

## ***E pluribus unum* : Europe and heroism of reason**

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*First of all, I would like to thank the organizers of this edition of the Turin Book Fair for inviting me to pronounce this inaugural conference. It is an honor that makes me a huge pleasure, for several reasons. The main is that mine Italian literary life has always been linked to Turin in general and this particular exhibition. Here, at this show, they have me invited in 2002 to talk about my first book translated into Italian, and here since then I have been invited many times for talk about my other books. Always here, in Turin, or better: in surroundings of Turin, I received, in the summer of 2003, mine first Italian literary prize, the Grinzane-Cavour. And in this Salone del Libro gave me the first prize at the career I have ever received, the International Award of the Salone del Libro di Torino, an award that gave me two things wonderful: a week of conversations in schools and institutions of this region, to talk about my books with people young and not so young, and the friendship of Ernesto Ferrero, director of this show for many years, which has me accompanied in those unforgettable days for me. To top it of happiness, that award was granted by the readers of the Salone, and this is the best reward a writer can receive. The reason is simple: books do not exist without readers. Half of the writer puts it in a book; the other half puts the reader in it. A book is just a score, and readers are the ones to interpret it, and moreover, each reader interprets it in his own way. A book without readers is only a dead letter; it is when the reader opens the pages of the book and begins to read it that the dead letter is alive, a life each time new and different. This is why readers enrich the books, adding senses that without them doubt they were in the pages, but of which the author was not always completely aware. This is why Paul Valéry says it is not the author, but the reader, to make the masterpieces, a rigorous reader, endowed with acuity, slowness, time and armed ingenuity. "Only he can make a masterpiece," concludes Valéry. And for this, among other reasons, events like this are so important Salon: because, from time to time, they allow us authors and readers to look at each other, to make our complicity private becomes public. In short: I said sometimes that I am an Italian invention of Luigi Brioschi, my publisher Italian, which was my first publisher outside of Spain and that from the first moment he deceived Italian readers by doing believe them that I am a serious writer; but Luigi me will allow today to complete this truth: the complete truth is which are also a bit of an invention of Turin in general and of this particular Book Fair.*

*Therefore, thank you very much.*

I said that it is an honor for me to hold this conference; I should add that it is also a commitment, not to say an because they asked me to talk about Europe, or about my idea of Europe. The problem is that, beyond the fact that it is the continent where I live, I do not know what Europe is; in fact, if I saw myself forced to respond with one sentence to this question, probably the most honest thing would be to resume what St. Augustine says, in his Confessions , at the beginning of a sensational reflection on the nature of time: «If none he asks me what Europe is, I know; however, if I want to explain it to who asks me, I do not know ». But I'm lying: something of Europe so that I know it. For example, I know that for many people, perhaps above all for many young people, Europe identifies itself with the European Union, and that today the European Union identifies itself, in the

worst case scenario, with a grainy and unlikely union of countries with so much past and little future, and, at best, with a supranational entity, cold, abstract and distant whose capital is located in a cold, abstract and distant place called Brussels, that we do not know for sure what it is for but for giving work to piles of gray bureaucrats and to make populist politicians of the entire continent give him the guilt of all that bad it happens in their respective countries.

Not always, however, the image of Europe was like this negative, or at least it has not been everywhere. In reverse. For centuries Europe constituted, without going too far, the great hope of many Spaniards; aware of living from the beginning of 17th century in an increasingly isolated country, increasingly immersed in poverty, in the inculcation, in the lack of freedom, in the obscurantist dogmatism and in the fiction of an empire that sank, from the middle of the eighteenth century the best among mine ancestors felt that Europe was a realistic promise of modernity, prosperity and freedom. I grew up with myself this idea in Spain that was trying hard to get out of the Francoism. But there is no need to go back so far, nor to limit myself to my narrow experience, or that of my own compatriots. Just over a decade ago, right after birth of the euro, while preparing the European Constitution and enlargements of the Union and the first meetings were held for the launch of a common European defense, a united Europe yes profiled like the great world power of the 21st century, the only one capable of threatening the North American or Chinese; to the point that, in 2004, a young British political scientist as Mark Leonard dared to publish a book called Because Europe will lead the 21st century and, in that same year, Jeremy Rifkin, a veteran American sociologist, could to write: «While the American dream languishes, a new dream European sees the light ». And he concluded: "The Europeans have put before our eyes the vision and the path towards a new one promised land for humanity ». It seems impossible, but it is this what a very short time ago said Europe thinkers of Worldwide. The question, at this point, imposes itself: what it is happened because all those hopes fell almost by one day to day and because, as early as May 2010, a journalist important as Gideon Rachman could write about Financial Times an article entitled The European dream is dead ? The answer also imposes itself: what has happened is the crisis economic crisis that has suffered Europe since 1929, a crisis that has not triggered a world war, as it had made that of 1929, but a political earthquake than before greatness and resurrection of the worst European demons, a begin with the demon of nationalism, which is the demon of discord and disunity. Europe can go back to being now that the crisis seems behind us, what has been for mine Spanish ancestors, what was for me in my youth, what it was for all or almost all at the beginning of this century?

Of course, I do not know, so let's get back to the question initial: what is Europe? Europe has an identity like that that apparently have Italy, Spain or Germany? And, if he has it, what is it? They have something in common Dante and Shakespeare, Cervantes and Montaigne, Ibsen and Kafka? There is something that all these writers share that do not do they even share a language? And by the way: stop it to share a language to have the same identity? They have one same identity as Milton and Melville, Quevedo and Borges? A few years ago, George Steiner seemed to try to define European identity at a conference entitled The idea of Europe. He argued that our continent can be traced back to five axioms. The first is that Europe is its coffee, those meeting places where people conspire and write and debate, and in which the great philosophies, the great artistic movements, the great ideological and aesthetic revolutions. The second axiom is that Europe is a tamed and practicable nature, a landscape on a human scale that contrasts with the wild landscapes, immeasurable and impassable of Asia, America, Africa or

Oceania. The third is that Europe is a place impregnated with history, a vast lieu de la mémoire whose streets and squares are full of names that recall an ever present past, at same bright and suffocating time. The fourth is that Europe is the deposit of a double, contradictory and inseparable legacy: the legacy of Athens and Jerusalem, of Socrates and Jesus Christ, of reason and revelation. And the fifth is that Europe is the its own eschatological consciousness, the consciousness of its own transience, of the dark certainty that has had a beginning and will have inevitably an end, more or less tragic.

These are the five axioms that, according to Steiner define the nature of Europe. It is almost useless to say that the idea is brilliant and provocative, but insufficient; there is no doubt that those characteristics belong to Europe, but also that they are not enough to define his identity. More: I'm sure that Steiner knows it; and I'm also sure he knows the problem it is not the answer that he gives to the question in his lecture on the identity of Europe, but in the question itself. In in the second half of the sixteenth century Montaigne wrote: "There is so much difference between us and ourselves that between us and others". This means that, long before Freud, the great French writer he understood that in a certain sense individual identity is a fiction, that within us there is a " drama em gente ", to use the words with which Fernando Pessoa explained the heterogeneity of his work, or that in our interior lives a confederation of souls, as he claimed, inspired by Pessoa, a character from Antonio Tabucchi. Now, if individual identities are illusory, how can collective identities not be? In reality, those collective identities, starting with those of Italy, of the Spain or Germany, are nothing but inventions collective induced or directly imposed by state powers that they know very well, as they know any power, that the first thing to do to govern the present and the future is to govern the past, that is to say building a narrative of the past in degree to legitimize a common present and prepare a future equally common. In reality, the only European identity its diversity is truly plausible - a contradictory identity or impossible, an oxymoron - and the only narrative capable of legitimating it would be the narration, moreover true, of a group of old countries with languages, cultures, traditions and dissimilar stories that, at some point, after spending centuries to fight ruthlessly, they decide to come together for building a new and united country from the values of concord, of the well-being and freedom of its citizens. From this point of view, the lemma of united Europe could be one of the first the lemmas of the United States, which was the great political utopia that has given birth to the enlightenment, and historically what it has had more success; the lemma was: E pluribus unum ; that is: by many countries, languages, cultures, traditions and stories, one state.

At this point I have to make a confession: for me Europe does not has never stopped being what was in my youth of boy just emerged from an interminable dictatorship, the same which for centuries has been for the best of my Spanish ancestors; in other words: like my friend Erri De Luca, I am a extremist Europeanist. This means that, for me, Europe unity is the only reasonable political utopia that we Europeans we coined. Of atrocious political utopias - theoretical paradises transformed into practical infernos - we invented them in mansalva; of reasonable political utopias, which I know, only this: the utopia of a united Europe.

If I'm not mistaken, there's an infinity of obvious facts that they endorse this idea; so obvious that I fear that we tend to forget them, all settled as we are in a dictatorship of the present for which what happened yesterday is already the past, and what happened a week ago is practically prehistory. I will mention only three of these facts. The first is that European sport par excellence is not football, as many people believe, but the war. We are

Europeans during the last millennium killed each other without giving us a single month of truce and in all possible ways: in wars of a hundred years, in wars thirty years old, in civil wars or religion or ethnic wars or wars world that in reality were basically European wars. These last ones have been terrible, deliriously atrocious: how recalls Steiner himself, between August of 1914 and May of 1945, from Madrid to the Volga, from the Arctic to Sicily, it is estimated that a hundred million men, women and children died a because of violence, hunger, deportations and ethnic cleansing, and western Europe and the west of Russia they have turned into the abode of death, into the scenario of unprecedented brutality, whether that of Auschwitz or that of the Gulag. The European Union project arose evidently from the horror of that carnage indescribable and conviction, full of sensibility, of tiredness and courage, that nothing like this should be repeated in Europe; the result of that conviction is not less evident, but not even astonishing: my father met her war, my great-grandfather and my great-grandfather and probably all my ancestors knew the war, but I do not know her; that is to say: the result is that I belong to the first generation of Europeans who do not know a war, at least - not we forget the fierce struggles that have dismembered the Yugoslavia - a war between the great European powers. Of course, I know that there are those who think that it is now inconceivable another war in Europe. It seems like naivety. In history of Europe, the rare thing is not war, but peace; besides, it's enough that snack again serious problems, as we have seen with the crisis of 2008, so that the nationalism, which was the final cause, the ornament and the fuel of all the European wars of the last two centuries. The union of Europe was born to fight it, but it is a difficult task. Nationalism is not a political ideology: it is a faith; after all, the nation was the substitute of God as political foundation of the state, and getting rid of it in Europe will be as difficult as it was to get rid of God. As he observed George Orwell, the nationalist is indifferent to reality, therefore it is not important for him to be shown with data, for example, that getting out of Europe is a bad deal for Britain or that all the anti-immigration verbiage of Nigel Farage is not other than this, verbosity - the xenophobic delirium of a chatty - because he will continue to believe that the British they have to leave Europe and immigrants threaten his work and its security, and will therefore vote in favor of the Brexit. Condorcet wrote that "fear is at the origin of almost all human nonsense and, above all, nonsense 'policies. And Walter Benjamin claimed that happiness consists in living without fear; the nationalists are very unhappy fear: for them, for many of them, the European Union is only one distant junk, unserviceable and without a soul that forces them to living in a bad weather, with strange people who speak strange languages and he has strange habits; they prefer to live with their own kind, o better with those who imagine or have made them believe that they are their own kind, protected by the false security of all time, refugees in illusory collective identities, breathing, as they would say Nietzsche, the old smell of the stable. The only way to do it something useful with the future is to have the ever present past, and therefore it is a huge mistake to forget the gloomy story of violence that has paved Europe, pretending it never is existed; forget that the European Union was essential for erasing that sinister past is an even worse mistake.

There is a second reason why the union of Europe me it seems the most attractive and ambitious political project of ours times. We know that Europe has been for centuries the center of world, but we also know that it is not anymore, and for a while time does not pass day without hearing or reading that almost the only thing left to do for us Europeans, under the push of the great emerging powers, it is languishing as nobles in misfortune in the ruins of our past splendor, for to paraphrase the greatest post-war Spanish poet: Jaime Gil de Biedma. I do not think this pessimism is justified. It is true that the weight of our countries in the world, taken one by one, it is always smaller, especially if we compare it to

weight of China or India or Brazil, but it is also true that, together, we still enjoy enormous power: without pushing us too far, we are the biggest economy in the world, with a GDP of 14 thousand billion euros. It is also true that weight Political Europe is scarce, and also its cultural weight e scientific; but this is not due to the fact that it is united, but a what is not enough, that the old states resist with the nails and teeth to surrender sovereignty and to dissolve politically in a single federal state. Utopia is still a lot far from being realized, and therefore nobody can be satisfied of the current functioning of the European Union: to begin with, the democratic deficit of its institutions is bloody, which it is perhaps the main problem of the Union because prevents what initially was, inevitably, an elitist project, conceived and directed by a vanguard illuminated, transformed into what must be: a project popular, directly supported and protagonized by the citizenship; but here the problems begin only: we are deprived of a common economic and fiscal policy (even if not one money and a common bank), we do not have a policy internal and foreign, nor a common defense policy, nor obviously a common cultural policy. From the latter point of view, which is that of our little corner of readers and writers, the disunity is total, beyond the contacts and the fertilizations that have always been produced and which, it is true, perhaps in this moment they are more fluid than ever; but they are completely insufficient: each of our countries operates through systems literary, educational, and completely different intellectuals, not we have newspapers or magazines or radio or common televisions - with the what we are deprived of a common public opinion -, not we have European publishing houses, not even a large debate European, I'm not even sure we have many writers really Europeans - really important writers throughout the European geography - and I know that there is a European literary prize, that grants the European Parliament every year, just because a couple of years ago was granted to one of my novels, which means that the European repercussion of that prize is a lot poor.

Everything I have just said may seem trivial or secondary, especially if compared to the major issues economic and political, but I do not think it is. Perhaps the great one challenge of Europe, or of Europe in which I would like to live and on which I bet, it consists precisely in reconciling two things which in principle seem irreconcilable: diversity cultural and political unity. Without cultural diversity, Europe will be irreversibly impoverished, because the variety of languages, of cultures, local traditions and social autonomy is among us an almost inexhaustible source of wealth, and therefore must be cared for and strengthened; there is no contradiction between this urgency and that of creating a common European culture, endowed with a common intellectual system and a community of interests, because this European culture of all must be what it is in Fund has always been, since the disintegration of the Roman Empire: the result of the fertilization of languages and cultures different. However, at the same time, without Europe's political unity seems condemned to destruction, because that diversity culturally so fertile was the germ of the gods ethnic hatreds, regionalist claims and claims chauvinistic nationalisms that have caused the truce to cease unabated continent and threatened to annihilate it. « E pluribus unum »; let us return to diversity, to the multiple identity of Europe, to its own original oxymoron: Europe must be politically one and culturally plural. Only this way, it seems to me, can give the best of themselves and not resign to irrelevance.

The third and last reason why a united Europe seems to me to be the The most precious political project of our times is no less important of the two previous ones, but it can be explained with less words. The classical political writers usually believed that the ideal for the development of democracy was, to put it like Rousseau in the Social Contract (book III, chapter IV), "one Very small state, in which it is easy for the people to gather, and in

which every citizen can easily know all the others ». It is obvious that this recommendation is no longer valid for our days. The reason lies in the fact that one of our main political problems is that, in the current economies globalized, large multinational companies have a so huge power that they end up imposing their standards to governments of countries, and especially those of small countries, deprived sufficient power to clash with them, and therefore must submit to their dictates. This means that a Europe truly united, which brings together the power of multiple states, represents perhaps the only possibility that, in our societies, politics can curb the blind and all-encompassing power of the economy and which therefore constitutes perhaps the only instrument that could allow us a democracy worthy of the name. Jurgen Habermas, among others, has rightly insisted on this aspect: "Democracy in a single country", writes the German thinker "He can not even defend himself against the ultimatums of capitalism furious that crosses national borders ".

Concordia, prosperity and democracy: these are the three pillars that the European Union has helped keep Europe in the latter half a century, and these are the values that they should guide our reasonable future utopia; after everything, nothing essential distinguishes them from the founding values of French Revolution: freedom, equality and fraternity. It's true that, as I said before, utopia is still very far from become reality, as we verify every time it is produced an important crisis in Europe, be it the economic crisis or the refugee crisis, when the European Union is unable to act as a whole and each country returns to fall back on itself, a to monitor their own interests and to neglect common interests, without understanding that, at least in current Europe, it does not we can watch over our interests without watching over those of others, because the interests of others are ours too interests.

No: it is impossible not to agree on the fact that utopia European Union has not yet fully achieved; however, to well look, maybe it's better this way, because the utopias are in some qual way like democracies. Perfect democracy does not exist: a perfect democracy is a dictatorship; that is to say it is one fake democracy: what defines true democracy is not the fact that it is perfect, but that it is infinitely perfectible, yes it can always improve. The same thing happens with the utopias. A utopia brought into reality is a fake utopia, because we beings we are different, we need our needs, our aspirations and different desires, and what for some is a paradise for others can to be a hell; a true utopia, therefore, is not what it is provides the same happiness to those who live there, but one that allows everyone to seek their own happiness in their own way. Will this be a united Europe in the future? It could be this that only a few years ago thinkers and political scientists from all over the world they thought it would be, the 21st century leader, like he predicted Mark Leonard, the new promised land of humanity, like Jeremy Rifkin, vaticinava?

I do not know: I still do not have an answer to this question. But I would be lying if I did not say that I know some things. For example, I know that, as some experts are amazed of international politics, like Moises Naim, we assist from time to an extraordinary phenomenon, that is, that the first power world, the United States, is renouncing its power and power its own influence by its own decision and without it be subtracted from his rivals. This phenomenon has intensified with the coming to power of Donald Trump, to the point that John Kerry, former US secretary of state, he called this retreat general as a "grotesque abdication from leadership", e there is no lack of those, like the Norwegian sociologist Johan Galtung, known for predicting the fall of the Soviet Union, it goes

announcing for some time, with arguments for nothing negligible, the next collapse of North American power. I do not know if everything happens as quickly as Galtung speculates, however it is true that, after almost a century of world hegemony, states United are closing in themselves in forced stages, which it is felt in many fields: they have not signed the Treaty transpacific trade (the so-called TPP), they are not interested of what happens in Europe and reduce their every day influence in key issues such as the fight against global warming, nuclear proliferation, aid to the development, control of global pandemics, regulation of Internet or interventions to contain the financial crisis. We know that, like the empires, hegemonies are not eternal, and I only hope that when that of the gods ends United States, do not arrive, as many others predict, the turn of Chinese hegemony. What I hope is that at that point the union Europe is a much more solid fact than it is now and which, thanks to it - thanks to the transformation of Europe into a federal state - we can, if not take over the witness from United States, at least occupy a relevant place in the post-hegemonic that some predict. Otherwise, if ours position in this new world without a clear hegemony it will be a secondary or subordinate position, I fear strongly that we will be seriously endangering a way of life privileged that we have enjoyed for decades and that many seem to take it for granted. Boldly because that way of life has not solidified spontaneously; all the contrary: it is the result of the sweat and blood of generations of Europeans and, more immediately, a political experiment unpublished, of extraordinary boldness, which arose from cognition of the horrors we have perpetrated in 20th century Europe e of what I can only call the heroism of reason, the which has erected society in the last half century peaceful, more prosperous and freer than our history: a experiment that, as Michel did not remember long ago Serres, allowed the Europeans to live "the period of peace and Longer prosperity since the Trojan War ». Yes it is a matter of triumphalism: it is a question of recognizing historical evidence; ignoring it is a mistake, because those who can not identify what possesses good will hardly identify the good that he lacks and what bad must correct. I have just used the phrase "heroism of reason" e I should clarify that it is not mine, but of Edmund Husserl. The philosopher German used it in 1935, at the end of some famous ones conferences on the crisis of European humanity that he held in Vienna and in Prague. He affirmed that what defined Europe was the passion for rational knowledge, and that at that point, when the continent was recovering from a carnage indescribable and some began to breathe the beginning in the air of another, there remained only two ways out of Europe: the decadence, says Husserl, "in a distance from one's own rational sense of life, sinking into the hostility of the spirit and in barbarism, or the renaissance thanks to the spirit of the philosophy through the heroism of reason ". I feel that that heroism of reason constitutes the original impulse to the union of Europe and is at the basis of truthful narration that, as I said before, the legitimate: the story of some old men countries with different languages, cultures, traditions and stories that, after centuries in which they were fought without mercy in wars eternal, they decide to unite to build a new and cohesive country from the values of harmony, well-being and freedom.

Some of you will be thinking that I'm an optimist, either perhaps a deluded one. There will even be those who think that, from 1935 onwards, we distanced ourselves even further from the rational sense of life of which Husserl spoke, that we have sunk even more in the hostility of the spirit and in barbarism. I do not believe it, e I think a great writer would not believe it either Italian, Alberto Savinio, whose words I want to report here for end this chat. Savinio's words were published on December 27, 1944, just before the end of

war in Italy and in the rest of Europe, and palpitate to the memory of the horror just ended and the euphoria of liberation from the fascism. I want to read them because they are exhausted by an emotion genuine, which is in its own way the immediate origin of utopia reasonable sense of Europe, and why in that emotion it resounds, for me, the heroism of reason that Husserl spoke of: "I am ever more deeply convinced," writes Savinio "That the peoples of Europe will not recover from their very serious ones wounds if they do not form a single nation united by communes thoughts, from common interests, from a common destiny (...).

Europe, basically and perhaps without its knowledge, wants to form and sooner or later it will be formed. Who knows? Such is the madness of men and such their stupidity - such is above all their insistence on not to resolve what destiny prescribes if not urged (...) - that perhaps it will take a third war even more disastrous than the two that have preceded it in order to clarify in the brain of Europeans need for the union; in which case the Europeans no longer live they will unite, but the shadows of Europeans, as Homer calls i ghost of those who lived. But maybe not (...).

No Man, no Power, no Force can unite Europeans and make Europe. Only an idea can unite them. Only one idea will be able to make Europe. Idea: this human thing for excellence.

And this idea is the idea of the social community (...).

And this "natural" union of Europe will take place. It will happen sooner or later. It will happen sooner or later. It will happen despite everything. It will happen in spite of everything (...).

The appeal that closes the manifesto of communism goes updated as follows: "Partisans of all Europe, unite!", meaning for the partisans and partisans the genuine element of Europe operating on its own impulse, and not on an order o inspiration from others. »

Thanks so much