms intervene only in conditions of great difficulty. Would simple measures taken earlier have avoided the crisis? To ask such a question is to ignore that people accept change only out of necessity and see the need only in crisis" (Monnet, 1976, pp. 128-129).

Change is also about the dynamic or static character of a society. Monnet establishes a correlation between the dynamism and expansion of American society, to which he added another important ingredient in the architecture of his thinking, that of order: "Where change was accepted, expansion is assured. The U.S. had retained the dynamism of the Western pioneers we saw in action at Winnipeg. But they added organization to it. Organizing change, I understood to be necessary and possible" (Monnet, 1976, p. 50). However, from Monnet's reflections, the change in the way Europe is organized is justified both by the internal crises it faced at the beginning of the twentieth century and by the

temptation to settle into a precarious static equilibrium, such as that established by the Treaty of Versailles.

"Change" in Monnet's conception is rather in the sense of a long, profound, lengthy process, not necessarily modest and unimportant, but devoid of the drama and irrationality of a revolution. It is a "peaceful revolution", whose instruments are persuasion and everyday work (Roussel, 1996, Note of Monnet, 1954), a process thought, planned, necessarily driven by a pragmatic general philosophy and oriented towards a goal. From this point of view, change starts from social actors who can conceive and run a project. The intervention of the social actor is essential: in Monnet's view, a problematic situation left to resolve itself will evolve into "disorder and to our detriment." (Roussel, 1996, Monnet Speech, ECSC negotiations reunion, june 1950) However, this social actor who initiates change is in the rear of the public scene; despite their visibility in the public space, politicians in the classical sense of the definition are not necessarily those who conceive a project based on which change can be triggered: they understand the need for change but do not have, due to decision pressure or lack of specific skills, the imagination necessary to project a certain issue in the form of a plan, thought in stages, with a balance sheet of available and necessary resources, and a timetable, albeit imprecise.

Governments are, Monnet points out, caught between the task of administering what exists and deciding on eventual changes. They cannot govern only in terms of preserving a situation, but also in terms of continuous change: "No matter how clairvoyant they are, it is difficult, almost always impossible, for them to change the things that exist and that they have the responsibility to manage. They may want this in their intimate conviction, but they have to be held accountable to Parliament, to public opinion, and they are held back by services that want to keep everything as it is. It's very natural: If governments and administrations were at any moment ready to change the existing order, it would be a permanent revolution, an endless disorder." (Monnet, 1976, p. 339) Instead, politicians are characterized by the flair to take on a project, bringing it to the forefront of the public scene: "Statesmen take care to do everything right, and especially to get them out of trouble, but they have neither pleasure nor time for imagination. They are open to creative initiatives and the one who knows how to present them has a good chance to be listened to" (Monnet, 1976, p. 339).

In Monnet's view, the fact that change is not natural for the human being means that he may encounter various resistances, due either to the inability of individuals to understand its necessity or to a context marked by confusion regarding the solutions to be addressed. In his view, the strength of resistance to change is an indicator of the order of magnitude of change that is about to occur. In other words, resistance to change and the magnitude of change are directly proportional and somehow feed off each other. (Monnet, 1976, p. 69) A problem that, generating resistance, seems insoluble, will find its solution if it is framed in another context, different from the immediate one, and if the perspective on it changes. (Roussell, 1996, p. 234) The issue of particular concern to Monnet is that of relations between states. He talks about change referring mainly to the necessary change in this plane of social reality. Although they seem distant from the concrete reality of the individual's life at the everyday level, Monnet nevertheless points out that relations between states have a reflection that goes down to the basic level of the social. Its logic is articulated from top to bottom, which is peculiar to Monnet's conception. Thus, in one of his famous pink notes – written on pink paper, hence the name – Monnet states that peace "can only be established by dynamically creating new conditions for the peoples of Europe, corresponding to the new conditions in the world, and people, thus situated in new conditions and subject to common rules, will see how their behavior gradually changes in relation to what needs to change today." (Roussel, 1996; Monnet, 1952)

The system of alliances, of cooperation, is obsolete and will have proved its limits over time, culminating in the world wars, called by Monnet the greatest European "civil war" (Monnet, 1976, pp. 398-399). Cooperation, says Monnet, fosters discussion between states, it does not lead to a decision, but only to the imposition of separate, national, selfish interests. It reflects the restrictive understanding of problem solving. Abandoning logic based on the expression of national power can "transform relations between people and between countries." (Monnet, 1976, p. 35; 98); in Monnet's terms, this means abandoning the formula of cooperation.

Cooperation, says Monnet, actually generates fear in states, and it has repercussions down to the grassroots level of society. Eliminating the source of fear implies a new type of relations between states on the basis of which federal ties between them lead to the emergence of a community between states and between individuals. For Monnet, a functioning community is one that has moved beyond the mutual fear between its members. He notes that, for example, Germany and German dynamism (Monnet, Fontaine, 1955) constitute a source of fear and concern for public opinion and for all political decision-makers of the time, hence the concern to establish various forms of control over this country: division into occupation zones, restriction of German rearmament, division between East and West. An apparent solution that fosters fear.

Monnet repeatedly evokes the need to abandon fear-based logic in relations between states, but the European project itself also contained this component: establishing a form of control over German potential, without marginalizing this country, but also without allowing the establishment of German superiority. Thus, Monnet argues, it is a question of transforming a problem generating fear and concern from a stake into a connecting element, on the basis of which a project can be started for Western European states: the delimitation of the coal-steel sector also has this function. (Monnet, 1976, p. 343) This connecting element, a steel basin in the Franco-German transition zone, with a specific economic activity, has meanings and effects that go beyond the level of a purely economic activity and which Monnet decrypts as follows: "The common wealth was primarily that of coal and steel, from which France and Germany divided unequally, but complementarily, their natural basins inscribed in a geographical triangle that historical borders artificially cut off. These random borders whose birth coincided with that of nationalist doctrines, obstacles to exchange, then lines of confrontation... However, coal and steel were both the key to economic power and to the arsenal in which weapons of war were built. .... Merging them across borders would be to take away their evil prestige and turn them, on the contrary, into a guarantee of peace." (Monnet, 1976, p. 348)

The change of method in relations between States – the replacement of deliberations in which distinct national interests are exposed under the already existing procedure of (intergovernmental) cooperation with the acceptance of supranationality (Roussel, 1996, pp. 689-694, Monnet to Fontaine, 1955), in which the common interest is taken into account – constitutes for Monnet the way in which a change of mind will take place in Europe: instead of discrimination, fear, domination and revanchism – major vices of negative peace established by the Treaty of Versailles – Monnet proposes relations of equality between States. (Monnet, 1976: 336) Shortly after the start of the coal-steel project, this approach would be tested by the Korean War, generating a new international context and new security needs for the European continent. The debates surrounding the European army project will reflect, shows Monnet, the persistent fear of the European states towards Germany, causing them to retreat fearfully to the logic of national interests (Monnet, 1976, pp. 398-399).

Monnet believes that any change in the nature of relations between states entails changes in people's daily existence. From an institutional point of view, this change in relations between states presupposes

an economic and political entity of a new type, the European Coal and Steel Community, endowed with a "supranational authority .... the concrete expression of this community that we aim to create", first stage of the project, says Monnet (Roussel, 1996, Monnet Speech, ECSC negotiations reunion, june 1950). Also, the delimitation of an industrial sector subject to the activity of the High Authority is also part of this first stage in the process of change: Monnet explains moreover that the choice of the coal-steel sector comes, on the one hand, from the fact that it constitutes "the basis of the economic life of peoples" and, on the other, from the fact that, in public opinion, this sector is closely linked to the notion of war. Subsequently, the economic concept of the Schuman Plan is extended by Monnet to the attempt to create, along the same lines, a European defense community.

The two European projects are based in Monnet's conception on a new type of collaboration between states focused on the search for the common interest: the principle of supranationality replaces the strict logic of national interest. Because, says Monnet, understanding international relations as a confrontation of national interests, occasional alliances, international agreements and constant rivalries, and as a permanent effort to impose hegemony only leads to divisions on the European continent, and ultimately to war (Monnet, 1952) Supranationality does not mean subordination of the parties – states – to an external and foreign authority – a supranational entity, in this case, the High Authority, but the establishment of federal links between states.

The change materializes in the establishment of a new type of community in terms of relations between states; this Community is not merely an international arrangement concerning a particular industrial sector, nor is it merely a code of technical procedures or a system for voting decisions, but "a federal institution whose members are the trustees of all participating countries" (Monnet, 1955). The logic of such a European federal entity makes the commitment of the participating States more than that derived from mere international cooperation. (Monnet, 1976, p. 382).

For Monnet, changing the logic of relations between States also means applying the principle of equality; he will refine this requirement by introducing different variables into the supranational decision-making mechanism that reflect in an equitable sense the relative weight of each state. The concrete functioning of the negotiations for the European treaties, but also that within the European institutions, inspired these reflections. Also starting from attacking the principle of strict national sovereignty and the (selfish) national interest, Monnet condemns voting by the unanimity rule, which reflects a misunderstanding of the equality of states in the decision-making process (Monnet, 1976, p. 414). Changing the unanimity rule to that of the majority favors agreement simply by facilitating and accelerating the decision, then applying it (Monnet, 1976, p. 455).

If it is generally stated that Monnet is less interested in the participation of the people/public opinion in the construction of Europe, this statement may suffer from a number of nuances. Monnet argues without fail that his projects concern not only relations between states, but also citizens/individuals. As the evolution of the European construction provides new elements of understanding, new situations, some adaptations appear in its conception, and the people/public opinion is no longer the passive actor in relation to the decisions taken in the restricted circles of government: a change is also needed in this plan, in order to break the habit that makes peoples "unaware of the changes that occur outside themselves and of the choices that are made for them." (Monnet, Fontaine, 1955) He also refers to a "universal public opinion" (June 1950) to anchor this community in a social reality that gives it, through its acceptance, legitimacy. It is more difficult to emphasize how the connection between the two planes is made. In 1955, after the first years of operation of the ECSC, after the failure of the EAA and CEP, in the context of the relaunch of integration through the common market and Euratom, we find in Monnet's conception more precise references to the role of public opinion, which, he argues, can have

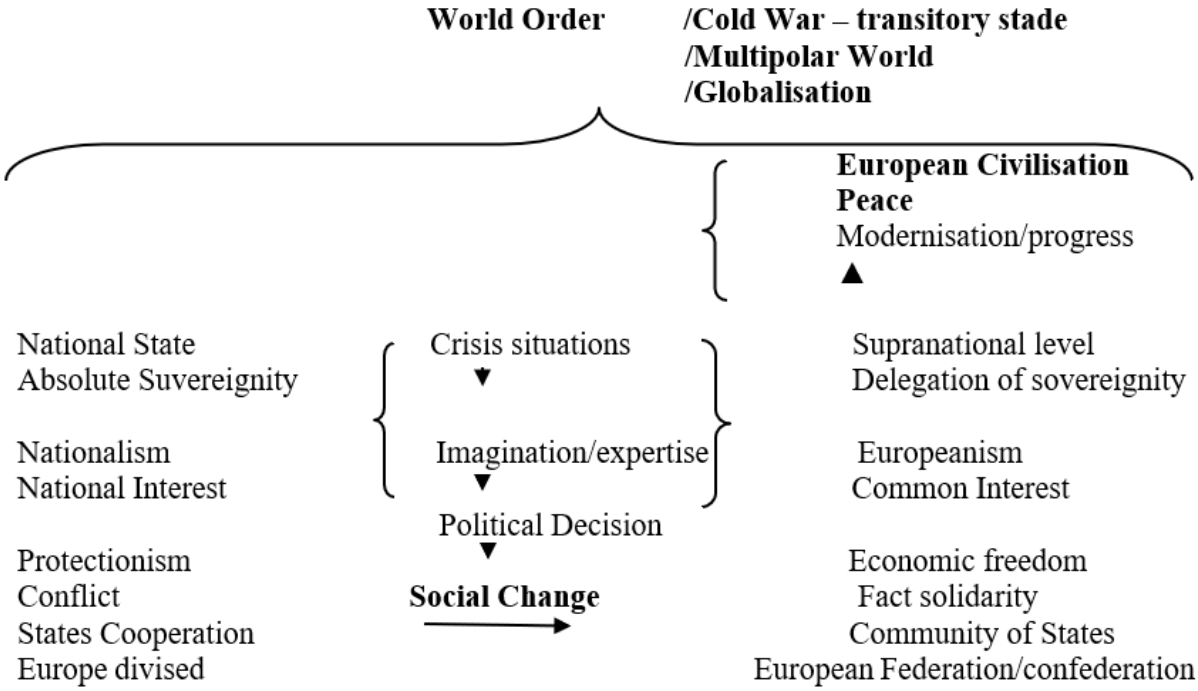
an influence, through parties and trade unions, on governments, once it is informed about European projects. (Monnet, Fontaine, 1955) These ideas illustrate Monnet's connection between change – radical, he states, but not revolutionary – in international relations and the level of everyday existence of individuals: "The Schuman Plan and the Pleven Plan will mark the beginning of a revolution in the political, military, economic and institutional life of Europe." (Monnet, 1952) Even if, as far as the defense community is concerned, the acceptance of the principle of supranationality as a concrete form of change of collaboration between states has encountered resistance, both at the level of political decision-makers and in national public opinions, which has made it impossible to complete this project, Monnet's statements illustrate a conception of change in which all components of social existence are engaged. It is interesting that Monnet attaches to the process of change the notion of de facto solidarity. However, the latter does not stem from the success of the process leading to the establishment of a community, but is the condition for this community to be able to start: "Europe will not be made all at once, nor through an overall construction: it will be done through concrete constructions, first creating a de facto solidarity", reads the Schuman Declaration. Years later, when President Kennedy was putting forward a US-European partnership aimed at recalibrating the more balanced division of responsibilities between the US and Europe for the world order, Monnet resumed this theme of de facto solidarity, synthesized by the formula *We unite people, not states*. (Monnet letter to Dean Acheson, 1963) The institutional architecture of the ECSC is important for Monnet for creating this solidarity as the foundation of a European community in the broad sense. To what extent this community is real today is a theme for reflection for which these few milestones in Monnet's thinking can be useful and challenging.

4. Evaluating Monnet's Contribution as a Vision on the World Order

Lucien Goldmann, in a volume of essays dedicated, under the label of sociology of literature, to the methods of investigation of sociology in general, also devoted to the relationship between the individual and the social body, between object and subject, but also to the relationship between the written text and the social, economic, political context in which it was generated, uses the concept of *worldview* with reference to intellectual constructions meant to know and understand the world around us and it insists on the multiplicity of these visions, which sometimes complement each other, sometimes contradict each other, each contain a part of truth, but never the whole truth. We believe that Monnet's thinking is such a worldview, generated in a particular social, political, economic context, and in competition with similar ideas by their objective or means.

In Goldmann's view, any worldview, in order to be considered a system of thought, must have meaning and internal coherence; it must also be in accordance with the reality it is trying to understand or explain. Also, any worldview arouses critical approaches that are also targeted by compliance with these criteria mentioned above. From the perspective of their function, these critical approaches must consider identifying possible inconsistencies in the thinker, which they should analyze either as due to the survival of outdated forms of thinking on a number of aspects, or as an expression of concessions made by the thinker to established powers, such as the state or the church; or as an attempt by the thinker to avoid too glaring differences between his thinking and the reality he hopes to understand. Any critical approach is also aimed at analyzing/determining the internal limits of that worldview, limits that can only be isolated, Goldman says, if that thinker is at an extremely coherent level, which is rare in reality. (Goldman, 1980)

Monnet's conception of the European construction inserted in his general conception of society means: changing the behavior of states in their relations with each other, in the sense of a civilization meant to pacify the continent; external coercion justifies postwar Western organization (coercion in the form of economic, political, strategic competition of the US and in the form of the bipolar order of the Cold War). The method is the progressive abandonment of strict and absolute national sovereignty and an exit from the logic of strict nationalisms and intergovernmental cooperation.



This graph shows the most important sociological concepts present in Monnet's thought and the relationships between them. However, several ingredients meant to give these reflections on sociological themes the unitary character of a theoretical model are missing. For example, Monnet does not define the concepts it uses or refer to established references. The intent of his writings is not strictly academic; Monnet's working writings serve as an argument to guide the finding of a solution to a concrete problem, while his memoirs attempt to organize together the chronological thread of lived events and different disparate reflections. Thus, a conceptual framework is formed which, without having the explanatory and especially predictive power of a theory, nevertheless serves to understand the events, the intervenant social actors and a far-reaching social process.

Given that Monnet's project refers primarily to what we might call an institution of relations between states, which he conceives by analogy with national societies, concepts referring to the state or relations between states appear predominantly in this graph. But Monnet does not understand them in the sense of international relations, international law, but rather in a sociological sense, because he believes that states among themselves must form a social entity, a community, with successive steps descending to the level of individual existence and ascending to the level of world order.

For this new type of relationship of states that he proposes, Monnet uses the concept of "community", in a bivalent sense: as a form of human collectivity united by a strong internal solidarity, but also as an organization in the sense of a voluntary act of some parties to associate under the regime of certain conditions fixed between them. The same happens with the concept of institution, also used in the pure sociological sense, but also as the usual name generically given to the organizations and bodies that

compose them. The concept of 'de facto solidarity', which indeed constitutes a terminological innovation, is used either as a given that exists and on the basis of which the European project can be built, or as an objective, a terminus that will have been reached after the project has been completed. Such inconsistencies derive from the lack of formal academic concern, which constantly generates the mixing of theoretical plans with that of the concrete action of the Monnet social actor. They fit, in the scheme taken above from Goldman, the inconsistencies due to the author's attempt to avoid discrepancies between his way of thinking and the reality he aims to understand. Another inconsistency is that the relationship between these principles and the concrete federal objective of the European construction is not made explicit by Monnet. The objective itself is invoked, but its coordinates are not precise. Under the influence of conjuncture elements, this object is placed in an indefinite time horizon; "the close association between the peoples of Europe" (Monnet, June1950) – their federal union – is limited in the context of states' reluctance to renounce altogether the principle of national sovereignty, to a formula of sectoral economic cooperation around the coal and steel industries, as a starting point for a European federation. Monnet often swings between federation and confederation, explicitly stating that it cannot hold all the elements to provide an accurate drawing of the future and united political european entity. We can attribute this kind of inconsistency to that category that Goldman considers to be determined by the thinker's adaptation to pressure exerted by established, established courts of power, such as the nation-state, and which facilitate the preservation of old forms. Even if thus limited, the formula of economic cooperation exercises in its first stage its primary function/intention, that of establishing European control over the industries necessary for the capacity of states to wage wars with the technical-military means of the time. Monnet believes that in this way historical conflicts will be impossible, but also that economic association around the Franco-German core is open to European states, without "reservations and exclusions", but without specifying the contours of this openness other than by stating that the limits of the European Union are fixed by those who are not part of it.

The new mode of production will, Monnet believes, be a model for modernising and raising living standards, as well as a guarantee for preserving peace on a global scale. Unlike an international cartel, restrictive and oriented towards increasing profits, this way of organizing favors the growth of production and the merger of markets. Institutionally, this economic arrangement around the coal-steel sectors is managed at supranational level by the High Authority.

The economic objective shall be progressively addressed, given the disparate production conditions in the sectors concerned in the participating States; the transitional provisions designed to prepare for the uniformity of national productions further fragment its attainment. The starting point of the European construction is thus doubly defined: on the one hand by cutting out the sectors to be integrated, on the other hand by phasing their integration.

As for the federal objective, the imprecision of the time horizon cannot be blamed on Monnet: even today, half a century after the beginning of the European construction, federal (confederal) Europe is still not a political, legal, social reality. Ultimately, Monnet's European project alternates between its economic objective – relatively easy to conceptualise and apply – with that of its political objective; this second plane highlights the limits of its conception. After all, as Lucien Goldmann says, always, the number of worldviews, as well as the explanatory and predictive force of any of them, are surpassed by the concrete historical situations in which social groups, regardless of their nature, find themselves throughout history. Worldviews merely articulate different possibilities of man's reaction to an infinite multitude of concrete historical situations (Goldman, 1980).

Placing the discussion in the theoretical realm of international relations but also of political sociology, and keeping the concept of vision, we will take from the arguments provided in an article signed by Richard Beardworth on the relationship between vision and the field of practice of international relations to deepen the conclusion regarding Monnet's contribution as a thinker. Even if the reference to Monnet is brief, it nevertheless has the value of an example of the theoretical distinctions made by Richard Beardworth in his study "Political vision in the discipline of International Relations" (2012). With this text, the author makes a plea for the theoretical recognition of the concept of (political) vision in the field of study of international relations, and an analysis of the relationship between it and the more frequented concept, which is prediction. The author uses as a starting point the classical distinction between empirical and normative and evokes the domination of the former as the main current in the discipline of international relations. Without going into the springs of his argument, we will say that the author links prediction to the dominant empirical, explanatory and verifiable theoretical current, and the political vision to the normative current, the one concerned with "values, norms and rules that do not require direct verification" (Beardworth, 2012) and, above all, immediate, rapid. He then states: "In contrast to the humanities and natural sciences, International Relations is structurally future-oriented. For example, whatever the dominant theoretical current in International Relations tries to explain, the explanatory hypothesis is basically predictive, and prediction has to do with building a set of relationships between past, present and future. Although structurally forward-oriented, this theoretical body is not particularly interested in political vision" (Beardworth, 2012). Because of this reluctance to articulate the relationship between past-present-future with and through vision, International Relations is moving away from the pretense of "proactively" shaping the future, "reporting ... to the future it is ascertaining rather than performative" (Beardworth, 2012). The meaning of the words proactive or performative in the present context is provided by the author when he states that the proactive political vision involves "active interventions in the future, with regard to specific political communities, and requiring political guidance and leadership" (Beardworth, 2012). The author's intention, however, is more subtle: he seeks to disturb, to destabilize the normative-empirical distinction recognized as dominant, as well as the domination itself of the neorealist current[1], in such a way as to highlight the importance of the political vision for International Relations studies and its extraction from the field of "political theory", where it remained cantoned, before and after "the hegemony of neorealism and the theorizing of rational choice" (Beardworth, 2012) indicate in which areas political vision may be needed; to show the need for a new political vision in the European Union and "in international relations itself".

But what are the coordinates on which the political vision is defined? The mentioned author finds two meanings that dress the concept. A first sense links the political vision to an intellectual endeavor "which seeks to encompass the problematic state of the world and the challenges of this state, rather than to problematize theories about the world and explain its problems" (Beardworth, 2012). The author refers to Sheldon Wolin and his 1979 article, "Political Theory as a Vocation", taking up the criteria that differentiate prediction and political vision. The political vision would thus be speculative, impossible to prove by rigorous and immediate empirical verification; instead, it makes mandatory the commitment of the author, whose warnings/proposals/solutions are addressed in a proactive/performative/involved

[1] Thus, the author shows that, in fact, the empirical-normative distinction has recently been broken down in IR from constructivism (which emphasizes the exogenous effect of normative and ideational agendas on the behavior and empirical interests of the state), historical-sociological and organizational theories (which insist on the role of historical processes through which identities and capabilities that restrain antagonistic interests are developed), the English school (with its emphasis on norms, principles and rules of international society), postmodernism (facts are not opposed to values but are organized by assuming values, therefore objective explanations or neutral positions vis-à-vis practical reality are not possible), and even the early realism of the field of IR (Hans Morgenthau, E.H. Carr, he states, accepted transcending the normative-empirical distinction by deriving the morality of the national interest from the practical reality of state boundaries) (Bearworth, 2012, p. 545).

manner to a community(s) whose destiny is to be shaped by that vision. Therefore, political vision and prediction would not differ in their content of ideas and its orientation towards profiling the future (possible, probably), but in their positioning – commitment versus neutrality – and in their normative or ascertaining status, from which follows the possibility or impossibility of an immediate empirical verification of the content of ideas.

In a second sense, political vision is a proactive response to certain empirical circumstances, which guide the possible future, but not precisely, on the basis of past and present determinations. In this creative process, which is different from prediction's ambition to predict the future from past and present, political vision maintains a fluid relationship with "possible circumstances of the future" (Beardworth, 2012) and is intimately linked to leadership performance.

The two meanings of the concept of "vision" are found in Monnet's thinking: his vision of the organization of postwar Europe responds to the problematic context left by the effects of the world war and sketches a project for a European future in which the premises for the outbreak of another similar conflict are controlled or disappear.

This project does not bear in itself the imprint of a certain ideology or a certain theoretical option, but proposes a new arrangement of relations between (Western) European states. It is an intellectual endeavor and at the same time a commitment, meant to guide, even imprecisely, a possible future.

5. Conclusions

The EU needs a vision adapted to today's reality, as Monnet's vision was at the time. The concept of change remains topical, in the context of a world that, after the Cold War, is constantly reconfiguring. A change that refers to various new aspects, some of which have not escaped Monnet's attention and concern, such as the extension of the European construction including to the east of the continent, the elimination of conflicts, the peaceful use of nuclear power, the rise of China and India, the British exception within the european project, the building of an autonomous security union in relation to its overseas ally, the USA. One could simply observe that these aspects are current issues today, and that their solution implies interrogating "old" notions and placing them within an appropriate vision.

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