THE CONCEPT OF EUROPE AS AN IDÉE-FORCE

Josep R. Llobera
University College, London
Universidade Pompeu Fabra, Barcelona

The European Union is based on a large set of values, with roots in antiquity and in Christianity which over 2.000 years evolved into what we recognize today as the foundations of modem democracy the rule of law and civil society. This set of values has its own clear moral foundation and its obvious metaphysical roots, regardless of whether modern man admits it or not. Thus it cannot be said that the European Union lacks its own spirit from which all the concrete principles on which it is founded grow. It appears, though, that this spirit is rather difficult to see. It seems too hidden behind the mountains of systemic, technical, administrative, economic, monetary and other measures that contain it. (…)

That is why it seems to me that perhaps the most important task facing the European Union today' is coming up with a new and genuinely clear reflection on what might be called European identity, a new and genuinely clear articulation of European responsibility, an intensified interest in the very. meaning of European integration in all its wider implications for the contemporary world, and the recreation of its ethos or if you like, its charisma.

> Simply reading the Maastricht Treaty, despite its historical importance, will hardly win enthusiastic supporters for the European Union. Nor will it win patriots, people who will genuinely experience this complex organism as their native land or their home, or as one aspect of their home. If this great administrative work, which obviously should simplify life for all Europeans, is to hold together and stand various tests of time, then it must be visibly bonded by more than a set of rules and regulations...
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> I would welcome if, for instance, the European Union were to establish a charter of its own that would clearly define the ideas on which it is founded, its meaning and the values it intends to embody...
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> If the citizens of Europe understand that this is not just an anonymous bureaucratic monster that wants to limit or even deny their autonomy but simply a new type of human community that actually broadens their freedom significantly, then the European Union need not fear for its future...
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> (Extract from the speech made by the President of the Czech Republic to the European Parliament in Strasbourg on March 8th, 1994)

Prelude

In this paper I will be using, more implicitly than explicitly, Alfred Fouillée's concept of idée-force to account for the developments that have led to the construction of the European Union. For Fouillée ideas are active principles that once they have been formulated lead to their own realisation through successive approximations. With this conception Fouillée was criticising the economistic approaches which were dominant in his time (end of the 19th century). Ideas, once conceived and desired, are forces that tend to assert themselves in action. Fouillée, however, was not trying to defend an idealist standpoint; rather he insisted that ideas are only successful when they signify something logically and experimentally. In other words, only when they correspond to precise relationships. If ideas become actualised is because they contain what Fouillée called an 'objective possibility'. An idea has to contain a kernel of truth to be powerful. Ideas are forces because they have causal effects, although they are also caused. Ideas

are, then, dynamic factors which impel individuals and nations to action (Guyau 1913).

Europe is an idea whose time has come. A famous French intellectual said that “nations are not eternal; they had a beginning and they will have an end. And what will replace them is the European confederation”. Now, these words were not uttered by a prophet of Europeanism or by an ideologist of the EU, but by none other that the very man who established the centralityof the nation for modernity: Ernest Renan. A quarter of a century later, another Frenchman, no less a patriot than Émile Durkheim wrote in a similar vein that the European order would be achieved by the small *patries* merging peacefully into a large one. What are we to make of these and similar statements ? Simply, the realisation that Europe had to unite if it wanted to survive as a civilisation. The two world wars of the twentieth century clearly show that this would not be an easy task. None the less, the concept of Europe was revived after 1945 and gave rise to the developments that we all know. Fouillée would have said that the concept of a uniited Europe was an idée-force, in spite of the difficulties to put into practice.

Paraphrasing Rudolf von Thaden in his book *Prussia: The History of a Lost State* (1988) we could start by asking: Wo liegt Europa?, that is, where lies Europe? Or in a different way we could ask how European is Turkey or Russia, or even England. What determines European-ness: geography?, political history?, culture?, consciousness? The sociologist Henri Mendras has suggested that, in so far as Western Europe is concerned, it can be defined by reference to four major traits: evangelical individualism, nationalism, capitalism and democracy. But can that be generalised to other parts of Europe? (Delanty 1995).

Introduction

At the end of the second millennium, and in the light of the acquis communautaire of the past fifty years (but particularly since the mid-1980s), it is possible to state that the European Union has radically transformed European society at the economic and legal levels, has created a new political space and has began to construct a sense of

European identity. What is far from clear is the final outcome of these complex processes, particularly in the context of both closer union and enlargement.

If we take into consideration its first fifty years of existence, the project of constructing a European community may have seemed for social scientists a chimera. In which way can a union of states result in a Gemeinschaft (community), unless we use the term in Benedict Anderson's term of an *imagined community*? Furthermore, the European Union that we have today is not the outcome of the clear federalist project of the founding fathers (Monnet, Schuman, De Gaasperi, Spaak, Adenauer and others), but a rather messy contraption made out of many compromises, concessions, accomodations, fudging of issues, etc., and also of of whole periods of stagnation, back pedalling and outward opposition to the communitarian project. Finally, the often cryptic and convoluted language of the documents of the European Commission does not project a clear picture of what the European Union is at present.

A key obstacle for seizing the essence of the European Union is our conceptual poverty. For many observers, the only point of reference they can muster in looking at the European Union is that of the nation-state. In that context the European Union is seen as a potentially a nation-state writ-large - and this, according to different political actors, may or may not be desirable or feasible. On the other hand, the political reality of what has emerged within the European Commission and the European Parliament are often ignored.

What the future will bring us is unclear. Philippe Schmitter has suggested four possible outcomes for the European Union. To avoid the contaminated language of modernity, he uses four Latin terms to refer to them:

1) Federatio. This is what we might call cooperative federalism. Typically it corresponds to similar arrangements to those which exist in Switzerland and Germany.

2) Confederatio. This a flexible system in which the states enjoy a fair degree of autonomy. Yugoslavia was a conferatio between 1980 and 1991.

3) Consortio. In this articulation the states retain their territorial identity, but pool capacities. This is the type of arrangement which exists between Canada and the USA.

4) Condominio. In this system there is a high variation of territorial and functional constituencies; divergences and conflicts can be common.

Each of these possible future political scenarios is likely to favour different cultural arrangements. How far is European identity going to develop is an open question, though even in the most appropiate framework (which is that of a federatio) the prospects are limited. In any case, what should be obvious is that national identity and European identity are not comparable entities, unless we think of the European Union as the germ of a future nation-state.

Edgar Morin's theory of Europe

In this section I propose to present an original interpretation of what Europe is. It is an attempt to capture Europe as the precipitate of a complex and contradictory history. Prior to that, however, it is important to clarify the concepts of culture and civilisation. As we shall see in the course of this chapter, different authors use these terms, particularly the word culture, in different ways. One can find references, for example, to 'English culture, 'European culture' and 'global culture', as well as to 'high culture' and 'popular culture', 'gay culture', etc. Looking at the different uses of the word culture, Wallerstein has suggested that there are two main ways, and a supplementary one, of looking at culture from a general point of view:

In the first place, as a set of characteristics which distinguishes one group from another. In this sense, culture is a set of values, symbols and patterns of behaviour that a person acquires as a member of a group. This is the widest definition possible and it is not always easy to operationalise it.

In the second place, as a set of phenomena which are different from a higher than some other phenomena within any one group. It is in this sense

that we have elite and popular culture, a great and a small tradition, high versus low culture, etc.

Finally, as a set of objects (material culture) or as a set of ideas (mental or intellectual culture).

An important feature of culture in the two major senses of the word referred to above is that it refers back to the concept of group; in other words, there can be no culture without a group that produces it, creates it or adopts it. Groups are carriers of culture and this assumes also a certain awareness of the boundaries of the group. Furthermore, culture has to be learned within the family, the school, etc, and to that end the group has a number of mechanisms to reinforce values and prescribed behaviour.

Civilisation is also a complex concept, which is often confused with that of culture. It has a long history and there are different national traditions, but in the sense used by many contemporary social scientists it does not refer to a condition of refinement and superiority to be contrasted, say, with barbarism, but to a space “encompassing a certain number of nations, ach national culture being only a particular form of the whole” (Durkheim and Mauss 1998:153). According to Durkheim and Mauss civilisational phenomena are essentially international and extranational; they are social phenomena that are common to a number of more or less similar societies. Some authors use the expression cultural area instead of civilisation. It is important to remember that within this conception civilisation is always used in the plural, and hence we have a plethora of civilisations: European, Chinese, Indian, African, etc.

When referrring to Europe it is conceptually and methodologically important to separate between:

- The European Union as an entity that is the result of a common will to build certain institutions.

- The European civilisation or cultural area which is the result of long-term, non-intentional, non-anticipated and indirect circumstances.

Can we speak of European culture? As we shall see, some authors do. But in the context of this chapter if by culture we understand singularity, individuality and specificity, it is obvious that it would be better to use the expression European cultural space, or even better European civilisation. In the final resort, European national cultures remain diverse at the religious, linguistic, political, economic and many other levels, although certain features that could be labeled European.

I follow Morin's definition of culture, although he is not always consistent in its use. By culture, in a strict sense of the term, he refers to what is typical, what belongs to nations and ethnies. It is a term that stems from the German tradition, that is, Herder, the Romantics, the historical school and the Volksgeist tradition; it also corresponds to the anthropological definition. Culture is the opposite of nature; it is the singularity, the subjectivity, the individuality, the specificity of a society. Culture develops by being faithful to one-self.

By civilisation, in a strict sense of the term, Morin refers to what belongs to Europe as a whole; it is cumulative and progressive. The concept stems from the French tradition and it is based on the universality of Reason. Civilisation is transmissible, objective and universal. European civilisation has produced a series of values: humanism, spirituality, rationality, democracy, science and freedom. In a nutshell, "nations may share a civilisation; but they will always be distinct in their culture, since culture defines what they are" (Scruton 1998:1).

The French sociologist Edgar Morin, in his book *Penser l'Europe* (1990), maintains that Europe is not a clear and distinctive notion, with precise frontiers. The history of Europe is characterised not by unity, but by conflict and division. If the medieval period is conceived as a unity it is because of Christianity; in a strict sense, however, this period is pre-European. Europe was made through the emergence of nations and the splits in Christianity. Europe meant divisions, multiplicity and wars. This is particularly true of the twentieth century. European cultural identity must be understood through these divisions, conflicts and heterogeneity.

The European consciousness of today stems from the interlocking of two factors. First, what the Czech philosopher Pato-ka calls the 'misery of the

fall, what is left in history after the fall'. Europe comes at a time of decadence and comes as a unity of destiny. In contradistinction to nations, which base the community of destiny in a past identity (on a cultural, linguistic, ethnic and common historical identity), in the case of Europe there is no common past, but that of division. We cannot refer to a past community of destiny, but to a present and future ones. Europe was born after 1945 as a result of the disintegration of national chauvinisms, particularly those of France and Germany.

This community of destiny presuposes also the end of colonial empires outside Europe (a fact that forced people to think in European terms). This community took a great step forward after the oil crisis of 1973 when people realised the vulnerability of Europe. The Cold War, with the Soviet threat, was another factor which contributed to the unification of Europe. While European economic identity is based on industrial potency, cultural identity stems from political decadence and human misery.

For Morin, Europe is like a Switzerland writ-large: a mosaic of small nations. Its wealth is the variety of cultures and languages. These cultures are not only threatened by the USA, but also by the homogeneisation brought about by industrialisation. Cultural diversity is, then, Europe's major wealth. In the past this diversity has been a major obstacle for Europe, because its has produced conflicts and wars. But today these tensions can be to a great extent superseded and channeled to more creative uses within the EU.

There have been many discussions concerning the issue of whether Russia is European or not. In a manner of speaking one could say that the Slav and Byzantine traditions are European, but Russia has also elements of Asiatic despotism. In another sense, the European influence is seen also in the Americas. Has Europe any fixed frontiers or is it an open concept? When Europe is envisaged as a unity within a multiplicity we enter what Morin has called the European cultural dialogics.

Europe has Judeo-Christian and Graeco-Roman roots, but these diffeent contributions to the making of European culture have not always generated a harmonic unity. The same applies to the inheritance of Latinity and Germanity. Some of this oppositions are complementary, but other are antagonistic.

Dialogics is different from dialectics. It means the preservation of the duality or plurality of instances, which in a way are complementary but in another way antagonistic. Europe was born of the split in medieval Christianity; this was the time when dialogics started. From the Renaissance onwards philosophy dissociates itself from religion; and later on science disassoaciates itself from philosophy. The dialogical movement means that none of these instances will ever be completely hegemonic. It also means that religion will be regenerated by philosophy and science or that Judaism (hidden for many centuries in the ghettoes) will influence modern European culture.

European institutions, be it Reason or Democracy, must be defined in dialogical terms; they all incorporate dimensions that take these concepts to the limits, showing their gragility and vulnerability. The example of democracy, born in Ancient Greece to millenia and a half ago, is paradigmatic. Democracy is not the power of the majority, but the rules of a game that makes productive the conflict between opinions and worldvisions. Dialogics means conflict asd fragility; but neither wars nor imperialisms, neither chauvinisms nor dictatorships have completely undermined democracy in Europe.

Identity and difference - the two terms of the Hegelian conundrum - is what defines Europe (according to Morin). Europe has been a continuous ferment of cultures, a melting pot of cultures. The main problem that affects Europe today is that of its lack of determination, its weakness, its inability to assert itself.

In conclusion, Europe is a unity in diversity, a multiplicity of cultures and languages in a democratic community of destiny. To be European is, negatively, to reject annihilation and subjection; positively, to defend the richness of a dialogical culture.

We are living through a period that can be described as agonistic: we do not know whether we are going through the pains of birth or of death. In any case, there is no room for the idea of an European nation, which would substitute the existing ones. European cultural identity is something different which heralds not an European nation, but an European metanation.

The European ideal: the enlightened pioneers

In the interwar period, and particularly during the hegemonic years of generic fascism, the European ideal was at a low ebb. Different reasons can be suggested to account for this state of things: the crisis of European civilisation (exemplified in Spengler's "decline of the West"), the predominance of nationalism, the emergence of the idea of race as an organising principle of the polis, etc. Nonetheless, there were attempts at European unification as the Pan-Europa movement, led by Coudenhove-Kalergi, and the Briand Plan testify (Heater 1992).

In the immediate aftermath of World War II there was an intense clamour in favour of European unity, of which the Recontres Internationales on "L' Esprit Européen" (Geneva, 1946) and the European Congress (The Hague, 1948) were perhaps the most important manifestations. I focus mainly on "L'Esprit Européen" because it was essentially a forum for intellectual discussion, while the European Congress was more a conference of politicians. I make no claim of providing a comprehensive picture of the period under consideration, nor do I intend to justify the selection of intellectual voices. I have chosen the best-known and the most influential thinkers. Interestingly enough one does not have to go very far in the examination of texts to realise that a number of themes, in the form of oppositions, emerge:

1) A religious versus a secular vision of Europe. While nobody denied the impact of Christianity in the making of Europe, its importance, particularly in modern times, is the object of controversy. Authors like Julien Benda, Federico Chabod, Karl Jaspers and T.S. Eliot considered Christianity the essential, defining element of Europe-past and the only sound basis of Europe-future. Other thinkers like José Ortega y Gasset, Denis de Rougemont and Georg Lukács gave prominence to reason, and particularly to scientific rationality, in their chracterisation of Europe. On the other hand, the secular camp was far from being unanimous; there is a humanist vision, articulated by Ortega, and socialist one, defended by Lukács.

This somewhat simplistic characterisation can be corrected by pointing out that authors such as Chabod and Jaspers were not reluctant to emphasise

the role played by non-religious factors in the making of Europe. Chabod's wartime lectures on the idea of Europe made it explicit that for him the most obvious expression of European consciousness occurred during the Enlightenment - a period in which thinkers such as Montesquieu and Voltaire conceived Europe as an economic sphere, as a political body and as an intellectual community. Jaspers insisted that the principles that animated the variety and richness of Europe were freedom (conceived as the necessity of truth), history (as a struggle for freedom) and science (Wissenschaft), meaning the universal desire to know.

2) Europe as a cultural reality versus Europe as a political reality. Most authors accepted that Europe was an idea (and also an ideal whose time had not yet come) and they might even have talked about the existence of a European culture, but it is only Ortega who took the view that Europe was a public power, a political entity before it was ever divided into nation-states. He also maintained that there has always been a European "state", albeit in the form of a balance of power.

3) A centralist versus a federalist vision of Europe. The future of Europe was imagined diversely. There were those who, like Benda, envisaged the construction of a supranational European state along the historical lines of nation-and-state-building. At the other end of the spectrum, Denis de Rougemont (with Raymond Aron approximating his position and to a lesser extent Ortega as well) favoured federalism, or, to be more precise, proposed a Swiss model for Europe. In the final resort, centralists expected that in a united Europe national, ethnic and regional identities would be subordinated, if not emasculated; federalists conceived European unity as the condition for the preservation and development of the different identities.

An important issue in the confrontation between Benda and Rougemont was, as I have said, the future of national and ethnic identities in a united Europe. Benda's formulations in the conference were widely criticised for confusing unity with unification and unity with identity. But nobody expressed it as masterly as Raymond Aron when he said: "The choice is not between a unified Europe and the diversity of nations; it is between two conceptions, one totalitarian, which impedes conciliation, the other federalist, which allows the existence of Europe as a community of culture

and perhaps of interests, but preserves the diversity of nations in their language, spirit and genius" (Aron 1947:62).

At a time like the present, when the word "federalist" is the object of so much misunderstanding (particularly in Britain), it is perhaps appropriate to conclude the reference to this conference with some sobering thougts from the pen of Denis de Rougemont; the principles of federalism that he wished to be applied to the construction of Europe were the following:

- A federation can only emerge if each of the composing nations renounces the idea of hegemony.
- Federalism only makes sense if the idea of "esprit de système" is excluded.
- Federalism respects the rights of minorities.
- The objective of a federation is not to erase diversity and to fuse all nations in one single entity, but to preserve the distinctive features of each nation.
- Federalism is built on the love of complexity.
- A federation starts at the bottom, with individuals and groups, and not at the top.

(Rougemont 1948:70-77)

For much of its history, the construction of European unity was influenced by the existence of two models one positive and one negative. On the one hand, Europe meant freedom, democracy, solidarity, rationalism, critical spirit, market economy, etc.; on the other, Europe represented dictatorship, collectivism, passivity, statism, nationalism, etc. Both traditions could draw on past history.

In 1948 the Congress of Europe met in The Hague. Federalists and non-federalists discussed the future of Europe. Presided over by Winston Churchill, who felt that the place of the UK was more with Empire and

with its special relationship with the USA, the Congress opted for a Consultative Assembly consisting of MPs appointed by each of the state parliaments. The Council of Europe was created in March 1949, with Strasbourg as its permanent seat. Among its aims figured a concern with human rights, the facilitating of economic and social progress and more vaguely the promotion of European unity. Federalists suffered a major blow.

It was a core of European countries (Germany, France, Italy, The Netherlands, Belgium and Luxembourg) which started the great adventure of building a united Europe out the ashes of the Second World War and in the context of the growing totalitarian menace of the Soviet block. The failure of The Hague stirred Europeanists like Jean Monnet and Robert Schumnan towards the creation of a modest, initial communitarian institution in 1950: the European Coal and Steel Community. In 1953 they suffered another setback when the French parliament rejected the idea of the European Defence Community. None the less, in 1957 the creation of a common market of six countries put the locomotive on the roll once again. In the meantime, the United Kingdom remained, on the whole, aloof from this process of unification.

European unification was began by the social democratic and Christian democratic leaders of the Western European states who had fought each other during World War II. The idea was to create a community of states that would guarantee peace and prosperity. The process turn out to be long and arduous, particularly after the federalist failures of the Congress of the Hague (1949) and of the European Defence Community (1953). The main emphasis was on economic cooperation, and the project was essentially elitist (Hayward 1996:253).

We have mentioned that the process of European unification did not start as a grass roots movement, but that it was dominated by top political elites. It was the decisive leadership of Konrad Adenauer in Germany, Robert Schuman and Jean Monnet in France, Alcide de Gasperi and Altiero Spinelly in Italy and Paul Spaak in Belgium that created the first institutions: European Coal and Steel Community (1951), European Economic Community (1957). The British political elites adopted a studiously ambiguous attitude towards European unification. Although it

was favoured by Churchill in the aftermath of World War II, it was meant to be a continental development, excluding Britain.

The elites who participated in these developments in France, Germany, Italy and the Benelux were small in number, but they agreed on the basics. All major political parties, communists and extreme nationalists excluded, backed the move towards European unification. Other major social forces such as industrialists, farmers, trade unions followed suit. An important force in the original impulse towards unity came from the senior civil servants of all these countries, France being the weakest link. The progress of the EEC/EU has often been the task of a few dedicated people, with a clear sense of purpose from Jean Monnet in the 1950s to Jacques Delors in the late 1980s and early 1990s. On the other hand, the path has been anything but easy; there have been a lot of interruptions. In some periods of history the EEC stood completely still, left at the vagaries of powerful politicians who aimed at blocking any progress (this was the case of de Gaulle in the 1960s and Thatcher in the 1990s) (Wilson 1999).

Creating European Unity

In a number of articles dealing with the EU from the inside, the anthropologist C. Shore (1993; 1996; 1998) has maintained that the main objective of the so called 'Brussels bureaucracy' has been to create a superstate. Further, and since at least the late 1980s onwards, talk about creating 'European identity' has also been rife in the same circles. This was perceived as an important issue, particularly at times when it was essential to mobilize the Europeans. The reality, however, is that the EU is neither a *demos* nor an *ethnos*, neither a *polis* nor a *societas*. In these circumstances, how to increase European consciousness?

The history of the EEC/EU is summarized by Shore as a "technocratic, managerial, top-down… attempt to create Europe by fiat (1998:48). The failure of such an endeavour has prompted the EU to shift to the development of a people's Europe. The functionalists predicted that in the long run a European consciousness would follow the institutionalized

attempts at Eurobuilding undertaken by the EEC/EU elites. But this was not the case because national identities remained strong, while European identity is still very weak.

Why has the EU failed in its attempts to create a sense of European-ness, while nations were successful in a relatively short period of time? Nations were invented by using all sorts of means: the media, literature, education, the arts, conscription, development of national languages, mobilization of myths and symbols, manipulation of history, etc. The question is whether it is possible to create an additional tier of identity beyond the existing national identities. Shore does not think so, and for the two following reasons:

1) National identities tend to become politicized along issues of power and sovereignty. There follows that state-building and nation-building can be very repressive an even violent.

2) The European cultural commonalities, that is, the values shared by Europeans (Greco-Roman tradition, Judeo-Christian ethics, Renaissance humanism and individualism, Enlightenment rationalism and science, civil; rights tradition, democracy and the rule of law, etc.) are not sufficient to create identity. In fact, Europeans are divided by language, religion, historical memories, myths and symbols, etc.

To say that Europe is ‘unity in diversity’ is insufficient. The fact is that for most Europeans the idea that there is an overarching European culture that encompasses all national cultures is a chimera. If there is a process of cultural homogenization, even at the microlevel, it is so slow and imperceptible that it is hardly worth mentioning. Shore does not believe that the increase of contacts among Europeans(holidays, sports, etc.) and existence of more consumer convergence are sufficient motives to state that an European identity is developing. People may consume the same things but they give it a different meaning. On the other hand, labour mobility in the EU is still very low, Belgian being the country with the highest proportion of EU members (5%); in Italy it is only 0.2%. As it is well-known, language is the most important barrier for European identity; only a very small percentage of the EU population is multilingual.

For Shore, then, the failure of the construction of an European identity has much to do with the irreconcilable differences which exist within the EU: linguistic diversity, divergent historical memories and absence of kinship bonds. The European narratives needed to construct a sort of overarching nation-state are not available; in any case, the nationalism of the nation is still very powerful. And he concludes: "To talk of Europe federal destiny is not only a dangerous myth, it is also profoundly anti-historical" (1993:50).

Like some other British observers of the European scene Dr. Shore has created a Leviathan to which he has projected all his fear and doubts. He often uses an emotive language to refer to the EU (like the repeated expression 'fortress Europe'). He certainly expects too much and too quickly of the community. The EU is a long-term process and its current results should not be subjected to such a demanding, sharp-edged razor. Furthermore, we should always keep in mind Max Weber's warning that human beings rarely achieve everything that they have planned for, and perhaps even more importantly, that there are unintended effects of human actions.

Another problem affecting Shore's conclusions is the unreliable character, or at least the multiple interpretations that can be given to, of the surveys of public opinion that he refers to. Using the same sources (Eurobarometer), Mattei Dogan (1994) reached rather different conclusions, that is, that the nationalism of the nations was being eroded, although not obliterated. Focusing on five indicators (national pride, confidence on one's army, unwillingness to fight for one's own country, attitude to neighbouring countries, support of the EU) it is possible to observe a decline of nationalism based on the fact that support for the first three indicators has diminished, while trust of neighbouring nations and support for the EU has increased.

A word of caution. It is assumed in most surveys that European identity and national identity are comparable categories, that they are the same discursive practices; in other words, that only if the latter diminishes can the former progress. Now, this is an assumption that is not warranted as we shall shortly see.

It is in this context that the recent work of Habermas is relevant. The point is that the attachment to the EU cannot be based on primordial

allegiances, but on what Habermas has called constitutional patriotism (popular sovereignty and human rights). This is not to suggest that nothing unites the peoples of Europe. For starters, the two world wars were such a revulsive, such a negative historical experience that, as we have seen, was the decisive factor that triggered-off the process of unification in the late 1940s. Before anything else, the devils of exclusionary nationalism had to be exorcised. Habermas believes that a "certain sense of belongingtogether culturally and politically [grew] out of these experiences –specially against the rich background of shared traditions which have long since achieved world-historical significance, as well as on the basis of the overlapping interests and dense networks of communications which have more recently developed in the decades of economic success of the European Community" (1998:152).

It may or may not be utopian to think that a European people will ever exist. However, European integration is provided by the existence of a communicative network of a European-wide political public sphere embedded in a shared political culture. The latter is based on a civil society which consists of interests groups, NGOs and private initiatives. In the future, it is not unthinkable that European-based political parties might arise.

Another author who has examined the issue of the existence of a European people is J. Weiler (1997). His starting point is the classical nationalist definition of the state or polity. What constitutes a polity is its people (*Volk*, *demos*, *ethnos*). There is an objective (organic) and a subjective (socio-psychological) dimension of peoplehood. At the subjective level we have things like "social cohesion, share destiny and collective self-identity" (1997:270). Here we find not only a descriptive but also a prescriptive dimension. The objective factors are well-known: common language, common descent, common culture, common history and common religion. There is also a spiritual, mystic element as well. Ethno-cultural homogeneity is a crucial issue for the presence of a demos. It has a quasi-organic in that you are born into a demos by way of your parents being part of that demos; in this sense, being a national is more primordial than any other identity that a person can have (religious, political, gender, etc.). In this conception, which is the German one, the people are the foundation of the modern state. State and nation reinforce each other. "The state belongs to the nation and the nation belongs to the state" (1997:272).

On the basis of this definition of demos, Europe does not conform to the criteria of peoplehood – or at least not yet. And since the basis of democracy is the manifestation of the will of a people, the EU cannot be democratic. Weiler objects to thinking of the demos as "bestowing legitimate rule-making and democratic authority on a polity, exclusively in these *Völkisch* terms" (1997:275). The alternative to this path is, of course, is the idea of constitutional patriotism, that is, defining "membership of a polity in civic, non-organic cultural terms" (1997:277). Here the key is to separate ethnos from demos, nationality from citizenship.

Individuals may belong to different demoi, for example, be Scottish, British and European. In the context of the EU the key issue is that of variable geometry. The sense of belonging to each of these levels must be based on different criteria: ethnocultural elements at the national level, civic values at the state and European levels. But each defines its own sense of nationality, including the possibility of double state citizenship. The European Union remains and ought to remain committed to an ever closer union among its peoples. But it is not like the USDA – 'one nation, indivisible, under God'. For the time being, European citizenship has no independent existence; it exists only in so far as there are European states. In that, article 8 of the Maastricht Treaty is crystal clear: "Citizenship of the Union is hereby established. Every person holding the nationality of a member state shall be a citizen of the Union".

After the collapse of the Soviet bloc, one of the key demands of the peoples of the region (Eastern and Southeastern Europe) has been the 'return to Europe'. What does that mean? Joining the EU? The acknowledgement that they belong to European civilisation? Perhaps both. In practice, they demanded democracy, national sovereignty, personal freedoms, economic prosperity, the rule of law and other features that over the years have come to be identified with Western Europe, and more specifically with the EU.

It has been the policy of the EU that the only requisites for admission are economic compatibility, democracy, the rule of law, respect of the basic human rights and freedom. No cultural criteria are required, except in the sense of political culture, that is, values, attitudes, ingrained patterns of behaviour, as a prerequisite for the functioning of the institutions.

Smith's contention that any attempt to create a supranational European entity is "unlikely to be successful on the social and cultural levels" (1993:134) is as valid today as in the foreseeable future. The Europeans do not share any primordial identities. Hence Europe cannot, will not, be built on the model of the nation-state. This would require a homogenising, often repressive, process, which is incompatible with the democratic approach on which the EU is based. Paraphrasing Geertz' s famous expression, it could be said that the legitimacy the EU would not rest on a thick common cultural identity, but on a rather thin form of it.

European identity and the mass media

The concerted attempts by the EU to unify Europe at the cultural level are a response, at least partially, to the realisation that there was a growing malaise in a number of countries concerning the implications of the Treaty of Maastricht. To avoid nationalist reactions what was required was further cultural convergence, if not uniformity. One of the objectives was the creation of an European audio-visual industry. The survival of so-called European cultural identity was at stake, and so was the competitiveness of the industry. On the whole, the European communication policies can be described as resistance against the industrial and cultural supremacy of the USA and Japan.

The European Commission for cultural matters has been extremely concerned by the fact that American films dominate the EU market. In 1999 American films represented 70% of all the films shown in the cinemas of the EU. While the EU and the USA produce approximately the same number of movies (around 300 a year), there is no real European market but only national ones for the films made in the EU; in fact, 93% of EU movies never go beyond the borders of the countries were they have been produced. On average an EU movie is seen by 2 million people; an American one reaches 200 million persons. Furthermore, many European states subsidise their productions with up to 70% of the costs. The effects of such a policy has not increased the support for European culture, but has only encouraged the making of low-quality movies.

Because they have a relatively strong and definitely distinctive audiovisual industry, the French have pursued over the years an active protectionist policy often couched in Europeanist terms. However, and as we have seen above, what is meant by 'European culture' is never too clear, unless it is a sort of French culture writ-large. On the other hand, as Victoria de Grazia (1998) has pointed out, that there is no such thing as European cinema or television.

The new technological developments in the audiovisual industry (cable, satellite, digital) are like a Pandora's box. On the one hand, it offers an opportunity for the members of the European Union to distribute more personalised movies and television series; it will also be possible to produce reasonably priced programs for culturally and linguistically specialised audiences. If this is complemented with a framework that regulates the EU internal audiovisual market, it may go some way into creating the appropriate conditions for promoting European cultural themes. On the other hand, the new technologies fragment the EU market even further, and a time of increasing world liberalisation the audiovisual industry is increasingly being controlled by foreign investors.

Since the 1980s, television has undergone major changes, and not only technological. From being a rather minor part in the life of the people of the EU, at present it roughly occupies half of their leisure time. Furthermore, it has become their main source of information about local, regional, national, EU and international news. For many years, most EU countries had only two or three more or less officially television channels. The new technologies have brought along transnationalisation of television. People have now dozens, soon to be hundreds we are told, of channels at their disposal. Whether the channels are American-owned or not, this proliferation of outlets is often perceived as a cultural threat to both national states and the EU. One reason is that the crass commercialism of the channels, challenges the lofty cultural objectives of both the European nations and the EU. Furthermore, the danger of Americanisation is real enough as the products consumed transmit the 'American way of life' which authorities (though not necessarily the wider public) vocally reject. At the level of the EU very little has been done in practical terms to put an end to 'American cultural imperialism', though the French regularly cry wolf (Morley and Robins 1995; Schlesinger 1997).

We have stated that the new technology has made possible the appearance of a new era of television broadcasting, characterised by the presence of an increasing number of specialised channels catering for a variety of taste. We have also seen that the main effect of this revolution has not been the creation of a European domain, but rather the presence of a variety of international channels offering news, soaps and movies for specialised national audiences, often encrypted in the national language. While in theory EU spectators have access to the main European channels, only those with linguistic skills and cultural sophistication watch them. On the other hand, there have been some attempts within the EU to create a European space; but they have been rather few, and mostly reaching only a minority of people. I will refer to two examples: EuroNews and ARTE. (Richardson and Meinhof 1999).

EuroNews is a European-based television channel that was launched in 1993; it can be accessed by either cable or satellite, and it is available in most European countries. It transmits in five languages (English, French, German, Spanish and Italian), and satellite viewers can choose the language of their preference. In this respect EuroNews is different from other monolingual world-wide channels like Sky (though broadcasts both in English and Spanish). EuroNews offer the same images, with either comment in different languages or no comment at all. Written information is offered in the five official languages.

EuroNews encourages, by the use of imaginative program tittles coined in Eurospeak and by giving the native words for cities, festivals, etc., a certain exposure to the languages and cultures of the EU and elsewhere in Europe. It is true that at the news level most of them are not transeuropean, but rather rooted in national spaces and extracted from national channels; of course, the commentators try to give each piece of news a European spin, with varying success. In EuroNews the word ‘Europe’ and its derivatives (European, Euro+noun, etc.) are repeated as quasi-mantras, presumably with the goal of reminding the viewers of the existence of an entity which is disputed and hence it needs constant reiteration. One of the slogans of EuroNews is: “If it matters, if it’s European, if you need to know, it’s on EuroNews, everyday, in every news bulletin. EuroNews”.

Close to the EU, EuroNews has tried to construct a sense of Europeanness among its viewers. How successful it is in its objectives is open to contention. What seems to be true, however, is that it attracts a small audience.

If EuroNews was conceived as a European-based news channel, with the hope (yet to be realised) of attracting a wide-range of viewers, ARTE, created by a Franco-German consortium in 1991, was born as a 'cultural' channel. It was unashamedly high-brow and elitist in its conception. It was decided the channel would function in French and German, but it would be made available through cable or satellite across Europe. As an alternative to the dominant mass culture of American television, ARTE aimed at offering the European intelligentsia a variety of products of high culture: from classical music to literature, from the arts to independent cinema. Financed by public money, ARTE has tried to create in its own way a European television space, no matter how minimalist. As Richardson and Meinhof have remarked:

> ARTE has a distinctly cultural agenda – one which prefigures to some extent the political construction of Europe in that there were always well-travelled, multilingual elite groups with an appetite for transnational high culture outside television. In that sense, the channel finds it easier to find a minority TV audience whose tastes coincide with the public service ethos of education and serious rational engagement with topics as a form of – *Bildung* and *Kultur* as joyful or otherwise rewarding (1999:174).

Conclusion

We have seen that the EU appeals to economic self-interest and it stands for democracy, human rights and the rule of law. However, this does not imply that, except in some areas of government, business and the intellectuality, there has emerged a European identity. Steps towards a closer union, like the treatises of Maastricht and Amsterdam in the 1990s, encountered various degrees of resistance across the EU, particularly in the Nordic countries and in the UK. The same can be said of EMU, which has created a sense of uneasiness in many countries including Germany. The

issue of popular legitimacy has been at the forefront of many of the criticisms against the leadership of the EU. The political lessons to be drawn from such developments are not straitforward. While Eurosceptics will conclude that the EU should not stray into the uncharted waters of further unification, Europhiles believe that a popular EU will only come into being with the emergence of a common identity.

With the prospective enlargement of the EU towards Eastern Europe and beyond, another issue of critical importance will come to the fore: to which extent is there a serious divergence between Western and Eastern Europe? If Western Europe is already culturally multiform, what about Eastern Europe and beyond? The question is not so much the internal cultural diversity of the region, which is to be expected and it is not different from Western Europe, but whether the underlying values of these societies will guarantee the proper functioning of democracy, the rule of law, human rights economic openness, etc. On the other hand, it is also possible that at least some of the countries of Eastern Europe are more committed to the belief in an European identity than some of the Western equivalents.

Those who, like Hobsbawm, have proclaimed the death of nationalism are, if not foolish, at least premature in their forecasts. National identities are certainly not eternal, but the time of their demise has not yet arrived. There are certain primordial allegiances like kinship, language, culture, religion and historical memory that still prove a strong magnet of attraction.The strength of nationalism is far from being undermined by the existence of a transnational elite parading its cosmopolitanism in selected circles of academics, business people and others. As to European identity in no way can we say that at the cultural level there is at present an entity that we can call ‘Europe’. The fact of the matter is that the everyday horizon of most Europeans is still nation and state-based, if not regionally coloured. Europe is bound to remain what Ralph Darendorf has ironically called “a figment of statistics”. Whether Europe can become a ‘virtual’ community instead of a real one, as (Delanty 1998) suggests, it is to be seen.. As we are entering the knowledge society, perhaps Europe can be built on the growing interaction between the European Union and its citizens through the electronic media.

We have mentioned that in many surveys and studies on Europe it is often wrongly assumed that European identity and national identity are

comparable categories, that they belong in the same category of discursive practices. In other words, that European identity can only progress if national identity fades away. In fact, as Habermas has repeatedly emphasised the attachment to the EU cannot be based on primordial allegiances, but on constitutional patriotism (popular sovereignity and human rights). This is not to suggest that there have not been decisive historical experiences that undeniable unite the European peoples both politically and culturally. Whether a European people will ever exist is a purely speculative question.

I would like to close this paper by referring to the wise words of Phillip Allot (1997). In many ways he rejoins Fouillée's perspective. He believes that the European Union is above all an *anarche*, that is, it lacks an ultimate ordering principle. The Europeans have not yet an entity to which they can attach their loyalty. Three steps must be taken to create a responsive European society:

1) "The re-integration of Europe's re-unifying into the historical consciousness of Europe, into the ever-maturing constitutional psychologies of the people and the peoples of Europe".

2) "The bringing back to consciousness of a public mind of Europe, of a collective consciousness which can process the concepts, the ideals, the values, the purposes, the policies, the priorities, the hopes and the fears of the people and the peoples of Europe".

3) "The final step in the salvation of Europe's reunifying must be the instituting of a transcendental debate in the public mind of Europe about the idea and the ideal of European integration".

Like Fouillée, Allot is convinced that "the only power over power is the power of ideas". The spirit of Europe has to be rekindled and encouraged. Much has been achieved since 1945, but to ensure the way of the future we must be constantly vigilant and encourage the immense potentialities of Europe.

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