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###### Philosophers and Europe: M. Heidegger, G. Gadamer, J. Derrida

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Abstract

In the 20th century among the greatest philosophers and literates there was an ample, ideal, wide ranging forum on the question of Europe to which, following a run already started by F. Nietzsche, M. Heidegger, E. Husserl, P. Valéry, Ortega y Gasset, Nikolaj Berdjaev, and after the second world war G. Gadamer, J. Habermas, J. Derrida and others offered meaningful contributions. The questions were: What will be of the spirit of Europe? What will be of Europe? Europe: quo vadis?

The aim of this paper is to articulate the meaningful stages of this historical forum through some essays of mentioned philosophers and literates. The first essay is the conference "Europa und die deutsche Philosophie”, delivered by Heidegger in Rome 1936 at the Kaiser-Wilhelm-Institut, the same year of the publication of Husserl’s Krisis. Thereafter, with the purpose of marking a clear discontinuity between the debate of the first half of the century and the second, I comment on Gadamer’s essay “Europa und die oikoumene”, published half a century after the conference of Heidegger, then the Gadamer’s essay "Das Erbe Europas”, 1989, in which Gadamer deduces on the existential condition of Europeans, today. At the end, I analyze Derrida’s pamphlet "L'autre cap suivi de la démocratie ajournie", English version “*The Other Heading: Reflection on Today’s Europe*”, that opens with the provocative and heretical Derridean gesture: To which concept, to what real individual, to what entity can we confer today the name of Europe?

Keywords: Europe, identity, philosophy, rhetoric, spirit. P. Valéry, M. Heidegger, E. Husserl, G. Gadamer, J. Derrida.

*The question of Europe is not merely one question among others. It is, rather, as Jacques Derrida remarks at the beginning of The Other Heading: reflections on today’s Europe, “a question that will always be of current interest”. If the question Europe is raised today in Europe it is because it is a question that poses itself now and is therefore of some urgency.*

## Introduction

At a Conference on the cultural identity of Europe held in Turin, May 20th 1990, J. Derrida started asking: To what concept, to what real individual, to what determined entity can we today ascribe the name of Europe? Who will design its boundaries? He went on with more questions: "We are younger than ever, we Europeans, since a certain Europe does not yet exist. Has it ever existed? and yet we are like these young people who get up, at dawn, already old and tired. We are already exhausted... From what state of exhaustion must these young-old Europeans who we are set out again, re-embark [re-partir]? must they re-begin? or must they depart from Europe; separate themselves from the old Europe? or else depart again, set out toward a Europe that does not yet exist? Or else re-embark in order to return to a Europe of origins that would then need to be restored, rediscovered, or reconstituted, during a great celebration of “reunion”[retrouvailles]? 1 Questions in which it seems to hear, as in a distant echo, the Nietzschean call to "last Europeans”, and they have been answered in some way and we continue to answer them.

Speaking of Europe, of the different philosophers’ conceptions of Europe today, when a political federal Europe is being built, speaking of the ideas of Europe may sound a merely rhetorical exercise. Speaking of philosophers and Europe, of the ideas of Europe that the philosophers worked up in the last decades of Twentieth may look like pausing oneself before an old but at the same time new picture. It may mean to interpret, if one thinks of the difficulties that entails and the quality of this kind of work, and to re-interpret the content of a picture frayed by the numerous incrustations and misunderstandings due to time. It doesn't speak of Europe for signs and references, it is opened a multifaceted and complex, high-level forum to which participate philosophers, writers, men of letters, artists, all shocked by the disasters wrought by the First World War, by the crisises and endemic civil wars between 1918 and 1938, spread here and there for the continent up to the second world conflict. It is a sort of interview, a debate in which the perception of the end of Europe and the hope of one rebirth are alternated in oscillatory, intermittent motion.

Among the philosophers who have devoted ample spaces in their writings, if not even volumes, numerous are the Germans. Among them E. Husserl with his famous Krisis of the European sciences, M. Heidegger, G. Gadamer, philosophers fully immersed in the so-called continental area of which Nietzsche would be the forerunner. To these we must add men of letters, intellectuals of other nationalities and formation among which J. Ortega y Gasset, the French P. Valery and J. Patočka.

Right after the First World War, according to a literary approach, to himself more congenial, P. Valery wrote some essays on Europe. He himself explains the choice of his research thus: ''The things of the world are interesting to me only in relation to the intellect; everything from the point of view of the intellect. Bacon would characterize this intellect as an idol. I would agree, but I have not found a better idol”(VC. 34).2 He shows an imaginary European Hamlet leaning from an immense terrace that overlooks the whole of Europe looking at million of ghosts. "But he is an intellectual Hamlet who reflects on the life and on the death. His ghosts are the objects of our controversies; his regrets are the titles of our glory. He is oppressed on the weight of his discoveries, of his knowledge, and is incapable of any action. He reflects on the boredom of a past that needs to be rediscovered, at the folly of continual innovation. He is thorn between two crevasses, since two are the dangers confronting the world: order and disorder"(VC 32). Descending from the terrace, the European Hamlet picks up a skull and recognizes it for the trace of the development of European history: it is the skull of Lionardo da Vinci, and then that of Leibniz, who, between the 17th and the 18th century, was looking for a universal European peace, and that of Kant who was also looking for “perpetual peace” at the antipodes of Heraclitus, the founder of European philosophy. From Kant’s skull issue that of Hegel, of Marx "Kant qui genuit Hegel, qui genuit Marx, qui genuit… "and so on. And were the European intellectual to abandone all the skulls of the past and throw them in a ditch, would he still be himself? What would the European intellectual become? It is time to say good bye to ghosts since it has no need for them any longer?

Later on, as a way of questioning himself on European man, Valery writes: "He is a sort of monster. His memory is too acute, too developed. He has extravagant ambitions and an incredible avidity to knowledge and to wealth’ (VC. 47). Finally he closes with a statement that is not quite coherent and scientific, but will do for the moment a plausible one, defining European man as a man with three fundamental characteristics: “as far as I am concerned any people who have been influenced throughout history by Greece, Rome and Christianity are Europeans”.

Martin Heidegger and the spirit of Europe.

Despite the attempt to create an instrument of stability of international relations through the League of Nations’, 1918, Europe remained devoid of a stabilizing centre and exposed to violent tensions. The picture in the Thirties shows internal difficulties in France, Fascism in Italy since the 20 th, Nazism in Germany with Hitler chancellor since January 1933, a hard pitiless civil war in Spain in 1936.

When Martin Heidegger delivered in Rome, on 8 of April 1936, his lecture "*Europe und die deutsche Philosophie*", according to some historians he has already modified his prior analysis of 1933 in which the philosopher had given in to the temptation of being part of the popular nationalism and had even joined the Nazi party for a while. The Roman lecture, nevertheless, cannot be adequately understood without mentioning certain excepts and the general outline of the discourse "*Die selbstbehauptung der deutschen universitat*" in which the philosopher seems to have lost the immediacy of the historical moment by returning to clichés such as philosophy as a community of minds, the myth of the king philosopher, service, duty, science, Hellenism, German heritage. He seems to be still within the first season of his speculation, and his proceeding has not achieved yet the different wisdom style he will show after the so-called Kehre. The discourse pronounced on April 27/1933 at the University of Freiburg takes for granted that the duty to attempt once again a new beginning of Europe’s historical-spiritual existence belongs to the German people. As Gasché glosses, for Heidegger ‘the notion of a universal humankind ... remains tributary of subjectivity. But there is at least one other reason why Heidegger avoids the notion of universality: the great beginning of Greece, according to Heidegger, concerns (at least at first) only Europe and the west, and within Europe -according to *Introduction to metaphysics* – the German people first and foremost. In contrast with Husserl, for whom the idea of a universal rational science that breaks forth in ancient Greece is, metalinguistically speaking, neutral, the thought of being is linked by Heidegger to the specificity of a language, more precisely to the Greek and German languages-that is, to communities or peoples’ .3

However, barely a year later, Benedetto Croce in a note written on the journal ‘*La critica*’ as a brief review, attacked Heidegger affirming that in his speech philosophy and science became a German affair to the advantage of the German people, "The German students, as he says, have three duties ‘‘bindungen’’, of which the most fundamental is ‘’volksgemeinschaft‘’ or nationalism".4 Taking advantage of his alert liberal anti-totalitarian spirit, Croce attacks the apparent weak historicism of Heidegger and adds that "it suddenly falls today in the vortex of a pseudo historicism, in what in reality history denies, and by which the movement of history is conceived in a very rough materialistic mode as the assertion of *technicisms and racisms* (my italics) as celebration of wolves and foxes, lions and hyena’s deeds in the complete absence of the real protagonist of history: humanity’’(ib.). Probably, Heidegger in his engagement with the National Socialism was motivated by philosophical considerations of his own, utterly different from the political concerns that moved Hitler and his regime. His major work *Being and Time*, in such a way, could be considered a political text, albeit political in Heidegger's sense. The essence of National Socialism was, as Heidegger saw it in 1933, "not an unrealized abstract ideal but rather the historical, existential thickness of [the] world that is always happening but nonetheless neglected". A bit later Croce, almost prophesying for Europe the near, dramatic, deadly years of the second world conflict wrote "and so it renders philosophical-political services which is a way of prostituting philosophy, without advantage for sociology and politics".5 That to say, Croce is thinking not of an ideal Hellenic-German Europe; Croce is criticizing the limited, unilateral, German-centrism of Heidegger, faulty of essentialism and eurocentrism.

Let us return to the Roman Lecture and its spirit and structure which deserve a brief look in order to understand a later writing of Heidegger "*Was ist das-die Philosophie?* ” published in 1956, in which the philosopher offers a clearer and more definitive form to his meditation of the 30s by answering the question ‘What is philosophy’. Having said that the word philosophy speaks Greek; it is Greek, and therefore to speak of philosophy is to speak of Hellenism, Heidegger writes that philosophy determines the fundamental core of European history. The civilization and the sciences of the whole planet have still this characteristic. If they are able to leave a mark of civilization of the entire world it is because they issue from the core of European historical process, which is the philosophical process. The word ϕιλοσοϕια, therefore, coincides with the birth of our history, with the origins of our era. Not only. The question we have set at the beginning τι εστιν is Greek; and asked for the first time by the Greek. The Greek adjective ϕιλοσοϕοζ, philosopher, probably coined by Heraclitus, attributed to man, means him who loves σοϕον, him who can speak as the λογοζ speaks. The relation between φιλειν and λογοζ, the corresponding of the two terms, is αρμονια. But harmony is not something of static and fixed; it is tension toward the logos, a way to be attuned to Being. It can be perceived through the divine madness (see Plato’s symposium). Heidegger writes (I report in German): “Das griechische Wort ist als griechisches Wort ein weg. Dieser liegt einerseits vor uns, denn das Wort ist uns Zeit vorausgesprochen. Andererseits liegt er schon hinter uns, denn wir haben dieses Wort immer schon gehort und gesagt. Demgemaβ ist das griechische Wort ϕιλοσοϕια ein weg, auf dem wir unterwegs sind… das Wort ϕιλοσοϕια sagt uns, daβ die Philosophie etwas ist, was erstmals die Existenz des Griechentums bestimmt. Nicht nur das-die ϕιλοσοϕια bestimmt auch den innersten Grundzug unserer abendlandisch-europaischen Geschichte ”.6And, further on: “Das griechische Adiectivum ϕιλοσοϕοζ sagt etwas vollig anderes als die adiectiva philosophisch, philosophique. Ein ανηρ ϕιλοσοϕοζ ist derjenige, οζ ϕιλει το σοϕον, der das σοϕον liebt; ϕιλειν, lieben bedeutet hier in sinne Heraklitus: ομολογειν, so sprechen, wie der Λογοζ spricht, d.h. dem Λογοζ entsprechen. Dieses entsprichen steht im Einklang mit dem σοϕοζ. Einklang ist αρμονια”(ib.). The place of birth of the form of thought called philosophy is undeniably Greece; the word philosophy speaks Greece; it is Greek, and therefore in order to say philosophy we need absolutely to depart from the Greece. Philosophy determines the innerness basic feature of our western-european history. The question "what philosophy is", obviously, can be re-phrased "what is man", the universal perennial question put among the historical changes that humankind has always asked in the changing journey of *pantarei*. For Heidegger, of course, the human being (Dasein) must not be understood as ‘the biological human being’. By means of philosophy Dasein is good at cultivating a certain kind of comportment towards being, a way to be attuned to Being.

After having looked at a text of the 30s, let us retake the Roman Lecture which begins with the consciousness that Europe is at the crossroads of its salvation or its destruction. On a pragmatic concrete level what can philosophy do? We know that philosophy has never directly founded a historical era, that it constitutes an obstacle for daily living; from the perspective of daily acting and producing we know that it has always been; it is still today considered abstract and abstruse, marginal by necessity. We all remember the anecdote on Thales and the Thracian housemaid, or the replies of Callicles in the *Gorgias* whereas he makes fun of Socrates. Philosophy is that about which the same thing has been said. What is the one and what is the same is the question philosophy has always asked.

These the first steps of philosophy and these the last ones, the ones we take today, even if not aware of them. Philosophy is that science or knowledge/not knowledge which repeats itself. This aporeticity of philosophy is one of its essential prerequisites. The problematic of philosophy is proved by that neither Plato, nor Aristotle has ever initiated a real system, or even Kant. The same fascinating Nietzsche’s attempt to skip metaphysics has not succeeded. Many philosophers have attempted to return to the foundations of Being, but in their interpretations, in their thinking, Being has revealed itself to be an abyss. "Being and thinking or being and time-this is the problem" .7

Toward the end of the lecture, in order to remind us how Europe is marked by the question of philosophy and is in fact destined to ask the question of philosophy, Heidegger adds: "when we again pose the original question of western philosophy on the basis of a more originate beginning, we are then heeding that task which we have defined as the salvation of the west. It can only be accomplished as a recuperation of the original relationship with being itself, and as a new foundation of all the essential acts of peoples confronted by these relationships". 8 European man is marked by an indelible sign: the will of know, which is the struggle for truth; a struggle which, according to Heraclitus’ dictum, constitutes the essence of the whole: ‘the struggle generates everything, but also guards everything, lets something appear as gods, others as men; ones as servants and the others as lords". 9

Object of criticism by more parts, the Roman lecture, according to M. Riedel, must be interpreted as an historical analysis of the philosopher on the Europe of the Thirties, "experienced with increasing anguish and clarity as an aut-aut: either the salvation of Europe or its end. In the light of this crisis, also diagnosed by Husserl, Heidegger's diagnosis establishes two points: that the possibility of salvation requires 1) the preservation of European people from the spirit of Asia within the context of a common origin, 2) the overcoming of their eradication and disunion". 10 Confronted with this dramatic picture, philosophy is called upon to offer its contribution with a fair look to the future but also with a deep look at the past regarding the origins of Europe with those thinkers who first put themselves philosophy’s question. In particular, for Heidegger the reestablishment of unity and the preservation of original essence of Europe are contingent on the recovery and the deepening of the issue of Being. Let us remember that ‘when Heidegger invokes the terms Europe, people of the middle, or earth, it is never in geographical or planetary sense but in a historical-spiritual sense, that is, in terms of “world”. 11

A careful, not polemic, historical interpretation of Heidegger’s position will lead to believe that he wished to take part to the great debate-dialogue on Europe which took place in the first half of 20th century and to which contributed, among others, Husserl and Valéry, Ortega y Gasset and Nikolaj Berdjaev. With his philosophical gesture, he wished to give a contribution, an answer to the questions: what will be of Europe? what will be of the spirit? He did it by following the well established and deep German approach from Leibniz to Hegel, till Nietzsche.

More than two centuries before, Leibniz had asked the question of the essence of Europe pointing out the language, the celtic-germanic proto-language, called indo-germanic, as the fundamental element, the fountainhead for the union of the peoples and the nations of Europe, from Romània at west and south up to the Slavia at East, with Germany at its core.

Hegel, who lived in a disunited Germany, believed that a reunification of Europe was possible through classical philosophy and poetry. He believed that the European nations, including Romania, could justifiably be called Germanic because in their totality through race and language they have a common imprint which can be found out since the time of the Holy Roman Empire. For Hegel it is more correct to call Europe the west, since that we have to go back to the Greeks when happened the break between Asia and Europe. Hegel did not shy from identifying his ‘universal spirit’, the highly idealized subject of his philosophical system with the European spirit.

Within modernity Nietzsche is the thinker who most consciously used the name Europe. He did not spare his own fellow-nationals of critical words for the hybrid foundation of Bismark’s Reich. In agreement with Holderin he was searching for a German Delos, the central point of the spirit. Disappointed by Bismarck, he returned to origins and paid attention to the youthful Europe just born from the Greeks, impelled from the need ‘to feel at home, which everywhere is the Greek world’.

Within the framework of his own philosophy and his nihilism, which is a European nihilism, Nietzsche did not put the question ‘what is Europe?’, but rather ‘what does Europe mean? not only for himself, a 19th century culturally nomad German and therefore also Italian, Greek, French, but for all of Europeans. Once again we are called to give some answers to his question "what does Europe mean for us? for all of us who need to examine with Nietzsche within and without our traditions and historical conflicts lived with passion. Still now we need to ask what is at stake after the century of the exterior nihilism.

There are no doubts that Heidegger thinking of Europe, after 1935, is influenced by Nietzsche’s "unfashionable reflections". If Nietzsche expressed forcefully and angrily his delusion after the illusions of a spiritual renewal of Germany brought about by Bismark, a similar stance toward the third Reich must have been felt by Heidegger when he disappointedly retired from the political scene.

Gadamer: the hermeneutics of Europe

###### Heidegger and even Husserl are entrapped in a traditional vision of Europe, with a predominant German conception of the spirit of Europe. However, after Auschwitz, as T. W. Adorno forcefully will write “No word from on high, not even a theological word, has the right to remain unmodified. After Auschwitz it is no longer possible to speak of the spirit of Europe”.

###### More near to our sensibility and our history, at the distance of about half century from the Heidegger's Roman lecture, G. Gadamer writes the essay "Europa und die Oikoumene" in which he departs from the Greek word oikoumene to designate the inhabited world.

###### For the Greek the borders of the inhabited world were the borders that Alexander the Great probed up to their furthest extremes. Subsequently, with other geographical discoveries, we have modified and distinguished what is to be understood as inhabited world (oikoumene) and what is to be understood as Europe. The Northamerica and the Southamerica, although not part of Europe geographically, can be considered as a philosophical hinterland of European thought. It is different for the far East, for China, India, countries that have had their own unique civilizations, with which Europe has been in contact, but which have not had, a genuine philosophy. Philosophy, therefore, is and remains a European discipline.

###### But Gadamer, a student of Heidegger, want to urbanize the Heideggerian philosophical province with an opening to its universal dimensions, in as much as that is possible. He thinks that philosophy is something which affects the whole world in as much as it manifests itself through language, especially spoken language. In effects spoken language is the essence of language despite the multiplicity of languages. The ability to speak is universal and common to all people. In contrast with Heidegger, on one hand Gadamer wants to deal with this universal aspect of language, and, on the other hand, he wants to deal with the particularity and the plurality of languages issuing in plurality of customs, races, religions, as we are reminded by the biblical story of the tower of Babel.

###### In their inner side the civilization and the European culture, within scientific knowledge, epistemic-mathematical, has developed another kind of knowledge said phronesis that realizes within a live, authentic linguistic community. With the help of that kind of knowledge Europe can become a community which is respectful of otherness and diversity and can be the road to the future. Heidegger, in his attempt to solve the problem of Being, in questioning the problematic of what is truth in Plato, has focused almost exclusively on the episteme and has conceived of Plato as he who with his idea prepares Aristotle’s metaphysical of ousia. But we can balance this interpretation, remembering that Aristotle is not only a metaphysician, but also the founder of a practical philosophy.

###### Moreover, the history of the West and Europe can be interpreted as a long series of humanistic renaissances of these two souls of philosophy "It begins with the circle of the Scipios, which sent the Roman elite to get educated in Greece, and thus prepares the way for a Latinity that accepts Christianity. Then, in the Carolingian era we have a new Renaissance. And finally the best known Renaissance at the threshold of modernity which concludes the last act of the metaphysical drama, our own age of technology". 12

###### F. Nietzsche seems to untie this connection between epistemic and practical knowledge. With the various interpretations of Nietzsche we are confronted with a crossroad: either we interpret him as the last of the metaphysicians, as Heidegger does. Or see him as the one who has broken up and fragmented truth itself in the multiplicity of appearances, as the French tend to do. In that case the episteme has reached its end with Nietzsche and we Europeans are left with only the practical philosophy, the fronesis. One thing is sure: we should not be talking about the end of philosophy till there is an end of questioning. In any case, when there is no more questioning there will be no more thinking.

###### During the eighties and the first nineties last century Gadamer returns to meditate on these thoughts, to deepen the value of the philosophical research, the value of the philosophy in sense of European and Western identity. The philosopher, enough longevos, one of the most careful witnesses of the twentieth century, can remembers the nationalistic fires of the First World conflict, the material destruction of the continent with the Second World War, the crisis of the consciences. But he doesn't thus arrive at the pessimism or nihilism of his teacher Heidegger; he looks for and finds, instead, hints and motives for hope. Ahead in the years, he remains open to the future and like a prophet talks to the new generations.

###### The post war era, especially that of the fall of Berlin’s Wall, we are living, is the era of authentic globalization, and Gadamer feels he has to speak, to express his thinking, to offer his testimony, just as the great Plato, allow me the reference, did during the difficult moment of his city during and after the Peloponnesus' war.

###### Europe needs philosophy because in the past was philosophy that generated science. Philosophy and science have competed to characterize the European civilization since the time of the Greek. They can still do the same despite the fact that since the half of the 19th science and philosophy and the sciences seem to have divorced each other and continue to go separately. And yet, we all acknowledge that science by itself cannot answer all questions, cannot by itself satisfy the human thirst for the meaning of existence and human action in balance with nature. Gadamer, as master of hermeneutics, refers to a humanism, which is integral part of Greek terminology and resurrects the term praxis (a term for communicative interaction between people who are governed by moral norms, that doesn’t deal with forms of instrumentalism) which means “the mode in which one is”, which is to say, the situation in which we find ourselves, by which we are not in complete control of our lives, but rather are dependent on external circumstances. intrinsic to the language and the Greek terminology, goes to recover the word praxis that means the way in which one is, or rather a situational way in which we are, not masters of our life, but depending on external circumstances. In short to the man is subject to his finitude and his temporality. Praxis means also that each belongs to the society, which every European, in our case, belongs to Europe and is responsible of her, as far as he belongs to the whole humanity and is responsible of it.

Europe has a great treasure which is its diversity, its variety of languages, in having practiced throughout the centuries, despite so many difficulties and wars, a tolerance of different cultures and languages among different faiths and confessions. It is not necessary to give to Europe only one language, a language good for the entire continent. Now we merely need to focus on what historically has united all Europeans: that cultural and spiritual unity acquired in the past and which remains a task and a commitment for the future.

###### In a very profound and actual essay, that well defines the existential condition of the European man and indeed of man anywhere, Gadamer uses the expression 'City of two worlds'.13

###### Departing from the Greek he writes that they invented the science and the philosophy, "Only with Plato the word assumes a new accent: for him philosophia is no longer mere knowledge, but the desire for knowledge, the search for sophia, for wisdom, the desire for truth whose possession is reserved to the gods".14 And a bit later: "the platonic adhesion by which philosophy become pure aspiration to truth has never taken hold. It is only with the birth of the new experimental sciences that this platonic meaning of the word philosophy finds it full actuality context even under semantic difficulties. From the time when the scientific revolution began in the 17th century, continuing with various scientific revolutions, the relationships between philosophy and science has remained a problematic one.

By means of an anthropological approach Gadamer attempts to explain how did Greek science began "It is the very peculiar structure of the Indo-European languages to allow within Greek thought the slow ripening of the concept of << substance >>, and, consequently of what is an attribute of substance. The predicate structure of a judgment here doesn't only describe the logical form of the proposition, but also the objective articulation of observed reality".15 Even more explicitly Gadamer writes that “A linguistic family such as ours, whose grammar insists so much on the relationship of verb and substantive, predicate and subject, has a natural predisposition to dissolve the unity of word and thing; which is to say a natural  predisposition toward <<science>>” (Gadamer 1991, 87). European languages are based on the grammar of subject and predicate and therefore correspond to the metaphysics of substance and its attributes, which is to say to philosophical thinking.

Gadamer adds: “Therefore European civilization presents us with a unitary aspect only on condition that we recognize that the birth of the modern experimental sciences represents a decisive break, an event when the traditional unity of knowledge, philosophy in its wider meaning of total knowledge, begins to dissolve. It is then that philosophy itself becomes a problematic enterprise”(Gadamer 1991, 88). As far as he is concerned, since the 17th century we have a situation wherein we have a fundamental tradition on one side and the modern sciences on the other. This ambiguous situation in which European man finds himself had also been individuated by Kant who had also shown that we are citizens of two worlds: that of scientific natural experiential sensibility, and that of freedom, of the subject which is led by practical reason. Following Kant, Gadamer brings us back to the Greek concept of praxis to know-how and the ethical value of that know-how. Finally Gadamer concludes that “the life of Greek society resolves entirely around the concept of friend, philos, which according to the old Pythagorism which permeates Greek thought, friends are those who have everything in common. Here we have, in its extreme ideal form, the undeclared assumption which makes it possible a practical and orderly living together among individuals, something akin to the status of a right” (Gadamer 1991, 98). This is the teaching of the Calabrian Pythagoreans that invites us to a kind of consensus by which we can take common decisions which are valid for everybody in their moral, social, political aspects (community ethos). On this concept of *philia*, which is to say of solidarity, of an authentic solidarity which allows for conviviality we can build a future society and a future European State.

###### Derrida: the deconstruction of the idea of Europe

Let us return to nowadays and to the concept of head or origin, so dear to Derrida, head of Europe not only from the geographical standpoint but also spiritual standpoint, concept that expresses an old reality, a reality that seems to have exhausted its propulsive strength. For Derrida a discourse on Europe departing, as it regards the history of ideas, from Hegel to Valery all the way to Heidegger and Husserl, is rather dated, it is by now traditional ‘it is a traditional discourse of modernity’(OH 28). It is faulty of essentialism, smacks of rhetoric; it is within the traditional vision of modernity especially since the beginning of the debate on the political union of Europe. What is needed, today, is a deconstruction of the idea of Europe. We Europeans today are called to fulfill the paradoxical responsibility for and to a specific tradition of responsibility -from latin 'respondere’- that has been bequeathed to us, one which even Nietzsche was appealing to, a contradictory greek-roman responsibility: on the one hand to be the guardians of an idea of traditional Europe and therefore at the end of its development, on the other to search what does not yet exist, go beyond, toward another beachhead. It is' necessary to make a jump leaving the ideas of Europe of the first half of 900, to forget the so diffused discourse of the crisis, also the discourse of the end of the spirit of Europe, influenced by the Hegelian philosophy, from an absolute european spirit. Husserl and with him his antagonist Heidegger in the years 35/36 spoke about the crisis of the European spirit. The first one in the name of a "teleology that guides the analysis of history and the very history of this crisis, of the recovery of the transcendental theme in and since Descartes, is guided by the idea of a transcendental community, subjectivity of a << we >> for which Europe would be at once the name and the exemplary figure. This transcendental teleology would have from the origin of philosophy, shown the way, indicated the heading "(OH, 33). The second in reflecting on the impotence of europe "the impotence, the become-impotent of the spirit, that which violently deprives spirit it of its power, is nothing other than the destitution (entmachtung) of the european west. Even though he is opposed to transcendental subjectivism, or to the cartesian- thinking the essential danger as the danger of the spirit, and spirit as something of the european west, there at the oppressed center of a vice, in the mitte of Europe, between America and Russia" (OH, 34). The concept of head, for both Husserl and Heidegger, must be intended as beginning of a path.

Following Valery’s suggestions, in the course of his pamphlet Derrida asks himself if there is a well defined place for a European capital. It doesn't deal with finding again a site, a physical place. In this case the search would seem similar to that proposed by Dante in 1200 for a fixed place, curia, stable center for the language and the Italian culture in middle ages, or, going back the history, for a fixed place as Athens for the Greek or Alexandria in Hellenistic epoch, as physical-organizational cultural center. For Derrida the term capital has a double value, because it can be intended as the feminine and as a masculine one. As the feminine the capital can be similar to what just said; as the masculine means the capital of Europe, and that is the european identity and culture, in front of which we have two injunctions: “on the one hand european cultural identity cannot be dispersed (and when I say “ cannot” this should also be taken as “must not”- and this double state of affairs is at the heart of the difficulty). It cannot and must not be dispersed into a myriad of provinces, into a multiplicity of self-enclosed idioms or petty little nationalisms, each one jealous and untranslatable. It cannot and must not renounce plates of great circulation or heavy traffic, great avenues or thoroughfares of translation and communication, and thus, of mediatisation. But, on the other hand, it cannot and must not it accept the capital of a centralizing authority that, by means of trans-european cultural mechanisms, by means of publishing, journalistic, and academic concentrations-be they state-run or not, would control and standardize, subjecting artistic discourses and practices to a grid of intelligibility, to philosophical or aesthetic norms, to channels of immediate and efficient communication, to the pursuit of ratings and commercial profitability”( OH , 39).

Within this apparent, also real and bipolar contradiction of these two tasks, Derrida takes as guide his deconstructive approach and his mature sense of democracy. When he speaks of centripetal factors, he doesn’t refer to forms of cultural or civil monopoly, he intends only to take action, in the fullness of the actual technological civilization, because the dispersion of energies, the renouncement to a globalist horizon is not tolerable. After all the idea of Europe, that he goes to discover, is always the idea of an entity to place inside what we call western civilization.

The new European culture doesn’t need certainly a physical capital, a geographical city; it is more profitable, in this connection, to realize a system alike a polycircular network, a little similar to the medieval universities. Derrida explains better his thought a bit later when he says “if it is necessary to make sure that a centralizing hegemony (the capital) not be reconstituted, it is also necessary, for all that, not to multiply the borders, i. e. the movements [marches] and margins [marges]. It is necessary not to cultivate for their sake minority differences, untranslatable idiolects, national antagonisms, or the chauvinisms of idiom. …one must therefore try to invent gestures, discourses, politico-institutional practices that inscribe the alliance of these two imperatives, of these two promises or contracts: the capital and the a-capital, the other of capital. That is not easy’ (OH, 44).

From the issue of head to the issue of the geopolitical frontiers, which seem to him less uncertain than the geographical ones, we rediscover the spiritual frontiers: ‘(around the ideas of philosophy, reason, monotheism, Jewish, Greek, Christian (Catholic, Protestant, Orthodox), and Islamic memories, around Jerusalem, a Jerusalem itself divided, torn apart, around Athens, Rome, Moscow, Paris, and it is necessary to add etc. ‘(OH, 63). Europe must recover what is the best about itself, but also open it up to what is not yet, nor has ever been, what will never be Europe, a task for the future inspired by the Husserlian crisis. On the way Husserl tells us that we Europeans are liable ‘’to respond to the call of European memory, to recall what has been promised under the name Europe (OH, 76). For example, in reference to the issue of hospitality, that today divides our european and national consciences, european responsibility dictates the opening-up of Europe, ‘’welcoming foreigners in order not only to integrate them but also to recognize and accept their lateritic (OH, 77). To be sure, an unconditional hospitality is practically impossible to live; but, on the other hand, without at least the thought of this pure and unconditional hospitality, of hospitality itself, we would have no concept of hospitality in general and would not even be able to determine any rules for conditional hospitality.

What is incumbent on us europeans is to assume “the european, and uniquely european, heritage of an idea of democracy, while also recognizing that this idea, like that of international law, is never simply given, that its status is not that of a regulative idea in the kantian sense, but rather something that remains to be thought and to come /à venir/: not something that is certain to happen tomorrow, not the democracy (national or international, state or trans-state)of the future , but a democracy that must have the structure of a promise—and thus the memory of that which carries the future, the to-come, here and now” . (OH, 78).

The european idea of democracy that ‘’dictates respecting differences, idioms, minorities, singularities, but also the universality of formal law, the desire for translation, agreement, and univocity, the law of majority, opposition to racism, nationalism, and xenophobia’’(OH, 78). It demands, moreover, ‘’tolerating and respecting all that is not placed under the authority of reason. It may have to do with faith, with different forms of faith. It may also have to do with certain thoughts, whether questioning thoughts or not… for these thoughts Europe may also try to remain faithful to the ideal of enlightenment (Aufklarung, illuminism), acknowledging its limits in order to work on the enlightenment of our time, the time that is ours—today (OH, 78-79).

No doubt, such duties call for a special responsibility, effective and- with experience, through experiment- interminable. We are talking of a task that is new and complex, looking to the future. Here, Derrida refers to the most strong and suffered instances of his latest speculation, the tendency to a thinking of being together, of friendship that, at the same time, doesn’t mark by the identitarian scheme, the scheme, eo ipso, of community that is inclined to exceed the differences. It deals with a position/not position, with an aporetic position, subject to a double law, to the imperatives of singular and plural. Quite interesting in this regard the similarity/difference in the research of J. Luc Nancy (Nancy 1996). It remains the oscillation between the respect of singularity and the impulse toward the community, the search, at the same time, for a real, concrete democracy beyond democracy, a democracy after the democracy. Allow me emphasize that for Derrida, or his specter, remains that ‘democracy to come’ gives movement to democracy, that democracy to come and democracy as such are implicated in the play between identity and difference, are the condition of the production of meaning, something that can be accomplished only by way of approximation that may give a plus of democracy to the present and future of Europe. One thing is sure: what was important to Derrida, against current too, was not the search for Europe’s traditional identity, one that, if fixed in time, remains aporetic and subject to change, but an identity that needs to be perennially deconstructed, surely not the fading kind which many intellectuals and politicians have attempted to re-discover in a confusing, rhetorical and instrumental mode, to justify the construction of a probable future european state. He had something else in mind.

At the end of the pamphlet, Derrida concludes thus: “I am European, I am no doubt a European intellectual, and I like to recall this, I like to recall this to myself, and why would I deny it? But, I am not, nor do I feel European in every part, that is, European through and through. By which I mean, by which I wish to say, or must say: I do not want to be and must not be European through and through, European in every part. My cultural identity, that in the name of which I speak, is not only european, it is not identical to itself, and I am not "cultural" through and through, "cultural" in every part”(OH, 82). Neither eurocentrist, nor anti-eurocentrist, then. What comes through Derrida’s critical and continual interrogation of European identity is that Europe imposes both as a conception and as a task of universality.

Before his death, in the short article “A europe of hope” delivered in May 2004, Derrida launched his final prayer and hope for the future Europe, for an other heading.

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Endnote

1) J. Derrida, The Other Heading- reflections on today’s Europe, Indiana University Press, p.7-8, 1992. Hereafter referred to parenthetically in the text as OH.

2) P. Valery, La crise de l’esprit. note in essays quasi politiques, Oeuvres, Paris: Gallimard, La Pléiade, 1957-translated by Denise Folliot and Jackson Mathews as “The European” in history and politics, New York: Bollingen, 1962, p. 196 and following. Hereafter referred to parenthetically in the text as VC.34

3) Rodolphe Gaschè, Europe, or the infinite task: a study of a philosophical concept. Stanford University Press. California 2009. p.107.

4) Benedetto Croce, “La Critica” Laterza Bari -annata 1934

5) Benedetto Croce, ibid. p. 69

6)Heidegger, Martin -Was ist das- die Philosophie? -Neske Pfulligen 1956, p.28-30. 1981,

7)Heidegger, ibid. p.30 and sub. 1981.

8)) Martin Heidegger- Hans Georg Gaudier “L’Europa e la filosofia“ postfazione di Manfred Riedel, Marsilio edit.Venezia 1999, tr. by Jan Bednarich- Europa und die Philosophie, Frankfurt am Main 1993. p. 34, my translation in English.

9)Heidegger, ibid. p.35

10) Heidegger, ibid. p.35

11) Heidegger, ibid. p.36

12) Riedel, Manfred “Postfazione Heidegger e l’Europa “ in Heidegger, Martin –Gadamer, Georg “L’Europa e la filosofia“ postfazione di Manfred Riedel, Marsilio edit.Venezia 1999, tr. by Jan Bednarich- Europa und die Philosophie, Frankfurt am Main 1993. p. 69-70). See also: Manfred Riedel “ Heideggers europaische wendung, Gander, Europa und die deutsche Philosopie, p. 43-66, Frankfurt/main Kloster mann, 1993.

13) Rodolphe Gasche, ib. p.117

14)Gadamer, Georg “L’Europa e l’oikoumene “ in Heidegger, Martin –Gadamer, H. Georg “L’Europa e la filosofia“ postfazione di Manfred Riedel, Marsilio edit.Venezia 1999, ibid. p.60-61

15)Gadamer, Georg ‘Das erbe Europas’, Suhkamp Verl Europas, Suhkamp Verlag 1989. p.85

16)Gadamer, ‘Das erbe Europas’, 1989. p. 86

17)Gadamer, ibid, p.87

18) Gadamer , ibid p.88

19) Gadamer , ibid. p.98

In the capter on Derrida I reports some commented passages from the paper  Francesco Tampoia: Derrida, The Other Heading . Academia.edu. 2013.

See also : Held, D. “Nietzsche, Greece and the European spirit“ in Banus 2002 Actas VI Congreso ‘Cultura europea’, editorial Aranzadi Cizur Menor Navarra. See in detail section ‘European identity’ p. 333-460. See also, G. Delanty “Inventing Europe: idea, identity, reality” Macmillan London 1995; J. P. Faye “L’Europe une. Les philosophes et l’Europe” Gallimard Paris 1992. J. L. Nancy, “Etre singulier pluriel“ Galilee Paris 1996. On the way let me refer to my paper : Francesco Tampoia, Actos VII Congreso “Cultura  Europea” Pamplona 2005 - paper “Philosophers and Europe: M. Hheidegger, G. Gadamer, J. Derrida”.