European Economic Ethics Research

A Diagnosis

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Die europäische Forschung in der Wirtschaftsethik – Eine Diagnose

The purpose of the European Economic Community’s founders was not only “mercantilist”, but “economic”, in the broader sense of the term “economics”. If there has been a specific model of Europe, it has been the social market economy. But the crisis of the welfare state has raised doubts about key features of that model. Does Europe have anything particular to offer in the economic realm? The approaches of economic ethics that have been developed in Europe have a lot to say in the formation of a “Euroethos”. The article tries to show the main European approaches and to delineate the traits of a European proposal.

Keywords: Ethics, Economic Ethics, Social Market Economy, European Union, Euroethos

1. Is the European Union also an ethical-economic project?

There is a long history behind the establishment of the European Union, although it was only after the Second World War that Robert Schuman took the first step towards creating the European Community: integrating and jointly managing Franco-German coal and steel production in order to increase wealth and, above all, lay the foundations for harmony. It was thought that a European Federation could gradually be formed from this position. The European Coal and Steel Community was set up in 1951 with the Paris Treaty. In 1957 the ‘Six’ (Germany, France, Italy, Belgium, the Netherlands and Luxembourg) signed the Treaties of Rome, by means of which the European Economic Community (EEC) and the European Atomic Energy Community (EURATOM) were created. From this point the process of building the European Union went on in several different stages.1

It is undeniable that the European Union’s creation as an economic community stemming from the Coal and Steel Community led voices from the left to criticise the fact that the European Union had in the first line been born as a ‘Europe of Merchants’, which only gradually would insist on also becoming a ‘Europe of Politicians’ and, later on, a ‘Europe of Citizens’. In the meantime, the first target has been

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