The Intellectual History of Europe

HUM1013

Autumn 2017

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Content of the module

This module deals with one of the most fundamental questions concerning Europe: Does Europe exist? Does the name "Europe" refer to a political and/or cultural entity that has a distinct identity of its own? And if so, what are the distinguishing characteristics of this identity, what have been the decisive common experiences that have fostered a sense of European community, and how has it evolved over time?

By articulating our central focus in this way, we assume that Europe is not a "natural" entity. After all, if it were, we should be able to identify a European essence that somehow has always been there, only waiting to be discovered or realized. In the absence of such defining feature Europe is best understood as a historical construct, as a political and cultural entity that is the product of specific historical circumstances. On the one hand, Europe may be viewed as an invention of late twentieth-century politics, which has legitimized its own ideal of peaceful coexistence and cooperation between states by projecting this ideal unto the past. Just as the newborn nation states of the nineteenth century reinterpreted the past along national lines, inventing national traditions in order to present themselves as the inevitable outcome of a long process of organic growth, so the European Union is trying hard to establish a sense of identity in history. This quest, however, is already troubled at a conceptual level. Not only has the content of "Europe" changed over time, as a concept it has also meant very different things to different groups of people. Therefore, any productive exploration of the question "What is Europe?" always begins with the question: "Who is talking?"

It would be wrong, though, to concentrate exclusively on the word "Europe". There may have been a transnational sense of community, which today we would identify as Europe, even before that name itself existed. Most countries that belong to the European Community were once part of the Roman Empire, which stretched into Northern Africa and Asia Minor as well. After its fall in the fifth century, the dream of its restoration remained alive until the early modern period. In fact, for a long time the Holy Roman Empire was considered to be a continuation of the old Roman Empire. Secondly, until the eighteenth century "Christianity" was used as a notion to refer to a cultural and geographic entity that more or less coincided with what we now call Europe. This suggests that there already was some idea of Europe, even before the word itself was *en vogue*. It also underscores the significance of looking behind the word for those crucial historical experiences from which the need for "Europe" as a shared label was born (Rome and Christianity being two of the most important among them).

Tracing those events and experiences in the past that have helped to shape some sense of European community means establishing the factors that have contributed to the difference between Europe and the non-European world. The concept of identity logically consists of two components: the notion of historical continuity and a marked sense of difference between the "in-group" and one or more significant others. If we accept that there is some sort of European identity, albeit complex and multifaceted, we should ask which factors have generated it. To put it more specifically: Which factors contributed to Europe's Sonderweg in world history? Or, to use the words of one author, the historian E.L. Jones: how did "the European miracle" come about?

From the angle of world history, the European experience constitutes a major deviation from an almost universal pattern of social and political organization. Europe is the first region in the world that has changed into a large-scale industrial and urban society. Whereas until the end of the eighteenth century people mainly lived in fairly small communities of hunters and gatherers or in somewhat larger agricultural societies, European industrialization has led to societies that are capable of sustaining populations of unprecedented size. This so-called process of modernization has turned European civilization into something of a historical anomaly- the kind of anomaly, however, that forced itself on other continents, thus becoming a new kind of standard in the end after all. To ask for the factors that have contributed to the modern sense of European community is, at least for a large part, to ask for the factors that have produced this phenomenon of modernization, including the blatant economic disparities between European civilization (including North-America) and the rest of the world.

Several of these factors will be discussed briefly. First, there is the issue of geography. Compared with the Central Asian highlands with their large open spaces, which are easily invaded, the European continent is subdivided in a number of territorial units, which are more or less separated by natural barriers (rivers and mountain ranges) and these make it difficult for one power to have total control. Europe, in part on account of its geography, is a polycentric continent where a number of powers have always competed with each other to gain the upper hand, politically as well as economically.

Of course geography alone cannot explain the emergence of "Europe" as a distinct political and cultural entity. Another major factor is its Judeo-Christian

tradition. This particular tradition managed to give a number of European peoples a feeling of shared historical experience, and this in turn set them apart from other peoples that did not belong to Christianity. Apart from this strictly historical observation, there are also specific elements in the inner logic of Judeo-Christian beliefs that have contributed to Europe's anomalous road to modernity. Compared with the widespread pattern of polytheistic belief systems, monotheism has of course the capacity –at least in theory- to unite people within one universal system of moral and religious values. This is also characteristic of Islam, and to a lesser extent –since it never was a proselytizing religion- of Judaism. Apart from this monotheistic aspect, then, more specific Christian notions have been important as well, including views about the relationship between God and man and between spirit and nature, as well as the idea of man's inborn sin.

A third major factor involves the idea of rationality as it evolved in European history. Regarding this issue, one is inclined to focus exclusively on the importance of the Scientific Revolution and the Enlightenment. But the sources of European rationality go back much further. Of course, some importance should be accorded to its classical heritage, which was passed on to modern Europe both directly and indirectly, through contacts with the Arabic world. Even more important, however, was the role of Christianity. This may seem a paradox at first sight, since we have become so much accustomed to viewing religion and rationality as opposites. Nevertheless, Christianity played its part in preparing the ground for our modern view of the relationship between man and his natural and social environment. In emptying nature of spiritual meaning, which it was usually accorded within polytheistic belief-systems, Christianity has helped pave the way for the modern idea of nature as an inanimate object, which is to be mastered by

the human spirit. Moreover, in its Protestant guise Christianity –following the thesis of Max Weber- has fostered a spirit of self-control and methodical conduct, which seems to have been essential for the emergence of European capitalism. Protestantism, with its deepened sense of a gulf dividing God and man as well as spirit and nature, and with its strong awareness of sin, which may only be atoned for by so-called "innerweltliche Askese", has contributed to creating a mentality in which endless methodical labor becomes the road to salvation. The modern idea of labor as a means of self-fulfillment, which is at the heart of capitalism, has its roots in this religious soil.

There are other, more political factors and arguments to be considered, though. For instance, Ernest Gellner has argued that industrial society would have been unthinkable, if it had not been for specific forms of political organization, i.e. the emergence of the modern nation-state from the end of the early modern period onwards. Building on this thesis, one should add that the idea of the nation-state implies the concurring idea of modern civil society, which is no longer divided into sharply separated estates (a characteristic of agricultural societies), but which consists of individuals who are –at least theoretically- equal under the law. One should also consider the roots of this modern idea of individuality in Roman law and Christendom, as well as mention the role of the medieval city as a safe haven from feudal law and as the cradle of the bourgeois spirit. Of course, the importance of the French Revolution as a turning point in the closely intertwined histories of European democracy and the emergence of the nation-state cannot be overstated. In the end, however, the unique character of Europe's new form of political organization can only be demonstrated fully by a comparison with other

forms of political organization that have been characteristic of other societies as well as for Europe's own earlier history: tribal societies without a political center or under the leadership of warrior-kings, or poly-ethnic empires like Russia, the Hapsburg Empire or the Ottoman Empire.

This brief overview of the structural elements in the formation of European identity would be incomplete without a consideration of the cultural aspects and, more specifically, the role of representation. The identity concept necessarily implies a sense of difference between the "in-group" and one or more significant others. Of course, Europe has never been a single monolithic entity. There have been, and still are, many internal divisions, and this may even be considered as one of the characteristics of what it means to be European. Paradoxically, being a European seems to imply the acceptance that there can never be one Europe, but only a number of different views on what it is to be European. It is nevertheless true that these inner differences appear to coexist with a feeling of belonging together, a feeling that is activated in particular when "Europe" finds itself caught up in some dynamic with others that are viewed as non-Europeans and that may pose a challenge to Europe's sense of self-identity. In such dynamic, representations, and notably stereotypical representations, always play an important part. If we were to consider cultural factors in isolation and treat representation as a phenomenon in its own right, we obviously run the risk of ending up with narrow if not merely idealist explanations. Views and representations of cultural differences do not come out of the blue; in contrast, they derive their strength and persuasive power from actual historical experience, which is not to say that they do perfectly mirror such experience. It is more typical of cultural representations, perhaps, that they distort actual historical experience and may even take grotesque forms, only in this way becoming a historical factor of their own, adding to new historical experience. For example, out of actual historical experiences Europeans and Muslims have created images of each otherimages that by their sheer exaggeration and demonization have added to the gulf separating both traditions. In the same way, one should mention the important role of colonialism in creating the image of a European civilization which in the nineteenth century "heroically" confronted Africa's "heart of darkness". At least two factors, however, complicate this particular conceptualization: first, the questionable claims of universality associated with this European concept of civilization, as described in detail by Norbert Elias, and, secondly, the fact that from the outset Europe's engagement with "primitive" Africa's heart of darkness was accompanied by awkward associations with Europe's own "heart of darkness", whether understood in a social sense –with reference to the great poverty in its industrialized big city slums- or in more metaphoric senses.

Design of the module

The module consists of six lectures and twelve assignments, each organized around a specific theme. The topics of the assignments and lectures partly overlap, but some of the lectures may also have a semi-autonomous character. This allows us to address issues that are not discussed in our group meetings or to emphasize particular theoretical or methodological insights.

The literature students need to read during this module is first and foremost the main course text book P. Rietbergen, *Europe. A Cultural History*, London/New York: Routledge 1998 either the 1st, 2nd or 3rd editions. The other literature recommended for reading is mostly included in the e-journals. Please note that several copies of both the above and G. Delanty, Inventing Europe. Idea, identity, reality, Basingstoke/London: Macmillan Press Ltd 1995, should be available in both the UCM reading room and the library. Literature not included in the e readers is probably available in the libraries learning resource centre for reference purposes. If this is the case the following abbreviation will be used Li. RC. If the Resource Centre in the library is that of Cultuurwetenschappen then the following abbreviation is used (FdCW).

Evaluation and Exam

Students will have to pass an examination of essay questions at the end of the module. These questions will cover the issues discussed in the lectures and the literature read during the assignments. The aim of this examination is to test both the factual knowledge and the conceptual insights of students as acquired during the module. The exam will represent 50% of the final evaluation. Moreover, students will write a paper of 3000 words on an aspect of one of the assignments. This paper should reflect a deepening of knowledge and the title and plan must be approved by the tutor. It will represent 40% of the evaluation the remaining 10% will be allocated on the basis of active and well prepared class participation-students are expected to have read the course literature for that tutorial and to have brought detailed notes. The standard 85% attendance requirement applies for this

course with an extra assignment should the requirement not be met. Students may only take the resit if they made a genuine attempt at passing the exam and paper the first time. The resit grade will replace the grade of either the paper or the written exam depending on which was worse.

The first lecture will be in the week of 30 October.

Topics and Outlines of Written Papers not to be in later than the end of the third week of the course. The paper is to be handed in by safe assignment no later than 1 December 17.00. Papers submitted after this time will not be accepted. Paper copies are to be submitted at the same time.

Paper grading guide

The **introduction** should contain at least the following:

A clear topic

A research question or thesis; this should be a full question or sentence, and from the research question it should be clear what kind of argument you want to make, and what kind of material would be necessary to be able to do so.

An explanation as to *how* you want to answer your research question.

The **main body** should contain information about the sources you want to use, and how you will use them;

The **conclusion** should be more than just a summary: here you actually answer your research question, or confirm your thesis, by bringing together the various bits and pieces of information and theory you have presented in the main body. In your outline this will probably only be tentative (as you still need to do most of your research), nevertheless try to say as much as possible about the answers you think you will be able to give.

Grading Criteria:

The final paper will be graded on the following criteria

Criteria	Percentage of
	score
Structure: Do the introduction and conclusion provide an adequate	Approx. 20%
frame for the paper?	
Argument: Does the paper have a main point? Is there a clear and	Approx. 20%
logical progression of idea expanding on that main point?	
Evidence: Is the argument supported by an adequate number of	Approx. 20%
facts and details? And are these facts and details applied in a	
meaningful and convincing way?	
Research: Are the facts, details and theories from articles, Reynolds	Approx. 20%
and other sources relevant, and presented accurately?	
Notes, bibliography, sources, etc.: Consistent and clear?	

Paragraph organization: Are paragraphs unified, coherent and	Approx. 10%
fully developed? Is there a flow from one paragraph to the other?	
Has repetition of information or ideas been avoided?	
Choice of words: Are words spelled and chosen correctly, avoiding	Approx. 5%
jargon, etc.?	
Sentences: Are sentences clear and concise? Are grammar and	Approx. 5%
syntax correct?	

Exam grading guide

Regarding grading for the exam the following points should be helpful.

In order to achieve a pass i.e. 5.5 Students are expected to show a clear understanding of the relevant core concepts involved and to avoid giving incorrect information. From there on grades increase as students give more relevant information, name and use theories, provide analysis and top grades will go for students who show not only a clear understanding of the topics concerned but also demonstrate scholarly originality.

A common error is that students do not answer the question as it is given and tend to provide lots of irrelevant descriptive detail.

Educational aims

- Providing a basic overview of the development of the idea and identity of Europe.

- Highlighting the specific characteristics of Europe's history, notably in comparison with that of other (non-European) societies.
- Confronting students with some of the basic theoretical and methodological problems in dealing with this subject matter. Students are introduced to the problems concerning the study of identity, especially involving the social construction of identity and the symbolic construction of community, as well as the corresponding notions of representation, invention of tradition, and "lieux de mémoire". They are also exposed to rudimentary insights into social anthropology, different types of societies and their historical preconditions (especially the theory of Ernest Gellner), as well as to the theory of civilization (Norbert Elias) and theories about the relationship between social reality and ideology (especially Max Weber).

Coordination of the module

- Dr. Mark Stout (coordinator) mark.stout@maastrichtuniversity.nl

Room 0.032 ZW4; phone 3885198. Appointments can be made by e mail.

Assignments

ASSIGNMENT 1

DOES EUROPE EXIST?

"Europe" has had many faces. Take a look at the maps and allegorical images of Europe in this module book. Also consider the following statements:

1) A 14th century encyclopedist:

"Europe is said to be a third of the whole world, and has its name from Europa, daughter of Agenor, King of Libya. Jupiter ravished this Europa, and brought her to Crete, and called most of the land after her Europa... Europe begins on the river Tanay [Don] and stretches along the Northern Ocean to the end of Spain. The east and south part rises from the sea called Pontus [Black Sea] and is all joined to the Great Sea [the Mediterranean] and ends at the islands of Cadiz [Gibraltar]..."

2) Voltaire, French philosopher, in 1751:

"[Europe is] a kind of great republic divided into several states, some monarchial, the others mixed... but all corresponding with one another. They all have the same religious foundation, even if divided into several confessions. They all have the same principle of public law and politics, unknown in other parts of the world."

3) Otto von Bismarck, chancellor of Germany, at the end of the 19th century:

"Anyone who speaks of Europe is wrong – a geographical notion."

4) T.S. Eliot, English poet, in 1945:

"The dominant feature in creating a common culture between peoples, each of which has its own distinct culture, is religion... I am talking about the common tradition of Christianity which has made Europe what it is, and about the common cultural elements which this common Christianity has brought with it... It is in Christianity that out arts have developed; it is in Christianity that the laws of Europe – until recently – have been rooted. It is against a background of Christianity that all our thought has significance. An individual European may not believe that the Christian Faith is true; and yet what he says, and makes, and does, will all... depend on [Christian heritage] for its meaning. Only a Christian culture could have produced a Voltaire or a Nietzsche. I do not believe that the culture of Europe could survive the complete disappearance of the Christian Faith."

5) Denis de Rougemont, French historian, in 1961:

"A united Europe is not a modern expedient, be it political or economic, but an ideal which has been accepted since thousands of years by the best spirits of Europe, namely those who can see into the future. Already Homer described Zeus as "europos" – an adjective meaning "one who sees very far"."

6) Jean-Baptiste Duroselle, French historian, in 1965:

"Europe is a construction of the human spirit."

7) Hugh Seton-Watson, English historian, in 1985:

"The interweaving of the notions of Europe and of Christendom is a fact of History which even the most brilliant sophistry cannot undo... But it is no less true that there are strands in European culture that are not Christian: the Roman, the Hellenic, arguably the Persian, and (in modern centuries) the Jewish. Whether there is also a Muslim strand is more difficult to say."

Literature

P. Rietbergen,

Europe. A Cultural History, London/New York: Routledge 1998, the prologue p. xvii-xxvii, Or xxviii -xI

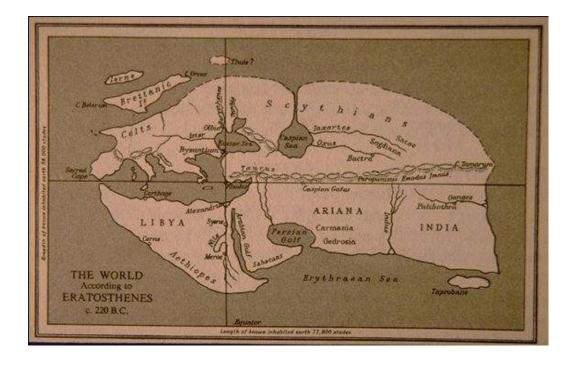
G. Barraclough

European Unity in Thought and Action, Oxford: Basil Blackwell 1963, p. 1-58. Li.RC.(FdCW) SW JN 30

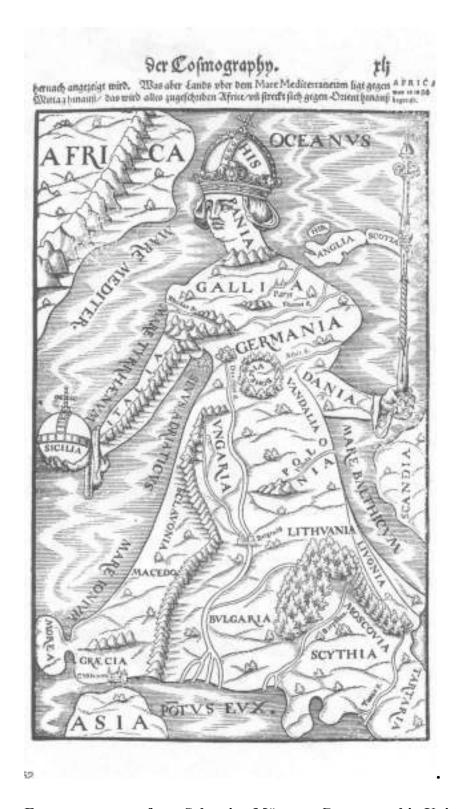
Additional literature

N. Davies

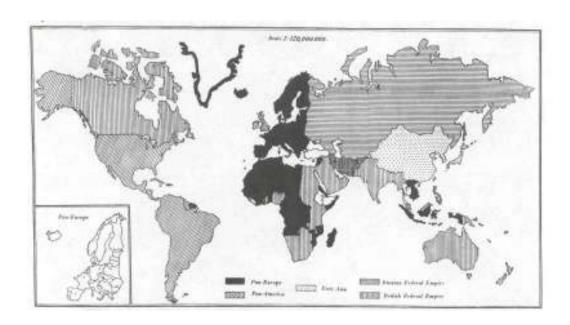
Europe. A History, London: Pimlico 1997, p. 7-31. Li.RC.(FdCW)



^{&#}x27;The world according to Eratosthenes. 220 B.C.'



Europe as queen, from Sebastien Münster, Cosmographia Universalis, 1588.



Classification by Coudenhove-Kalergi from 1923.



- (a) 'Rape of Europa'. Mosaic at Roman Villa, Lullingstone.
- (b) A T-O map from an eleventh-century manuscript of Isidore.

ASSIGNMENT 2

EMPIRE AND CHRISTIANITY

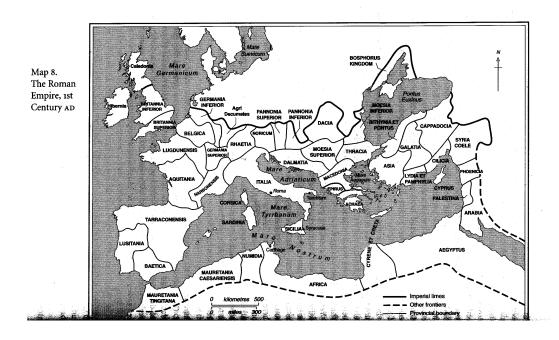
For centuries, Europeans have basically seen themselves as Christians. This was so important to them, that Christ himself was almost considered a son of Europe. In the words of Simon Purchas, an English author at the beginning of the seventeenth century:

"Europe is taught the way to scale Heaven, not by Mathematicall Principles, but by Divine veritie. Jesus Christ is their way, their truth, their life; who has long since given a Bill of Divorce to ingratefull Asia where hee was borne, and Africa the place of his flight and refuge, and is become almost wholly and onely European. For little doe wee find of this name in Asia, lesse in Africa, and nothing at all in America, but later European gleanings." (quoted in: D. Hay, *Europe. The Emergence of an Idea*, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press 1968, p. 110)

As a reminder:

Emperor Constantine declares Christianity the official religion of the Roman Empire

395 -	Roman Empire is split into a Western and an Eastern Empire with Rome and
	Constantinople as their respective capital cities
528-534	Proclamation of the general Code of law by the eastern emperor Justinian
711 -	Arab empire of the Umayyad dynasty conquers Spain
732 -	Frankish leader Charles Martel defeats the Arabs in the battle of Poitiers
800 -	Charlemagne receives (or, according to other stories: takes) the crown of emperor
	from the hands of the pope
962 -	Otto I is crowned emperor by the pope, marking the beginning of the Heilige
	Römische Reich deutscher Nation, originally encompassing large parts of Central
	Europe as well as Italy and Sicily
1054 -	Final split between the Eastern Orthodox Church of Constantinople and the
	Western Roman Church of Latin Christendom
1453 -	Fall of Constantinople into the hands of the Ottoman Empire
1492 -	Fall of Muslim Granada, which marks the completion of the Christian Reconquista
	of Spain
1517 -	Martin Luther proclaims his theses in Wittenberg, which marks the split of
	Western Christianity into Roman Catholicism and Protestantism
1529 -	First great siege of Vienna by an Ottoman army
1571 -	Christian Holy League, headed by Spain, defeats the Turkish fleet at Lepanto
1620-1648	Thirty Years War, concluded by the Peace Treaty of Westphalia
1683 -	Last great siege of Vienna by an Ottoman army



A map of the Roman Empire, 1st century AD.

Literature

G. Delanty

Inventing Europe. Idea, Identity, Reality, Basingstoke: Macmillan Press 1995, p. 16-47.

Additional literature

G. Barraclough

Times Atlas of World History, London: Times Books 1993, p. 88-89 [Roman Empire], p. 92-93 and 100-101 [Christianity], p. 106-107 [Franks], p. 112-113 [Byzantine Empire], and p. 136-137 [Ottoman Empire]. Li.RC.(FdCW)

R.R. Palmer & J. Colton

A History of the Modern World, London: McGraw-Hill 1992, p. 11-22 [Ancient Times: Greece, Rome, and Christianity]. (SL) Li.RC.(FdCW)

ASSIGNMENT 3

RATIONALITY AND CIVILIZATION

The following passage is from *Modern Egypt* (1908), a book by Lord Cromer, a high civil servant of the English Empire:

"The European is a close reasoner; his statements of fact are devoid of any ambiguity; he is a natural logician, albeit he may not have studied logic; he is by nature sceptical and requires proof before he can accept the truth of any proposition; his trained intelligence works like a piece of mechanism." (quoted from: E. Said, *Orientalism. Western Conceptions of the Orient*, London: Penguin Books 1995 [orig. 1978], p. 38)

Lord Cromer's observation fits into a long tradition of European statesmen, scholars and artists who have praised Europe – i.e. themselves – for its high-minded spirit, which allegedly sets it apart from other continents. See, for example, George Richardson's iconographic representation of the continents, drawn in 1776.

Is the European concept of rationality really unique? The German sociologist Max Weber seems to think so. According to him, this concept of rationality is not only

at the heart of modern science and technology, but it was also the source of capitalism. His famous book *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (1904-1905) is based on the conjecture, that there is a specific relationship between Christianity, especially in its Protestant form, and the emergence of a methodic way of life built on self-control, which has had repercussions in all domains of life. And one of his admirers, the sociologist Norbert Elias, has even contended, that this notion of self-control is at the core of civilization itself, as it has evolved over time in Europe. But are they right? And does that mean, that other cultures don't know any form of self-control and rationality.



Figure 15 George Richardson, Iconography (1776). (Photo: British Library Board, London.)

George Richardson, Iconography: allegory of the continents from 1776.

Literature

P. Rietbergen

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Europe. A Cultural History, p. 177-193, 206-208, 301-320. (SL)

Or p. 187-204; 216-221; 314-335 Or 209-226; 242-247; 355-377
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G. Barraclough

Turning Points in World History, Norfolk: Thames and Hudson 1979, p.29-43.

N. Elias

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The Civilizing Process: Sociogenetic and Psychogenetic Investigations, Oxford: Blackwell 2000 (orig. 1939), p. 47-52.
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R. Collins

Max Weber. A Skeleton Key, London: Sage 1986, p. 47-59.

Additional literature

G. Barraclough

Times Atlas of World History, p. 178-179 (Reformation) Li.RC.(FdCW)

R.R. Palmer & J. Colton

A History of the Modern World, p. 286-313 (on 'Scientific Revolution') and p. 314-336 (on 'Enlightenment'). (SL) Li.RC.(FdCW)

ASSIGNMENT 4

MODERNIZATION

The transformation from an agricultural society of estates to a large-scale industrial and urban society is seen as a crucial development in European history. The Swedish sociologist Göran Therborn is just one of many writers who have linked the emergence of European consciousness with modernity:

"Europe was the chief organizer of modernity, giving the latter its characteristic forms of vast seaborne empires, politically organized overseas settlements, intercontinental trade and investment, and deliberate diffusion of religious belief and techniques of rule. All this was linked to a system of increasingly national and secularized states at the centre, from which originated new technologies for the world and curious bodies of science and learning, developing physics, astronomy and political economy, as well as Enlightenment, nationalism and orientalism." (quoted from: H. Mikkeli, *Europe as an Idea and an Identity*, London and Basingstoke: Macmillan Press 1998, p. 208)

Therborn's definition involves a variety of elements, making it clear that "modernity" and "modernization" are rather broad and vague concepts which refer to a complex web of political, cultural, social and economic developments.

And his list is far from complete. Other writers have presented different definitions, which highlight other aspects of modernity. In his essay *Modernisierungstheorie und Geschichte* (1975) the German historian Hans-Ulrich Wehler lists a number of these aspects, which have marked the transition of a traditional type of society to the modern world. This is (part of) his so-called "alphabet of dichotomies":

	Traditional	Modern
Literacy	low	high
Professions	simple	highly differentiated
	stable	alternating
Social mobility	low	high
Families	extended	nuclear
Functions	diffuse	specialized
Political power	local	centralized
	personal	anonymous
Communication	personal	media
Conflicts	disruptive	institutionalized
Social control	direct	indirect
	personal	bureaucratic
Productivity	low	high

Religion dogmatic secularized

Population agricultural urban

Social stratification estates classes

Technology low high

Economy agricultural industrial

Values particularistic universalistic

Literature

P. Rietbergen

Europe. A Cultural History, p. 323-348. (SL)

Or 339-365 Or 385-411

G. Delanty

Inventing Europe, p. 65-83.

D.S. Landes

The Wealth and Poverty of Nations. Why some are so rich and some are so

poor, New York/London: W.W. Norton 1998, p. 186-199. Li.RC.(FdCW)

SW HC 21

D. Lerner, J.S. Coleman, R.P. Dore

Modernization, in: International Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences, New

York/London: Macmillan 1968, p. 386-395.

Additional literature

G. Barraclough

Times Atlas of World History, p. 196-197 (Industrial Revolution), 206, 207 and 208-209 (Revolutions). Li.RC.(FdCW)

P.N. Stearns

European Society in Upheaval. Social History since 1750, New York/London: Macmillan 1975, p. 331-337. Li.RC.(FdCW)



Ortelius – Theatrum Orbis Terranum, Antwerp, 1584.

ASSIGNMENT 5

THE IDEA OF PROGRESS

In his famous book *The Idea of History* (1946) the British philosopher R.G. Collingwood contends, that the emergence of historical consciousness must be considered as the most important element, marking the difference between premodern and modern thought. In his own words:

"The really new element in the thought of to-day as compared with that of three centuries ago is the rise of history. [..] Thus history occupies in the world of to-day a position analogous to that occupied by physics in the time of Locke: it is recognized as a special and autonomous form of thought, lately established, whose possibilities have not yet been completely explored. [..] The success of history has led some people to suggest that its methods are applicable to all the problems of knowledge, in other words, that all reality is historical."

Collingwood's observation seems to suggest, that people before the nineteenth century did not have a ("truly") historical consciousness. Compare the following quotations:

- "He, who wants to have a clear idea of human affairs and of what, according to human nature, will happen in this same way or in a similar manner in the future, will realize the use of my work." (Thucydides, 5th century B.C.)

- "Mankind are so much the same, in all times and places, that history informs us of nothing new or strange in this particular. Its chief use is only to discover the constant and universal principles of human nature." (David Hume, 1748)
- "In a time, totally different in character from all other times, when words, once incredibly powerful, have lost all meaning, only a fool could think, that one may be able to predict what the future has in store. In such a time, all human wisdom falters. All comparisons have become impossible, because there never was an era that matches the present one." (German newspaper, 1793)
- "Never before people were so strongly and intensely, so exclusively and generally focused on the future as in our time." (Friedrich Schlegel, 1829)
- "The heirs of the ancient world were the Teutonic tribes, who ... gradually formed a new uniform civilization on the foundation of the classic, and in recent times this has begun to be worldwide and to bring into close relationship and under common influences all the inhabitants of the earth." (G.B. Adams, 1898)
- "In the future, the average human being will rise to the level of Aristotle, Goethe and Marx.
 And there will emerge new pinnacles, that will even reach higher than these mountain ranges." (L. Trotsky, 1924)

May one —following Collingwood- really speak of the discovery of History? Is this History —following G.B. Adams- really the same as European history, which should then be considered as the universal model for all other possible histories? And does this History —following Trotsky- really conform to certain laws, pointing to a better future? Or is it precisely this kind of utopianism, which brings out the hidden dangers of European historicism? That, at least, is the view of the British philosopher Karl Popper:

"However benevolent its ends, it [utopianism] does not bring happiness, but only the familiar misery of being condemned to live under a tyrannical government."

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Or 366-391 Or 416-441

ASSIGNMENT 6

INDIVIDUALISM AND MASS SOCIETY

The rise of individualism seems to be one of the major developments that are characteristic for modern society. But can our society really be considered as a community of autonomous individuals, acting rationally and with self-confidence? Freud did not think so. And there have been many other commentators, who have been critical towards modern civilization. Not in the least, because modern society has also been characterized as a mass society, where individuals are in danger of losing themselves in the "lonely crowd". But twentieth century culture has also had its admirers.

A few observations:

- A positive view:

Modern western society has been the best of all worlds for people to be born in. Never before individuals were free and prosperous to such an extent, never before were their rights so well protected, and their participation in politics so large. At last, individuals are able to cultivate themselves in freedom, unencumbered by differences in their estates, repressive governments or material want

- "De Tocqueville's idea of modern man lost 'in the solitude of his own heart' has been brought forward into our time in such terminology as *alienation* (Marx), *anomie* (Durkheim), the *mass man* (Ortega y Gasset), and *the lonely crowd* (Riesman). The picture is always of a creature uprooted by industrialism, packed together in cities with people he doesn't know, helpless against massive economic and political shifts- in short, a creature like Charlie Chaplin in *Modern Times*, a helpless, bewildered, and dispirited slave of the machinery. This victim of modern times has always been a most appealing figure to intellectuals, artists, and architects.

 [..] But once the dreary little bastards started getting money in the 1940s, they did an astonishing thing- they took their money and ran! They did something only aristocrats (and intellectuals and artists) were supposed to do- they discovered and started doting on *Me!*They've created the greatest age of individualism in American history! All rules are broken!

 The prophets are out of business! [..] All the great religious waves have a momentum all their own. Neither arguments nor policies nor acts of the legislature have been any match for them in the past. And this one has the mightiest, holiest roll of all, the beat that goes...*Me...Me...Me...Me...*" [T. Wolfe, 1982]
- "In America, the old Protestant heavenly virtues are largely gone, and the mundane rewards have begun to run riot. The basic American value pattern emphasized the virtue of achievement, defined as doing and making, and a man displayed his character in the quality of his work. By the 1950s, the pattern of achievement remained, but it had been redefined to emphasize status and taste. The culture was no longer concerned with how to work and achieve, but with how to spend and enjoy. Despite some continuing use of the language of the Protestant ethic, the fact was that by the 1950s American culture had become primarily hedonistic, concerned with play, fun, display, and pleasure- and, typical of things in America, in a compulsive way. [..] What this abandonment of Puritanism and the Protestant ethic does, of course, is to leave capitalism with no moral or transcendental ethic. It also emphasizes not

only the disjunction between the norms of the culture and the norms of the social structure, but also an extraordinary contradiction within the social structure itself. On the one hand, the business corporation wants an individual to work hard, pursue a career, accept delayed gratification- to be, in the crude sense, an organization man. And yet, in its products and its advertisements, the corporation promotes pleasure, instant joy, relaxing and letting go. One is to be "straight" by day and a "swinger" by night. This is self-fulfillment and self-realization!"[D. Bell, 1976]

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E. Fromm

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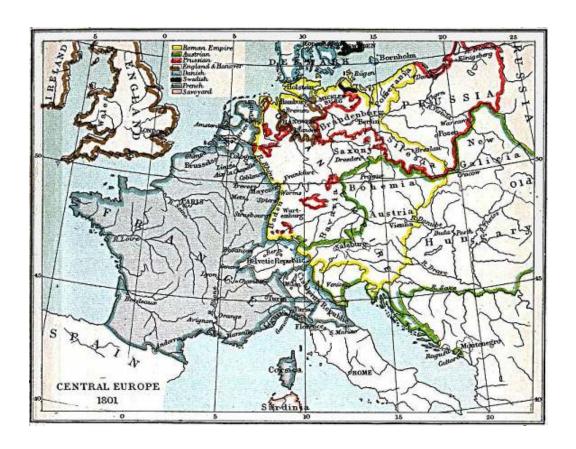
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Central Europe in 1801.

ASSIGNMENT 7

NATIONS AND NATIONALISM

What is a nation? In his famous essay *Qu'est-ce qu'une nation?* (1882) the French philosopher Ernest Renan gave a simple answer. In his view the nation is "a daily plebiscite". The nation manifests itself through the approval of citizens and their expressed wish to continue their lives together as a community.

East of the river Rhine one encounters other ideas concerning the nation. According to Johann Gottfried Herder Nature itself has divided humanity into several nations, each endowed with a unique spirit (*Volksgeist*). As Herder observes in his *Auch eine Philosophie der Geschichte* (1774):

"Every nation carries its centre of happiness within itself, like a ball its centre of gravity.

[..] The most natural state is One people with One national character."

But does the nation really exist? One modern sociologist, Ernest Gellner, has observed, that: "It is nationalism which engenders nations, and not the other way around." And the anthropologist Benedict Anderson goes even one step further, claiming that the nation is "an imagined community". The question then is: can

imagined communities exist? And if so, why did these "imagined" nations emerge in the first place?

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E.J. Hobsbawm

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J. Plamenatz

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ASSIGNMENT 8

IMPERIALISM

In the period after about 1870 until the end of World War II the nations of Western Europe, the United States and Japan were all active in extending their influence over many areas of the world. These nations had many things in common. They were all industrial powers for whom commerce was very important. They extended their power over countries that were generally less industrial or not industrial at all. Their control was sometimes not territorial, but merely commercial. This so-called "new imperialism" quickly brought about the partition of the underdeveloped regions of the world among the great industrial powers.

But what exactly is imperialism? What were its causes, its purposes, its results? To these questions very different answers have been given:

- The American clergy-man Josiah Strong, writing in 1885, mixes old and new arguments:

"It seems to me that God, with infinite wisdom and skill, is training the Anglo-Saxon race for an hour sure to come in the world's future. [..] There are no more new worlds. The unoccupied arable lands of the earth are limited, and will soon be taken. The time is coming when the pressure of population on the means of subsistence will be felt here as it is now felt in Europe and Asia. Then will the world enter upon a new stage of its history-the final competition of races, for which the Anglo-Saxon is being schooled."

- Rudyard Kipling's famous poem "The White Man's Burden" (1899) holds a somewhat different view:

"Take up the White Man's burden-

Send forth the best ye breed-

Go bind your sons to exile

To serve your captives' need;

To wait in heavy harness

On fluttered folk and wild-

Your new-caught, sullen peoples,

Half devil and half child."

- In 1902 V.I. Lenin defined imperialism as "the highest stage of capitalism":

"If it were necessary to give the briefest possible definition of imperialism we should have to say that imperialism is the monopoly stage of capitalism. Such a definition would include what is most important, for, on the one hand, finance capital is the bank capital of a few big monopolist banks, merged with the capital of the monopolist combines of

manufacturers; and, on the other hand, the division of the world is the transition from a

colonial policy which has extended without hindrance to territories unoccupied by any

capitalist power, to a colonial policy of monopolistic possession of the territory of the

world which has been completely divided up."

But this socialist view was already challenged in 1935 by the American

historian W.L. Langer:

"This much is clear: that territorial control of extra-European territory solved neither the

trade problem nor the question of surplus capital. The white colonies, which were the best

customers followed their own economic interests and not even tariff restrictions could

prevent them from doing so. In the backward, colored, tropical colonies, which could be

more easily controlled and exploited, it proved difficult to develop a market, because of

the low purchasing power of the natives. [..] We shall not go far wrong, then, if we stress

the psychological and political factors in imperialism as well as its economic and

intellectual elements. It was, of course, connected closely with the great changes in the

social structure of the western world, but it was also a projection of nationalism beyond

the boundaries of Europe, a projection on a world scale of the time-honored struggle for

power and for a balance of power as it had existed on the Continent for centuries."

Literature

P. Rietbergen

Europe. A Cultural History, p. 374-386. (SL)

53

Or p.392-403 *Or* 446-457

E.J. Hobsbawm

The Age of Empire, p. 56-83 Li.RC.(FdCW) SW D 20

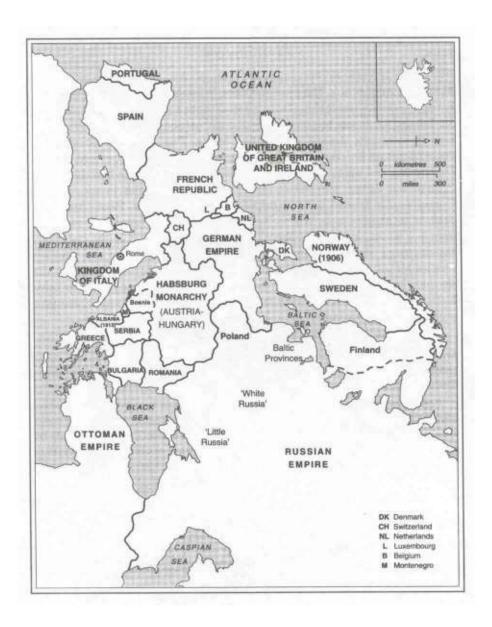
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Map of Europe in 1914 (N. Davies, 1997: 880).

ASSIGNMENT 9

HEART OF DARKNESS

In his *Modern Egypt* (1908), Lord Cromer gives the following account of the 'Oriental mind':

"The mind of the Oriental [..], like his picturesque streets, is eminently wanting in symmetry. His reasoning is of the most slipshod description. Although the ancient Arabs acquired in a somewhat higher degree the science of dialectics, their descendants are singularly deficient in the logical faculty. They are often incapable of drawing the most obvious conclusions from any simple premises of which they may admit the truth. Endeavor to elicit a plain statement of facts from any ordinary Egyptian. His explanation will generally be lengthy, and wanting in lucidity. He will probably contradict himself half-a-dozen times before he has finished his story. He will often break down under the mildest process of cross-examination." (quoted from: E. Said, *Orientalism*, p. 38)

This observation and the accompanying evaluation of the Oriental 'state of mind' could hardly come as a surprise to his audience. For example the readers of *Lectures pour tous*, a popular magazine, were already in 1901 instructed about the importance of French colonialism in Africa and Asia along the same lines:

"[..] in order to conquer those vast regions for civilization, where the most awful barbarity still reigns, we need an army of men, who are willing to suffer all adversities and to overcome all dangers for the benefit of the higher interests of humanity."

According to the author, these men (especially missionaries) have to face unbelievable atrocities in this "ocean of barbarity"; "slavery, human sacrifices and cannibalism" are still current practices among these uncivilized peoples. The French colonists are therefore "always in danger of torture and a hideous death". But that is "the price for the work of civilization they accomplish". (quoted from: d. Bertholet, *Le bourgeois dans tous ses états. Le roman familial de la Belle Époque*, Paris: Olivier Orban 1987, p. 280)

The Other does not conform to our standards of rationality, morals and respectability. Where he lives, there is *The Heart of Darkness*. This is the title of Joseph Conrad's famous novel of 1899 about a hallucinating voyage through the African jungle, where "civilized" norms and values do not count anymore. But "the heart of darkness" may also be found closer to home. In 1895 William Booth publishes his book *In Darkest England and the Way Out* about the conditions of the lower classes, living in the slums of London, who are described as England's own "barbarians", "savages" and "pygmees".

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Or p. 405-413 **Or** p.457-467

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G. Delanty

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Additional literature

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Times Atlas of World History, p. 150-151 (European expansion) and p. 152-153 (expansion). Li.RC.(FdCW)

ASSIGNMENT 10

THE DISENCHANTMENT OF THE WORLD

Around 1800 Weimar was the cultural center of Europe, where famous poets and philosophers—like Goethe, Schiller, Fichte and Hegel- lived. Just a few kilometers outside of town, however, one finds another European *lieu de mémoire*: the Naziconcentration camp Buchenwald. Weimar and Buchenwald represent not just German, but European events: the former reflects one of the highlights of European cultural achievement, the latter symbolizes the abyss into which European civilization fell during the 1930s and 1940s. Taken together, they show modernity's Janus face.

A few examples may illustrate this ambivalent character of modern civilization:

In his *Die Christenheit oder Europa* (1799) the Romantic poet Novalis critiques the Enlightenment. In his view, the *philosophes* have "emptied nature, the earth, human souls and sciences from poetry"; they have "destroyed every trace of the sacred, have made a mockery of all elevated events and people through their sarcasm, and have stripped the world of all its variegated adornments".

In his London exile, Karl Marx, author of *Das Kapital* (1867), accuses modern capitalism to condemn the majority of people to live and slave under inhuman conditions. He likens capitalist entrepreneurs to vampires who suck the blood out of their victims and turn them into living dead, a sort of robots who are alienated from themselves and have lost all control over their own lives.

- In his *Wissenschaft als Beruf* (1918-1919) Max Weber, writing in a much more sober fashion, arrives at a rather similar conclusion. Without making any judgment, the famous sociologist speaks about "the disenchantment of the world". Modern society is characterized by mechanization, bureaucratic efficiency, formal rules which tend to stifle individual freedom, and most of all by instrumental reason, which is only interested in the question of means and ends. Like Novalis before him, Weber seems to think of the modern world as a place that because of its cold rationality leaves hardly any room for a sense of magic and spirituality.
- Sigmund Freud's *Das Unbehagen in der Kultur* (1930) reveals yet another angle from which to contemplate modernity. Modern culture is characterized by its urge for self-control. But in order to control the self, modern man has to deny a part of his natural being. Civilization implies repression of primary urges like aggression and sexuality. Although Freud (in this respect a

representative of bourgeois culture) seems to think that civilization is worth the price, he still deems it necessary to warn for its dangers. For what is repressed may one day rise to the surface, unexpectedly and uncontrolled.

Literature

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S. Freud

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ASSIGNMENT 11

EUROPE: AN ANOMALY?

In his The Wealth and Poverty of Nations the American historian David Landes

has demonstrated that about 250 years ago the proportional difference in income

per head of the population between the richest and the poorest countries was about

5:1. At that time the difference between Europe and, for example, Eastern or

Southern Asia (China or India) was only 1.5 or 2 to 1. However, since then the

gap has widened dramatically. Nowadays, the gap separating the richest and the

poorest countries (say: Switzerland and Mozambique) is about 400:1.

Why are we so rich while they are so poor? Are we so clever while they are so

ignorant? Is it a matter of inborn qualities, as racial theorists during the nineteenth

century and the first half of the twentieth century thought? But if that were true,

how would one explain the fact that until the nineteenth century nobody could

have predicted that Europe (plus its American offspring) would become so rich

and powerful? Why not Africa, Australia or Latin America? Or, more relevant

perhaps, why not China? It was, at least until the sixteenth century, certainly one

of the most powerful and advanced societies, a marvel of civilization in the eyes

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of Europeans like Marco Polo. Or why not the Ottoman Empire, which even in the eighteenth century seemed to be a major competitor to Christian Europe?

Literature

S. Huntington

The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order, New York: Simon & Schuster 1997, p. 66-78. Li.RC.(FdCW) SW JC 930

D.S. Landes

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ASSIGNMENT 12

DOES EUROPE EXIST?

By way of a conclusion:

In 1999, in her annual speech to Parliament, the Dutch Queen Beatrix expressly stated that Europe is "our future". Just a few months later the German Minister of Foreign Affairs, Joschka Fischer, arrived at a similar conclusion: "Europe is the answer to all our questions."

However, there have been, and still are, many skeptics of Europe as well. In the 1970s the well-known French political scientist Raymond Aron argued that there were "no such animals as 'European citizens'". (quoted from: H. Mikkeli, *Europe as an Idea and an Identity*, London and Basingstoke: Macmillan Press 1998, p. 217)

More recently Anthony D. Smith, prominent writer about nation-building and nationalism, has tried to explain why. In 1992 Smith remarked:

"National identifications possess distinct advantages over the idea of a unified European identity. They are vivid, accessible, well established, long popularized, and still widely believed, in broad outline at least. In each of these respects, 'Europe' is deficient both as an idea and as a process. Above all, it lacks a pre-modern past – a 'prehistory' which can provide it with emotional sustenance and historical depth."

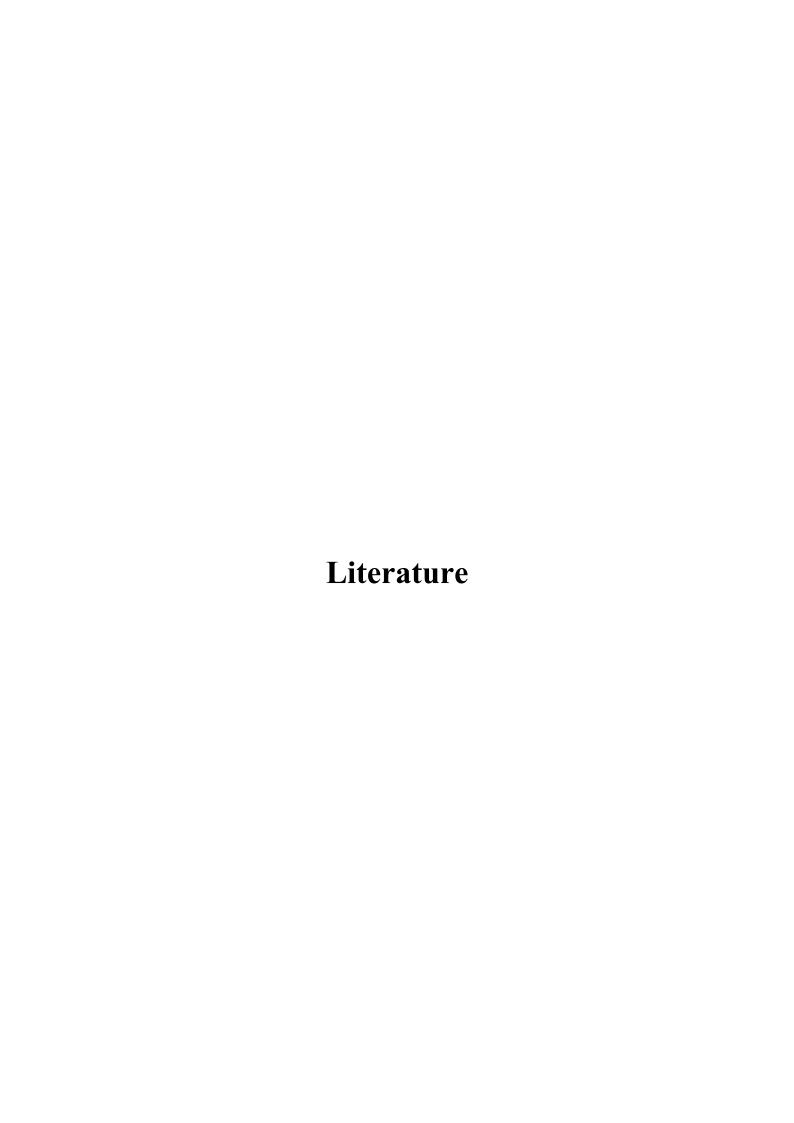
In 1996 Smith supplemented this argument with a rhetorical question. For who will, without such identifications – except perhaps for the reminders of recent holocausts and wars – "feel European in the depths of their being, and who will willingly sacrifice themselves for so abstract an ideal? In short, who will die for Europe?" (quoted from: H. Mikkeli, *Europe as an Idea and an Identity*, p. 220-221)

There are still others who do not so much doubt that Europe exists, but who claim that Europe is certainly not congruent with the European Union, which, as they submit, only exists as "Europe Ltd". In 1980, for instance, the British historian E.P. Thompson had only some derisive remarks about the slogan "Going to Europe":

"First, we are there already. Secondly, Europe is not that set of nations but includes Warsaw, Belgrade, Prague. Thirdly, the Market defines the diversity of European culture at its crassest level as a group of fat, rich nations feeding each other goodies. Fourth, it defines this introversial white bourgeois

nationalism as 'internationalism'." (quoted from: H. Mikkeli, *Europe as an Idea and an Identity*, p. 213)

In the end, the question remains whether much has really changed since 1980, whether we really have a clear idea of what Europe is, of whom it includes and whom it excludes, and whether such an idea is anything more than an invention.



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