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THE REBIRTH OF CLASSICAL EUROPE

WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE EUROPEAN?

ABSTRACT

In these pages I will present the results of a project, launched in 2008 by the European Union, the subject of which were the values of Europe. The idea of a Europe built on knowledge, civility, rule of law, inclusiveness, was in our mind, but we understood that this idea of Europe was conflicting with many other ideas about Europe and its destiny. At the end of our search, we have found that the best Europe is the Europe of the Founding Fathers. In 1946, Winston Churchill advocated European integration precisely to prevent the horrors of two world wars from ever happening again. From the beginning, the EU was linked to the USA. European heritage and American heritage are strictly connected. Many scholars, such as T.G. Ash and J.G.A. Pocock, underline the point. The rebirth of classical Europe is the rebirth of collaboration, alliance, partnership, mutual friendship, common values. Western declinism is the classic self-fulfilling prophecy, while, actually, however, what continue to exist are reasons for US strength and European eminence, which can be maximized rather than minimized (for those who care about the stability of the international system). The inventor of dynamite and philanthropist, Alfred Nobel is an icon of European ambivalence on science, which can be used in order to build bombs and in order to build peace. At the annual *Nobel Prize Award Ceremony*, in the Stockholm City Hall, every 10th December, the classical European spirit is alive and kicking even more each year.

Keywords: sociology, Europe, frontiers

INTRODUCTION. THE THESIS

The following pages focus on the concept of classical Europe and on the connection between that old tradition and our tumultuous future. The starting point is research developed within a project promoted by the European Union, regarding Turkey's entry in the EU. During our research activities, we discovered that originally Europe was very inclusive. In the perspective of a future in freedom and peace, classical Europe appears founded on rationality and science, selection and inclusion.

The thesis is that from the beginning, the EU was linked to the USA, because European heritage and American heritage are strictly connected in a common vision, which we can admire in its roots within Mediterranean shores. This heritage is the best one, since it is indispensable for the current definition of human rights and global citizenship, from Homer to Virgil, from Erasmus to T.S. Eliot, from Alfred Nobel to Marie Curie Skłodowska, from Giovanni Falcone to Karol Wojtyła, from Raymond Aron to Ralph Dahrendorf. The European dream had its motives and its heroes.

On the decadence of Europe there are the most pessimistic texts with the most denied prophecies, but Europe has carried out unremitting adaptation and innovation. Decadence and decay are nevertheless possible for many reasons, above all, if identity and pride are forgotten. Right struggles and fair collaborations made Europe a miraculous historical chance in liberty and civility, which must be continued, upgraded, defended, and published.

1. ONE MORE EUROPE

The word *Europe* is linked to many institutional, geographical, and cultural identities. About money, military, foreign policy, the judiciary, security, immigration policies, the common market, and so on, European signs and meanings are overabundant. For instance, the *Court of Justice of the European Union* is not related to the *European Court of Human Rights*; Russia is not included in the first, but it is in the second. A main symbol of Europe, the Euro, has been adopted as the official currency by some members of the EU, while other members are happy not to be in the Eurozone. For their survival in a dangerous¹ international arena, all European countries rely on NATO, which formally contains Europe, given the importance of the *Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council* (EAPC). It might seem a paradox: glorious European values are defended by that kind of American militarism that is so often despised in Europe. On

¹ A.-M. Slaughter, *The Idea that Is America. Keeping Faith with Our Values in a Dangerous World*, New York 2007; R. Kagan, *Dangerous Nation. America's Place in the World from its Earliest Days to the Dawn of the Twentieth Century*, New York 2007; N. Luhmann, 'Die Moral des Risikos und das Risiko der Moral' in G. Bechmann (ed.), *Risiko und Gesellschaft. Grundlagen und Ergebnisse interdisziplinärer Risikoforschung*, Opladen 1993.

the two side of the Atlantic Ocean, there is the same political tradition. On this tradition, Pocock wrote: *in the American colonies – the present state of research strongly suggests – the ideology that presented virtue as ever threatened by corruption was little mitigated by any sense that it was possible to live with the forces of history and contain them. This circumstance helped bring about the division of the Atlantic world in the great civil war of the American Revolution; it presented the civic humanist intellect with an unparalleled opportunity of applying the sociology of liberty to legislation in the sense of actual state-founding.*²

Many institutions use the name *Europe* and speak in the name of Europe, but their voices are sometimes confusing. So, like the Americans frequently ask *What Does it Mean to Be an American?*,³ Europeans are frequently uncertain about what it means to be a European.⁴

The word Europe has different meanings because wealth “maketh too many friends”. There are conflicting ideas about what Europe is and what it was (and about what it should be in the future). Even the geographical boundaries are widely and bitterly discussed. We do not know where Europe geographically ends and where its historical boundaries are. The Balkans, for instance: for some they are not Europe and for others they include Greece; while Greece for some was the cradle of Europe, and for others the holiest European wars have been fought precisely in the Balkans. The problem is not only about uncertain boundaries, specific names, limited events, or countries such as Russia or Turkey.

Napoleon, Hitler, many political and military leaders have tried to unify Europe; they had a specific idea of Europe. From the very beginning, Hitler dreamed that Berlin was to meet “the fate of Rome”. He had a clear idea of Europe’s past and future. His atrocious *Thousand-Year Reich* spread all over Europe and included resource-rich colonies, with a detailed plan for a potential Nazi Europe: the population on Germany’s eastern frontier enslaved, allies in cherishing and servant function, Jews and other inferior peoples exterminated. As experts explain, only Nazi incompetence and hubris saved Europe putting an end to the possibility of a horrible outcome for humanity. For years, Europe had been as Hitler wanted it to be.⁵

Even great writers, like Dostoyevsky, or great emperors, like Alexander III, had a unique vision about what Europe was. For centuries it was thought that the battles of Marathon and Salamis (in 490 BCE and in 480 BCE) were the founding moments of the idea of Europe as a land of freedom, against “Oriental despotism,” according to

² J.G.A. Pocock, *The Machiavellian Moment. Florentine Political Thought and the Atlantic Republican Tradition*, Princeton 1975, p. 457 (*Limited Paperback Editions*).

³ D. Cox et al., *What Does it Means to Be an American? Attitudes in an Increasingly Diverse America Ten Years after 9/11*, The Brookings Institution, 6 September 2012, at <<http://www.brookings.edu/research/reports/2011/09/06-american-attitudes>>; ‘What Does It Mean To Be an American?’, *The American Conservative*, 30 April 2003.

⁴ N. Fligstein, *Euroclash. The EU, European Identity and the Future of Europe*, Oxford 2008.

⁵ M. Mazower, *Hitler’s Empire. How the Nazis Ruled Europe*, London 2008; idem, *Dark Continent. Europe’s Twentieth Century*, London 1998.

a scheme that is encoded in Aeschylus, Herodotus, and Aristotle, absorbed and transmitted by well-respected thinkers.

There are many ideas about the definition of Europe and there are many ideas about the definition of classics. In 1755 Winckelmann said: *the only way for us to become great, perhaps inimitable, is by imitating the ancients*. His *Geschichte der Kunst des Alterthums* (1764), written about classics, was one of the first classical books about European culture. What, in the Renaissance, was an aristocratic choice (at its best, in Montaigne's childhood) after Winckelmann began a duty, compulsory training, an ultimate blueprint for the good life.

It is difficult to be a classic for everyone and forever. In 1872, Nietzsche, controversial professor of philology at Basel University, in *Die Geburt der Tragödie aus dem Geiste der Musik*, produced a masterwork on modern definitions of the past, which he largely spurned. Nietzsche reflected on the incoming European crisis, which had broken out in 1870, with the Franco-Prussian War. Looking at the typical Berliner promenade, from the *Column of Victory* to the *Brandenburg Gate*, it was crystal clear that the European heritage had too many heirs and too many owners. In order to signal the best, bombs and armies seemed not less important than librarians and scholars.

It is remarkable to say that there is only one European Union, defined by the Copenhagen criteria and supported by the Stockholm consensus. But, apart from good hopes and good intentions, we have too many hypotheses about Europe and we will see many more other Europes prospected in the future, offered by a wild and multifaceted market of ideological programs.

Criteria and consensus need legitimacy, fathers and roots, their own prophets and martyrs, sacred events and sacred places, solemn rituals and symbols: a tradition – if not well invented, at least well motivated and supported.

In these pages I will present the results of a project, launched in 2008 by the European Union, the subject of which were the values of Europe and the entry of Turkey into Europe.⁶ The aim was educational: informing students and academics about the concept of being a EU citizen. At the end of our search, we have found that the best Europe is the Europe of the Founding Fathers, which is coherent with the classical idea, as is shown in the most undisputed human heritage, from Homer to Ralph Dahrendorf.

⁶ The project was complex and developed into a research study; all key data are in F. Sidoti, M. Gammon, *Che cosa significa essere europeo? Una ricerca al cuore e ai confini dell'Europa*, Milano 2013 (*Laboratorio Sociologico. Ricerca Empirica ed Intervento Sociale*, 70); *idem*, 'The Sociological Intervention' in R. Kincal (ed.), *International Symposium on Democracy and Democracy Education in Europe*, Ankara 2009; M.Y. Eryaman, S.Z. Genc, E. Aktan, 'Perceptions of the EU and Democratic Values' in J.A. Spithourakis, J. Lalor, W. Berg (eds.), *Cultural Diversity in the Classroom. A European Comparison*, Wiesbaden 2011, pp. 180-196 (*VS Research. CrossCulture*).

2. DISTINCTIVENESS IN CLASSICAL EUROPE

There is probably no time and place without some invention of a legitimating tradition.⁷ On the meaning of Europe there is an anarchy of interpretation, but because always everyone chooses relevance “that is comfortable”.⁸

The Western vision of antiquity is largely a product of that mixture of militarism and academic philology, especially in the 19th and 20th centuries, which followed the majestic rise of the Hohenzollern. Antiquity was gradually understood as a mixture of beauty and war,⁹ or, as the beauty of war; in a journey which was to lead to Leni Riefenstahl's 1938 masterwork, *Olympia 2. Teil – Fest der Schönheit*.

The same journey was resumed by one of the foremost current interpreters of antiquity, C. Meier: *Von Athen bis Auschwitz* (from Athens to Auschwitz). For many years, Homer and the *Iliad* were read in this light. In 1947, in *Dialektik der Aufklärung*, Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno labelled this vision as proto-fascist. In the Prussian “garrison state” even civilian life was militarized. The slogan *Primat der Aussenpolitik* (primacy of foreign politics) was the building-block and fountainhead of national unification. In our dissertation, imperial Germany is just an example: at that time, many European powers were militarist, colonialist, racist, and so on.

The military ethos is obviously clear in Homer, but it is not the whole story.¹⁰ In the *Iliad* there is a lot of fighting, but there are also foundational moments of humanity, for instance the Last Parting of Hector and Andromache (in the Sixth Book of the *Iliad*), or the dialogue between Priam and Achilles.

The final lines of the *Iliad* were about the victims of the war and about the mourning for lives lost on the battleground. In this crucial moment of the poem, alone and unarmed, Priam meets Achilles and asks for Hector's body. In the fight under the walls of Troy, Achilles had cruelly killed Priam's beloved son. Before killing him, Achilles had said to Hector: *my rage, my fury would drive me now to hack your flesh away and eat you raw – such agonies you have caused me*. But, speaking with Priam, suddenly, Achilles remembers the recent death of Patroclus and sees his own impending death. He thinks his father will mourn his death, as Priam is mourning the death of Hector. He thinks about his father and his close friends, whom he will never see again. Beleaguered, he weeps. Urged by pity, Priam understands the overwhelming despair of Achilles and embraces him, weeping, in a sensational shift of perspective. Profoundly divided by land and blood, these two men recognize their common humanity, their common in-

⁷ E. Hobsbawm, T. Ranger, *The Invention of Tradition*, Cambridge 1983 (*Past and Present Publications*); E.S. Morgan, *Inventing the People. The Rise of Popular Sovereignty in England and America*, New York 1988.

⁸ U. Eco, *I limiti dell'interpretazione*, Milano 1990, p. 135 (*Studi Bombiani. Campo Semiotico*); P. Ricoeur, *Histoire et vérité*, Paris 2001 (*Points. Essais*, 468).

⁹ J. Keegan, *War and Our World. The Reith Lectures 1998*, London 1999 (*Reith Lectures*); D. Hillman, *A Terrible Love of War*, New York 2005.

¹⁰ A. Momigliano, *Le radici classiche della storiografia moderna*, Firenze 1992 (*Biblioteca Storica*).

surmountable pain, and embrace each other in tears, besieged by lost affections and the vanity of life. There are many passages like this in the *Iliad*. Within the verses, paternity, friendship, patriotism, family, humility, duties, are depicted in patterns which have dominated the collective imagination of millions of students and professors.¹¹

In conversations and in teaching, in the streets and squares of the Mediterranean, Anatolia, the Aegean, the Ionian, then in all those schools which claim to be modern, Homer's 27.793 verses have taught us how to live, offering behavioural models which we find today in the recesses of a dense, complex saga, ranging from the chivalry of medieval knights to the fairness of English gentlemen. For centuries, every man of letters has recited Homer – and then applied his idea of a superior humanity.

Almost immediately Homeric perspectives became the fountainhead of behavioural patterns. A pivotal figure in Homeric mitopoiesis, Xenophon (430-354 BCE) states correctly that Homer has covered all issues concerning humanity. Xenophon's legacy is well-known. Alexander the Great used the *Anabasis* as a field guide during his expedition into Persia. But Xenophon's compelling bestseller is the *Education of Cyrus*, also known as the *Cyropaedia* (because it is based on the life of Cyrus, founder of the Persian Empire). In this magnum opus, reputed as such over the centuries, Xenophon offers an astonishing representation of humanity: wisdom, love, honour, pity, are better than greed, hate, revenge, fury. Xenophon makes deconstructions and adaptations of Homer (and Herodotus) in order to showcase his leadership theory – which founded a multi-centennial and ultra-edifying tradition of books on the *specula principum* (the mirror of princes). In this tradition, later challenged by Machiavelli, but renewed by Frederick the Great, a true leader must show pity and honour.

Mediterranean culture has plenty of inclusive ideas.¹² The same observation here made about Homer could be made about other giants of human knowledge. Herodotus was criticized as *Philobarbaros* (barbarian-lover), for not being patriotic enough. Herodotus was an open-minded and doubtful observer, moved by curiosity and empathy, especially toward the "Asiatics" of Persia and Lydia. He sympathetically focused on the origins, customs, and cultures of the barbarian "other".

Herodotus was not a staunch jingoist supporter of Greek-speaking supremacy and for that reason he was severely disapproved of (for instance, by Plutarch). While, for the same reasons, Herodotus is today the hero of Ryszard Kapuściński in his *Podróż z Herodotem*.¹³

Kapuściński was right. Herodotus was an open-minded traveller, full of doubt and respectful of rivalries and differences. The same comment could be made about Homer. In the *Iliad* there are many battles, but also the decisive step towards a heritage which is indispensable for our current definition of human rights and global citizenship.

¹¹ F. Braudel, *Grammaire des civilisations*, Paris 2008 (*Champs*, 795).

¹² Idem, *La Méditerranée et le monde méditerranéen à l'époque de Philippe II*, Paris 1949.

¹³ A superb and extraordinary profile of Kapuściński is well outlined in B. Nowacka, Z. Ziątek, *Ryszard Kapuściński. Biografia pisarza*, Kraków 2008; a different story in Domosławski, *Kapuściński non-fiction*, Warszawa 2010.

Aristotle is even more complex than Herodotus and Homer. In the days of Alexander's education, Achilles was an iconic referential hero; during his mature period, on the contrary, in the teaching courses on ethics at the Lyceum, the true virtues occupy a middle ground between two extremes. So, the virtue of courage is in the middle, between foolhardiness and cowardice. Aristotle condemns intemperance and incontinence. Virtue takes the middle ground, between excess and defect. Moral virtues are abiding states, which celebrate themselves in mastering and commanding Homeric passions such as anger. Thus Achilles in Homer's *Iliad* reminds us that there are risks with fury and that there is sweetness in pity.

Homer, Herodotus, Aristotle were not "Greek" as we currently understand the term. They were people living on the frontiers and at the borders of the Mediterranean.¹⁴ They spoke similar languages, but they were linguistically, geographically, culturally (we could even say ethnically) very different. The ancient Mediterranean colonists lived in many city-states around the shores, from Africa to Asia, from today's Turkey to the south of France. It seems certain that the first period of about two centuries, which elapsed from the original urban settlement of the colonies (700-500 BCE), was the period during which these colonies rose to the maximum height of their wealth. We have little information concerning this early period, but all historical accounts agree in representing Greek colonies as holding an amount of wealth, knowledge, civility, which far exceeded that enjoyed by any of the Greek areas of the mother country.

Frequently, Mediterranean people were not ready to acknowledge the same dignity in people who spoke a similar language, but who lived a few kilometres one from the other and who frequently enslaved each other. Aristotle, for instance, had not the dignity of being considered an Athenian, but he was labelled as a kind of *mestizo* and for this reason he preferred to leave Athens. Discrimination was frequent; Demosthenes referred to Philip II, the father of Alexander the Great in the same manner: *He is not only no Greek, nor related to the Greeks, but not even a barbarian from any place that can be named with honour, but a pestilent knave from Macedonia, whence it was never yet possible to buy a decent slave.* In Greeks' intramural debates about distinctiveness, many identities have been left to posterity, which used different self-perceptions in different epochs. In the Mediterranean waters, Minoan civilization and Mycenaean civilization, Etruscans and Aegeans, Hittites and Lydians mixed frequently and fruitfully, but tribes, sailors, farmers did not share a common language, a common religion or a common tradition.

For instance, the Romans were completely different from the Greeks. The most famous Greek word, *democracy*, does not exist in Latin: it is almost impossible to translate it taking into account a Roman mentality. Culturally, it has been said: *Graecia capta ferum victorem coepit* (captive Greece captured her rude conqueror), but not from a political or practical point of view. The meaning of democracy fell into disuse for centuries and was abruptly reborn in America; to tell the truth, before the Jacksonians,

¹⁴ G. Pugliese Carratelli (ed.), *Megale Hellas. Storia e civiltà della Magna Grecia*, Milano 1993 (*Antica Madre*, 6).

this word was unusual also for Americans: in the twelve collected volumes of Thomas Jefferson, the word democracy appears once and, even then, only in a quotation. In the American rebirth, a new creature appeared: the notion of a democracy in continuous implementation, rich in opportunities and poor in population, was inexistent in ancient times, known for their brutal slavery and multifaceted inequalities, cherished by kings and landlords of both the European and Asiatic past.

3. CLASSICAL EUROPE

Different ideas of classical Europe¹⁵ are frequently borrowed from attitudes concerning those Asian people with whom Greeks came into close belligerent contact and against whom they defined themselves. Herodotus' masterpiece largely concerns the Persian Wars, which started in 499 BCE and lasted until 449 BCE. Herodotus related several different events such as the battle of Salamis and the battle of Thermopylae. When, in 490 BCE, the enormous Persian army landed near Marathon, Darius' punitive expedition was recognized as the first move towards absorbing the Greek-speaking world into a province of Asia and turning its free cities into an "oriental despotism". Aeschylus, Herodotus, Aristotle described the Persian Wars as a turning point. Herodotus wrote: *the Persians departed and sailed away to Asia*. Aeschylus wrote: *The mother of disasters awaits them there, / Reward for insolence, for scorning God*. Aristotle made abstruse distinction among enemies, slaves, living tools, animals. So, up against the *Westerners*, we had the *barbarians*.

The universal geography of Hecataeus (550-476 BCE) is the first attempt to identify Europe as a single entity, distinct from Asia, but, as in Homer, it was not the idea of two divided and opposed civilizations. Scholars suggest that for the first time, only with the victories of Philip II the Macedon (382-336 BCE), did European identity emerge in some primordial sense. In the years characterized by the rise of the Macedonian supremacy, a certain awareness arose about the existence of something larger than the area revolving around Athens and Sparta. Philip, his son Alexander the Great, and Aristotle as tutor of the young Alexander, were well aware of being hated by many Greeks (Demosthenes represented Philip as a disgusting monster and a pestilent barbarian).

In fact, Philip was acclaimed "the greatest king in Europe" and he called his daughter *Europe*, after the battle of Chaeronea (338 BCE). Philip unified Greece under a Macedonian hegemony and gave a meaning to the word *Europe* which is in some way similar to the modern term.¹⁶ Typically, when intellectuals speak about the birth of Europe, they refer to mythological narratives; they do not mention Chaeronea. This

¹⁵ V.D. Hanson, J. Heath, B.S. Thornton, *Bonfire of the Humanities. Rescuing the Classics in an Impoverished Age*, Wilmington 2000; M. Nussbaum, *Cultivating Humanity. A Classical Defense of Reform in Liberal Education*, Cambridge (Mass.) 1997.

¹⁶ F. Prontera, 'Sul concetto geografico di Hellas' in idem (ed.), *Geografia storica della Grecia antica. Tradizioni e problemi*, Roma 1991, pp. 78-98.

crucial moment is underestimated,¹⁷ but for many reasons it is relevant (obviously, our dissertation ignores current disputes about the naming of Macedonia, which are in the solid hands of the International Court of Justice).

For Philip II, all past experience had shown that wars against Persia succeeded only through collective action: his intention was to involve all Greeks in the Persian war. Philip had no illusions about his own unpopularity, so he sustained ideal and ideological unity: he established the League of Corinth, in 337, to preserve and perpetuate a general peace (*koinē eirēnē*), which allowed him to conduct the war overseas. In his attempt at unity, Greece was not enough: he needed a greater geographical and paradigmatic entity, which was more than the old Greek world, already heading towards the final sunset. The effervescent scenery of Greek city-state was destined to be swept away by Alexander, then by the heirs of Alexander and finally by the triumph of the Romans: after the battle of Actium (33 BCE), they did not need the idea of Europe, they needed the idea of an Empire.

Romans were not Greek at all: they admired the culture, but disdained the chronic Greek incapacity for nation-building and state-building. There are texts in which ancient Romans are ready to distinguish themselves from the Greeks, in terms of accountability and credibility. After the conquest of Greece by the Romans in 168 BCE, it finished the ancient and magnificent system of free city-states. This system had to end, in order to give room to the first supranational world system, unified from the Atlantic to the Middle East.

Forced to summarize a very complicated and controversial history, in our EU project we told students that as the Greek world disappeared under the weight of a number of factors, the same destiny befell the Roman world, which in its later history was often extremely corrupted, depraved, and greedy. Following various scholars, the decline and fall of the Roman Empire was due to the fact that it became progressively more “extractive” as opposed to “inclusive”.¹⁸

The Athenians and Roman ruling classes saw their social system as a cluster of subjects to oppress as slaves. In Athens the extension of democracy to the have-nots was only a necessary consequence of the urgent need for a permanent fleet, to defend the Athenian maritime empire. In Rome the extension of citizenship was dictated by similar opportunities.

From the beginning, there have been many bad experiences in the European heritage. Not everything deserves to be respected and respect must be recognized in appropriate doses. What we usually call *classical civilization* was not born in Greece or in Rome, but along the frontiers of anonymous coasts of the Mediterranean, in a multitude of shores and islands. The discoverers (for the first time in history) of freedom and self-government were immigrants, comparable to those of the *Mayflower*. At the end of the Bronze Age, immigrants from the autocratic regimes located in the pre-historical Balkans arrived in almost uninhabited Mediterranean areas and invented new social

¹⁷ S. Price, P. Thonemann, *The Birth of Classical Europe. A History from Troy to Augustine*, London 2010.

¹⁸ D. Acemoglu, J. Robinson, *Why Nations Fail. The Origins of Power, Prosperity, and Poverty*, New York 2012.

and institutional rules. At the same time, they were able to appreciate the best in earlier non-Greek civilizations: from Babylonian mathematics to Phoenician consonants. These immigrants later returned to mainland Greece and replayed the new civilization experienced in the colonies.¹⁹

In the Mediterranean area, distinctiveness and inclusiveness were become prevailing. Diogenes Laërtius says that Plato plagiarized several of Epicharmus's ideas (*Lives of Eminent Philosophers*, III, 9). However, in 369 BCE, in his masterpiece concerning the nature of knowledge, Plato openly recognizes his debt (*Theaetetus*, 152e). He frequently travelled to Sicily, Egypt, Libya, Cyrene. In many ways, Plato shows himself the spiritual heir of the Presocratics. He says that all the previous main thinkers may be listed in one line. He quotes Epicharmus, Parmenides, Protagoras, Heracleitus, Empedocles, Homer. It is a glorification of the Mediterranean connection, outside continental Greece. The list could be longer, including people as the celebrated inventor, physicist, mathematician, and astronomer Archimedes (287-212 BCE) or the celebrated lawgiver Charondas (c. 600-500 BCE). According to Aristotle, Charondas introduced precise measures on perjury and violation of rules. He *gave few laws and many regulations relating to public and private costume both to Sicily and Magna Graecia. By sanctifying them through his living example he deserved immortal glory as austere founder of civilization*. With these words, he is remembered at the entrance of the amphitheatre of his native town.

From the frontiers, civilization went to the West. Event today; in our research, we have frequently seen authors such as Kapuściński and Pamuk quoted as representatives of the "new Europe". Frontiers and borders have always provided the best champions for all Europeans. This perspective is not shared by all the scholars. Havelock proposed a specific interpretation of the classical world, based on a sharp division between literature of the 6th century BCE and that of the 4th century. In his perspective, the Presocratics are the pre-Platonics (even if the Platonic school is also source of "indefinite descriptions", according to a famous characterization of Bertrand Russell in 1905). The highest mathematical prize, often described as the "Nobel Prize of Mathematics", the Field Medal, is made of gold and shows the head of Archimedes, together with a carving illustrating his proof on the sphere and the cylinder. In the Field Medal, the inscription around the head of Archimedes is a quotation attributed to him, which reads in Latin: *Transire suum pectus mundoque potiri* (Rise above oneself and dominate the world). The reverse side bears the inscription: *Congregati ex toto orbe mathematici ob scripta insignia tribuere* (The mathematicians assembled here from all over the world pay tribute for outstanding writings). The famous Archimedes exclamation, *Eureka!* (I have found it!), is the State motto of California, appearing on the State Seal and referring to the discovery of gold near Sutter's Mill in 1848. The frontier metaphor is tied to various results; Western civilization gained new strength each time it touched a new frontier.

Not every heritage deserves comprehension. Civilization necessarily means selection, inclusion by consent and denial.²⁰ Every time we reach and cross a new frontier,

¹⁹ A different narrative in D. Kagan, *Pericles of Athens and the Birth of Democracy*, New York 1991.

²⁰ A. Giddens, *Europe in the Global Age*, Cambridge 2006.

we explore, discover, and select. The concept of inclusion and of belonging by selection today is notoriously associated with Darwinism, but (Hayek says) Darwin borrowed the concept from an earlier sociological tradition. Like plants and animals, humans are selective. Not only breeders and farmers, not only social scientists and natural morphologists, poets too are selective.

Once universally reputed greatest English intellectual of the 20th century, consecrated by the 1948 Nobel Prize for literature, later a victim of political correctness, T.S. Eliot's celebrity eclipsed, *not with a bang but a whimper*. Anyway, his definition of what must be intended as a classic is for us a good reference point. Before Eliot, many had written about the meaning of the word "classic", but he captured the crucial point (within the context of our dissertation): to be defined a classic, one author must have embedded in his work a synthesis of the best of what precedes him. Eliot says that Virgil is the classic *par excellence*. In Eliot's thesis, the two pre-eminent Virgilian qualities are *maturity* and *inclusiveness* ("comprehensiveness"). Virgil selected, enriched and transmitted a tradition of inclusiveness.²¹

After him, in the Renaissance, in the Enlightenment, and so on, Europe has been founded and re-founded many times, but this classical meaning remained a part of its DNA: fitness, selection, inclusion, culture as cultivation and as civilization. From Montaigne to Erasmus, classical ancient European heritage was condensed in a famous sentence: *Homo sum, nihil humanum a me alienum puto* (I am a man, nothing human is alien to me); there are no barbarians; we are all humans.

You can stay at the fringes and give your blood to the centre; you can stay at the centre and at the same time be culturally peripheral. In the heart of Europe, in his castle and in his splendid isolation, Montaigne wanted to be physically and ideologically peripheral. With the massacre of the Huguenots and the cruel European conquest of the New World, Montaigne re-valued the savages and even the cannibals. His best friend, Etienne de La Boétie, judged as unnatural and perverse those European jurisdictions that had allowed such carnage. We call barbarians, Montaigne said, those whose customs are unlike our own. In the *Escuela de Salamanca*, the natural rights (including the right to dignity) were at the centre of intellectual attention. Humans living outside Europe began to be seen in a new light²² – it was a minority report, but it still enlightens us.

4. THE EUROPEAN FOUNDING FATHERS

Inside and outside Europe, many people feel that the European Union is united only by the European currency. Many people think that European people are united by economic reasons and few are aware of the fact that the European Union was born in the aftermath of the catastrophic Second World War, following millions of deaths and in-

²¹ R. Brague, *Europe, la voie romaine*, Paris 1992 (*Idées*).

²² P. Hazard, *La Crise de la conscience européenne, 1680-1715*, Paris 1935.

numerable social, political, institutional, individual tragedies.²³ The meaning of the European Union is forged by forgotten feelings, as in the song *Where Have All the Flowers Gone?*, which is no longer sung and now almost unknown.²⁴

Old Europeans have seen immense physical destruction and mental anger, but they are silent minorities and nearly extinct. Today, young people have only witnessed an affluent society and rising expectations.²⁵ Current European identity was born, not against the barbarians outside the European civilisation but rather against the barbarians who are inside Europe. We could say that for the Founding Fathers, European identity was built on shame. Pride for the rest was following cautiously.

Personality should coexist in a balanced awareness of rights and duties, responsibilities and limitations. There must therefore be both pride and shame. Dodds called the Homeric culture *a shame culture* and made a comparison with the modern *guilt culture*.²⁶ The Germans use two words to indicate shame: *die Scham* and *die Schande*, public shame and private shame. Mozart and Euclid, Cervantes and Einstein, Socrates and Newton, Leonardo and Dostoyevsky, Erasmus and Pasteur, Pascal and Nobel, Verdi and Kant, are our cherished European ancestors. But they were not the only Europeans on the battlefield. In Europe we had too many events for which to ask clemency. In the famous Paul Ricoeur's book, mutual understanding is associated to gift and clemency, in the same semantic linking: *forgiveness, pardon, Vergebung, perdón, perdono*.²⁷ If you ignore the dimension of shame, sense of guilt and human limits, you amputate a vital part in the interconnected body of human consciousness.

Many different subjects supported and helped the foundation of what we consider as classical Europe: Babylonian mathematics, Phoenician vocabulary, and so on. It was only the foundation, making the base last longer and stay looking fresh.²⁸

While there are many ideas about Europe, it is clear when the European Union was born and who its Fathers were. The project of an united and pacific Europe was born after Auschwitz and in the awareness of the horrors perpetuated by people from all the European countries.²⁹

²³ Ch.R. Browning, *Ordinary Men. Reserve Police Battalion 101 and the Final Solution in Poland*, New York 1998.

²⁴ J.J. Sheehan, *Where Have All the Soldiers Gone? The Transformation of Modern Europe*, Boston 2010; idem, 'The Problem of Sovereignty in European History', *The American Historical Review*, Vol. 111, No. 1 (2006), pp. 1-15, at <<http://dx.doi.org/10.1086/ahr.111.1.1>>.

²⁵ Ch. Lasch, *The Culture of Narcissism. American Life in an Age of Diminishing Expectations*, New York 1991; W. Damon, *Greater Expectations. Overcoming the Culture of Indulgence in America's Homes and Schools*, New York 1994.

²⁶ E.R. Dodds, *The Greeks and the Irrational*, Berkeley 2004 (*Sather Classical Lectures*, 25); C. Cassar, *L'honneur et la honte en Méditerranée*, Aix-en-Provence 2005.

²⁷ P. Ricoeur, *La Mémoire, l'histoire, l'oubli*, Paris 2000 (*Ordre Philosophique*).

²⁸ E.B. Haas, *The Uniting of Europe. Political, Social, and Economic Forces, 1950-1957*, Stanford 1958 (*Library of World Affairs*, 42); idem, *When Knowledge is Power. Three Models of Change in International Organizations*, Berkeley 1990 (*Studies in International Political Economy*, 22).

²⁹ T. Snyder, *Bloodlands. Europe between Hitler and Stalin*, New York 2010.

This consciousness is the mother of the EU. It was the indication of the Founding Fathers, Robert Schuman, Alcide De Gasperi, Konrad Adenauer, Jean Monnet, and Winston Churchill. In their disdain for military adventures, in their appraisal of peaceful solutions, in humility and a sense of shame, the Founding fathers of the EU are linked to the best European heritage, from Virgil to Erasmus, from the gentleness, kindliness, and moderation portrayed by Erasmus to the *Pax Augustea*, portrayed by Virgil and carved in the *Ara Pacis*, the altar reliefs consecrated on 30 January, 9 BCE, in celebration of the peace brought by Augustus' military victories. Recently, Ralf Dahrendorf celebrated the virtues embodied by Erasmus: civility, liberty, equality, stability, tolerance, and respect for the rights of the individual.³⁰ In his description of that specific part of European history which is termed "civilization", Norbert Elias quotes Erasmus and his *De civiliatē morum puerilium* (On the civilization of a child's behaviour); in this idea, the restraining of human manners is a process which begins at school.

In his seminal speech at the University of Zurich in 1946, Winston Churchill advocated European integration precisely to prevent the horrors of two world wars from ever happening again: *There is a remedy... It is to re-create the European family, or as much of it as we can, and to provide it with a structure under which it can dwell in peace, in safety and in freedom. We must build a kind of United States of Europe.* From the beginning, in those words, the EU was linked to the USA. It is not a problem of military alliances; it is a problem of shared values. European heritage and American heritage are strictly connected. Some scholars, such as J. Habermas, dissent; but other scholars, such as T.G. Ash, underline the point.³¹

At the centre of Europe we have today lands that once were the centre of the worst European carnage: in World War II, 2.5 per cent of the world population died, 60 million people. To achieve this result, an exercise in training, which lasted many centuries, was necessary. The awareness of the preceding atrocities is the soul of Europe: it is at the origin of the *European Dream*. Today, this peaceful and unifying project is more alive and vital than ever, because unfortunately there are dire prospects for a return to the world of selfishness, misery, ignorance, brutality, which in Europe lead to two world wars. In a specific sense, a bitter consciousness is the invisible soul of Europe.³² A rightful pride to be European exists, but it would be a seditious and dangerous one, if, with the right elements of pride, it had no awareness of the lesson of humility and sense of shame that was the mark of the Founding Fathers, Konrad Adenauer, Alcide De Gasperi, Robert Schuman, Paul-Henri Spaak. Supporting international alliances, Winston Churchill and Jean Monnet (who was also Deputy Secretary-General of the League of Nations) are very important in the list.³³

³⁰ R. Dahrendorf, *Versuchungen der Unfreiheit. Die Intellektuellen in Zeiten der Prüfung*, München 2006.

³¹ T.G. Ash, *Free World. America, Europe, and the Surprising Future of the West*, London 2004; J. Habermas, *Kleine politische Schriften*, Vol. 10: *Der gesplittene Westen*, Frankfurt am Main 2004 (*Edition Suhrkamp*, 2383); idem, *Zur Verfassung Europas. Ein Essay*, Berlin 2011 (*Edition Suhrkamp*, 6214).

³² T.G. Ash, *History of the Present. Essays, Sketches, and Dispatches from Europe in the 1990s*, New York 2009.

³³ G. Ross, *Jacques Delors and European Integration*, Cambridge 1995 (*Europe and the International Order*).

For years, the EU has defended peace and made liberty stronger. After the Second World War, and up to the seventies, countries which are fundamental to the idea of Europe had been under fascist, military, authoritarian political regimes (Spain, Portugal, Greece), or were dominated by communist parties, despite tensions and insurrections (as in Poland, Czechoslovakia, Hungary). All these countries gradually followed in the wake of the European Community. After the fall of the Berlin Wall, in 1989, the attraction of Europe increased and accelerated the process of “re-unification of the Old Continent”. Today all this seems clearly at risk. Without a compass our journey is a turbulent, the origins and the soul of Europe are invisible, forgotten or neglected.

In our research we discovered that few Europeans remember Erasmus. His quiet and revolutionary civility is not enough appreciate; to say the best: it is almost unknown. Obviously, today the majority of the European people have been nurtured in a pacific culture, but the roots, the intimations, the motivations are unknown. When Erasmus comments the timeless words *Dulce bellum inexpertis* (war is good for those who do not know it), he is the heir of a long list of thoughts about war and peace. Even the students who travel by and large in Europe do not know his vision. The *Erasmus generation* thinks that Erasmus is only the acronym of a program. The millions of euros spent on the Erasmus program, haven’t made Erasmians of us all.³⁴

During our research, we have seen a great uncertainty about European values. The current financial crisis is motivated even by popular ignorance about the great specific European legacy, which could be much more assertive than it is today.³⁵

5. INCLUSIVENESS IN CLASSICAL EUROPE

In any case, as far as the frontier is concerned, inclusion is at the core of the term. Inclusiveness is at the heart of the *human canon* (very different from the so-called *western canon*). In every religion we find the same perspective, from Francesco d’Assisi to Mevlana, Gialal ad-Din (who lived at the same time, though separated by distance). Inclusiveness is a specific topic of the idea of Europe, as it was celebrated by Homer, Virgil, Dante, Eliot, and so on.

For many interesting reasons Islam has been considered as necessarily being outside Europe. But in one of the most beautiful rooms of the hyper-Catholic Vatican Museums, in Raphael’s most famous fresco, in the so-called “School of Athens”, the dazzling presence of Averroes is absolutely clarifying. The case is typically representative of the idea of Europe that is, truly, the classic one and the only one which deserves

³⁴ Regarding “diet coke democracy”, see N. Berggruen, N. Gardels, *Intelligent Governance for the 21st Century. A Middle Way between West and East*, Cambridge 2012; S. Goulard, M. Monti, *De la démocratie en Europe*, Paris 2012; F. Sidoti, “Terrorism Supporters in the West” in N. Gal-Or (ed.), *Tolerating Terrorism in the West. An International Survey*, London 1991.

³⁵ M. Castells, *La Era de la Información. Economía, sociedad y cultura*, Vol. 2: *El poder de la identidad*, México 2001; P. Bruckner, *La mélancolie démocratique. Comment vivre sans ennemis? Essai*, Paris 1992 (*Points. Actuels*, A122).

our respect. The fact that so many pagan intellectuals could be set beside a Pope in private, tells of the inclusivity of intellectual life at a time when ancient learning was reborn in what was then call the Renaissance – and what we wish to see happen again in Europe.

In the sixteenth century European Renaissance intellectuals knew the importance of Averroes, even the Popes knew it. Today we have to explain this fact extensively. During our research, in our discussion groups, when we talked about Averroes, we were talking about a total stranger. Among European students and teachers, no one knew him. No one knew Mevlana, Gialal ad-Din.³⁶ Islamic greatness in science and tolerance is unknown in Europe.

Yet, after seventeen centuries of neglectful Western inattention, in the Medieval European age (which was the golden Islamic age) Averroes was the first commentator of Aristotle. In Cordoba, in a library of 250,000 volumes, conversing in Arabic, Greek, Latin, Hebrew, Galician, Castilian, within a place that now seems a periphery and a border, but which was then the capital of the world, Averroes puts rationalism and doubt at the centre of European thought. Explaining Aristotle, he produced a colossal and lasting shift of the intellectual centre of gravity within the European continent. Along with Avicenna, Averroes brings to light not only Aristotle, but Euclid, Hippocrates, Ptolemy: medicine, mathematics, the science of the ancient world. Averroes was not alone in the Islamic revitalization of primordial civilization.

For the greatest Renaissance painter, Raphael (as in Thomas Aquinas or in Dante), the greatness of this Islamic culture was beyond question. Arab rationalism gave us the zero, numbers, the decimal system, algorithms and algebra. In turn, the Arabs strengthened and deepened various lessons learned from the Indians, the Phoenicians, the Egyptians, the Babylonians and the Assyrians. The cumulative and inclusive nature of scientific knowledge was evident during the strong Islamic presence in Europe.³⁷

The relevance of the scientific outlook has been at the core of European identity.³⁸ Rather than a history characterized by wars, militarism, colonialism, and so on, for us the first ideal European connection was with science. In our EU project, the first meeting was held in Heidelberg in 2008, on the same night a German Nobel Prize in medicine was celebrated. The idea of a Europe built on knowledge, civility, rule of law, inclusiveness, was in our mind from the beginning, but we understood that this idea of Europe was conflicting with many other ideas about Europe and its destiny.

The inventor of dynamite and philanthropist, Alfred Nobel is an icon of European ambivalence on science, which can be used in order to build bombs and in order to build peace.³⁹ Inclusiveness is a word used in many fields, from mathematical functions

³⁶ H. Dabashi, *The World of Persian Literary Humanism*, Boston 2012.

³⁷ J.A. Jáuregui, *Europa, tema y variaciones. La identidad y variedad cultural europea*, Madrid 2000.

³⁸ U. Beck, A. Giddens, S. Lash, *Reflexive Modernization. Politics, Tradition and Aesthetics in the Modern Social Order*, Stanford 1994.

³⁹ C. Cipolla, *Vele e cannoni*, Bologna 1983 (*Intersezioni*, 5).

to rhetorical subterfuge. In our context, the meaning is eminently biological and borrowed from W.D. Hamilton: inclusiveness is a feature of natural selection to privilege organisms that would behave in ways to maximize their fitness. Evidently, also dynamite can help evolution and survival. At the annual *Nobel Prize Award Ceremony*, in the Stockholm City Hall, every 10 December, the classical European spirit is alive and roaring each year more.

6. THE DECADENCE OF EUROPE?

Today, alarmist warnings about the perils of ignoring history in a Europe which is really on the brink of disaster are made by scholars like Roubini and Ferguson, who underline the possibility that civilizations can flourish for centuries and suddenly plunge into chaos.⁴⁰ There is a centuries-long literature on the decadence of Europe, always followed by factual denials. This kind of thinking is old and unfounded.⁴¹ Europe has showed a great capacity for self-transformation and re-adaptation. The merit and strength of Europe, for instance, is having been able to cut out its greedy empires of the past.⁴² Colonialism and militarism are an old European history.

An intermittent decadence of Europe is today possible. These pages are the results of a project sponsored by the EU. Forced to explain to students what Europe, knowledge, civility, laws, inclusiveness are, as scholars and professors we asked ourselves the fundamental question and then made a long exploratory journey into the past. We discovered that classical Europe was very inclusive: it was different from current Europe.

Immigration policies and border security are real problems. But they can be managed in different ways. We have confidence in the soul of classical Europe. In a speech made in Ankara, 6 April 2009, in his first trip overseas as president of the US, President Obama explained how it was possible to work together to respond to an unprecedented global crisis. President Obama said that cooperation only reinforces the common security that Europe and the United States share with Turkey as a NATO ally, and the common values that they share as democracies. Above all, he underlined the challenges of the 21st century: *This much is certain: No one nation can confront these challenges alone, and all nations have a stake in overcoming them. That is why we must listen to one another, and seek common ground. That is why we must build on our mutual interests, and rise above our differences. We are stronger when we act together.*

In Obama's words, the transition from unilateralism to multilateralism was evident. Obama said that leadership depends on ability to create partnerships, which are obligatory, *because we can't solve these problems alone*. Consequently, he underlined that in Afghanistan, the US was partnering with a coalition of forty-six countries. Not a *Pax*

⁴⁰ N. Ferguson, *Civilization. The West and the Rest*, New York 2012.

⁴¹ S. Mazzarino, *La fine del mondo antico*, Milano 1965 (*Serie Saper Tutto*, 153-155)

⁴² R. Aron, *Plaidoyer pour l'Europe décadente*, Paris 1977, pp. 22-23 (*Libertés* 2000).

Americana, but a peace enforced by forty-six countries. In Obama's words, the super-power acknowledged its limits.⁴³

The rebirth of classical Europe is the rebirth of collaboration, alliance, partnership, mutual friendship, common values. In the Middle East, in Europe and in America, Western declinism is the classic self-fulfilling prophecy,⁴⁴ while, actually, however, what continues to exist are reasons for US strength and European eminence, which can be maximized rather than minimized (for those who care about the stability of the international system). In the idea of a Europe built on knowledge, compassion, civility, rule of law, inclusiveness, there is the rebirth of classical Europe.

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⁴³ Ch. Patten, *Cousins and Strangers. America, Britain, and Europe in a New Century*, New York 2006; K. Mahhubani, *The New Asian Hemisphere. The Irresistible Shift of Global Power to the East*, New York 2008; idem, *The Great Convergence. Asia, the West, and the Logic of One World*, New York 2013.

⁴⁴ R. Kagan, *The World America Made*, New York 2012; D. Chong, J.N. Druckman, 'Framing Public Opinion in Competitive Democracies', *The American Political Science Review*, Vol. 101, No. 4 (2007), at <<http://dx.doi.org/10.1017/S0003055407070554>>.

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