

Europe's stories for young people

We, young and old, celebrate today the fiftieth anniversary of the European Union.

We, philosophers, normally begin our inquiries with the question of "what is?" What is that we now celebrate? What is the European Union? And, above all, what is Europe?

At the first approach the question can be answered easily. What is Europe, if not the stories told about Europe?

Many stories are told about Europe. And they are different ones. Some of these stories are irreconcilable with others. It is our impression even before retelling some of the major stories, that citizens of the European Unions will choose their tradition from among those stories, yet they will not choose, because they cannot choose all of them. The reading of the past stories and their appreciation will be selective. But even if today one does not choose all the stories, but one needs to remember all the significant ones not only for the sake of choice, but also for the sake of caution or rejection need we remember Europe's stories.

Many stories are told about Europe. Perhaps, you may say, because it is an old Continent. Yet there are also older continents without similar stories. China and India have many stories, yet Asia as such has none. Egypt has stories, yet Africa as such has none. More precisely, if they have stories, those were invented in Europe and by Europeans. Europe does not have so astonishingly many stories because it is the oldest continent, but it became Europe precisely because it has so many stories. Europe is simply a story telling continent, a continent, which has established its identity as a kind of autobiography but not because its geographic specificities, which are important, yet have not always suggested story telling, but because its historical specificities.

Once upon a time Europe had no stories at all. It was roughly since the Renaissance that Europe became the great story teller. It took time to embrace so many originally disconnected phenomena and include them into a common European history.

Several autobiographies of Europe have been written or grew out since the time of early Renaissance. I will say something about these stories in some details shortly. By now, I only enumerate them one story was about the Christian continent contrasted to non-Christian continents, another about the Occident contrasted to the against the Orient, another about the modern continent contrasted to the traditional one, again a story about the free continent contrasted against the despotic ones, another about the continent of white men contrasted to the continents of colored people, one story about the continent of science versus the continents of myths, one again about the colonizers against the colonized, and so on. As in all cases of identity construction, the identity of Europe has been constituted by contrasting "our": continent to the "others", to non Europe.

Are these identities pure fictions or do they have reality? It is difficult to tell these two entirely apart. Whenever an identity is constructed by stories, it is a fiction which is also reality as long as people believe in it, think according to it and behave in its spirit.

All people, all cultures have their myths. Blumenberg speaks also about the European narrative fictions as myths. According to Blumenberg the famous encounter between Napoleon and Goethe is one of the important European myths. I would challenge Blumenberg's understanding. This encounter is not a myth but mini story European stories about Europe are not myth above all, because the protagonists of the representative stories of Europe are conscious role players. They are conscious about that in this or that historical moment they are participating in a representative European story, that they, as actors, write one of the representative European stories. Even the two master narratives of Europe are not myths. European people had certainly their own myths, like the *Niebenungenlied* or the *Kalevala*, or that of the Knights of the Round Table, but they are not the European narratives, for they do not constitute the identity of Europe.

I mentioned master narratives, differentiating them from the identity constituting stories. Master narratives are the sources of imagination and points of reference to almost all identity stories. All people have master narratives. Europeans have, in addition, two shared master narratives. They are the Bible and the Greek-Roman historiography and philosophy. Neither of them can be called a myth. The Bible has invented uni-linear history in contrast to the cyclic Europe does not exist without the sharing the image of uni-linear history. True, in the Bible uni-linear history is also a history of redemption or grace. Europe may, sometimes, yet not always, secularize this story, but frequently it returns to it in the form of the image of redemptive history,

The Greek and the Roman history and philosophy are, as mentioned, the second most important European master narrative. The model of the republic, of the senate, of representation is Roman, and so is the Roman system of law. The model of democracy is Greek, and so is Athens also the model, of culture. Already in Rome cultivated were the persons who spoke Greek and were familiar with Greek drama and philosophy.

Machiavelli, the Florentine Machiavelli was, in all probability, the first representative European. The specificity of the European stories is, as I already mentioned, that they are man made, consciously man made. Since Machiavelli through Shakespeare myths as also legends had also been translated into the language of history. Machiavelli interpreted traditional stories rationally. And, indeed, European stories are rational stories; they become more and more rational stories. European stories are parts of the process Max Weber described as the “disenchantment of the world”.

Hegel’s grand narrative was perhaps the only universal story where the European real fiction became synthetic. The Hegelian grand narratives synthesized namely in one single fiction the economic, political and cultural reality. Since Hegel presented a grand narrative, he could avoid the dilemma of the irreconcilability of different stories. Yet if we reject the grand narratives, as nowadays basically all of us do, the irreconcilability of some stories will appear and selection will be necessary. All the European autobiographies cannot be incorporated by us I repeat only, that if not incorporated, all of them need to be remembered.

In what follows, I will discuss briefly, as I promised. Three decisive identity constituting narratives among the many autobiographies of Europe. One is based on the contrast between free and despotic, the second is based on the contrast between modern, scientific, rational, progressive on the one hand, and primitive, traditional, non rational on the other hand, this model is already a synthesis of several stories. The third is the model of negative identity, where Europe is identified by the Europeans themselves with the colonizer, aggressor, and exploiter, contrasted to the colonized, the victims, and the exploited.

I begin with the first story, because it is in fact the first. Europe, the West understands itself as the continent of freedom and contrast itself with the all the other continents, especially with Asia, and also with Egypt, as with the world of oriental despotism.

This is the oldest stereotype. We encounter it already in Aristotle’s Politics, where Aristotle praises the Greeks for embodying the union of two traditions. According Aristotle the Europeans love freedom, yet they are uncivilized, whereas the Asians are civilized, yet they do not care for freedom. The Hellens, however, love freedom and are at the same time also civilized. Interesting, that in Aristotle’s presentation the Greeks are not fully Europeans. While writing Europe’s story, different philosophers attribute different importance to one or the other aspect of Aristotle’s story. For Castoriadis, e.g. Freedom and Democracy are above all the great inventions of the Greek city state, while for Heidegger metaphysical thinking, that is philosophy, was their greatest invention.

Freedom versus despotism remains one of the fundamental European identity stories, although the interpretation of freedom assumes many variants and is also changing from Roman history Brutus and Cassius remain main heroes, yet so does Caesar. This is not astonishing, since Europe is also the cradle of the image of liberating dictatorship up to Napoleon. Yet, the dictatorship for Europe is not identical with oriental despotism, even if sometimes gets more bloody and cruel. Again, the image of the difference becomes real difference and vice versa.

. Europe, more precisely the West, has considered itself always the world of pluralism, contrasting the institutionalization of dual authority (pope and emperor) to Oriental caesaro/papism, even if religious intolerance and fanaticism was as vehement in the West as in the East. European nobility understood itself as free; moreover, free equality was the fundamental idea of European nobility. Medieval parliament constituted, that is institutionalized this freedom. With the emergence of Protestantism, although in some places, for example in Italy, far earlier, the extension of freedom is put on the agenda, and the interpretation of freedom acquires a double meaning. In one meaning, and this is the Biblical heritage, it means liberation, liberation from slavery, from serfdom on the other hand it means the constitution of liberties, following Roman and Greek models. Both will be soon interpreted in the sense of free practice of one's own religion, of the free use of national language.

From the times of Enlightenment and especially the French revolution, the concept of Europe or the West gets slowly identified with Western Europe. The liberating dictator Napoleon carried this message through all European countries. Since we are now in Rome, I mention the well known opera of Puccini, where the victory of Napoleon meant to victory of liberty for the revolutionary Cavaradossi.

Yet in the Napoleonic wars the story of liberation has already been intertwined with the second European story. I promised to interpret briefly; Europe is not just the continent of freedom, the home of freedom lovers, but also the repository of a new idea, the idea of progress, which also includes the progress in freedoms. Nowhere was the idea formulated, thought and developed than in Europe, that all men are born free. The sentence that all men are born free and they are endowed with certain rights by birth, plays from this time, the pivotal role in the European autobiography. This slogan, from the moment that it had been accepted as an idea by a considerable minority, became an effective fiction, which transformed European constitutions and became the fundament of the American one. It was effective, for the three waves of political emancipation - the emancipation of the Jews, the emancipation of the proletariat and the emancipation of women - were carried out by making the slogan effective. The idea appears also on the declaration of the United Nations, without becoming effective for the time being.

Let me turn briefly to the second European story. According to it Europe, it is developed, progressive, rational and modern. Orient is stagnating, primitive, traditional and irrational. There are several variants of the narrative in what follows I will simplify it.

Europe began to identify itself with the enumerated characteristics fairly late in time.

As the champion of Catholicism, Europe regarded itself since the 8/9 centuries always as the repository of the supreme truth, against Islam and Orthodox Christianity, not to mention pagans and Jews. Yet we cannot associate "eternal truth" with terms as modernity development or progress. Yet the Renaissance self-image of Europe already included the idea of progress and modernity was already, so much so that the ecumenical conception of universal Christianity, termed itself "devotio moderna". Erasmus, the champion of "devotio moderna" has been claimed also at the first champion of the European civilizing process by Norbert Elias. This was, indeed, an important turning point, since up to this time the Orient

remained still the model of high civilization, and Europe considered itself at least in this respect as inferior as against Byzantium, and later China. Through launching the so called civilizing process simultaneously with the development of the new sciences, and not much later the industrial revolution, Europe has slowly lost the last remnants of its inferiority feelings. The Orient remained the past, and received its place in the past of the so called world history already by Voltaire. The trade of Chinese vases and textiles continued to bloom but this had no more anything to do with the old inferiority feelings. Europe has the wealth, the money to buy. The progressive West was developing capital, middle class, huge industrial cities. The West was moved even more westward towards the United Colonies, not much later becoming the United States.

Progress in the modern sense includes expansion. One can expand in different territories and manners, and Europe tried out them all. The colonies of the 19 century differed essentially from the colonies of the 18 century. The little Europe became the master of almost the whole world. To be European, especially Western European meant in this time also membership in the white race which claimed right to rule the world. It became clear at this point, that two European narratives, the freedom narrative and the progress narrative can be interpreted in a way that the two interpretations become irreconcilable. Progress, in the European narrative is also about expansion. But expansion in freedoms contradicts the expansion in rule or might at least in this case.

We have already entered the Europe of different nations, the Europe of nationalisms. Nationalisms, both as centrifugal and centripetal powers within empires. The traditional story of pluralistic Europe assumes the form a story of a great variety of nations. A new story is born, and old one has been revised.

There is no more European culture, there are various national cultures.

There is no more European music, like the Gregorian, no more European architecture, like Romanesque or Gothic, no more European language of the learned, as the Latin. There is now French and English novel, Italian or German music, French, British and German philosophy. Still, there are thinkers and authors who withstand the power of the new story and still consider themselves first and foremost Europeans. For example Nietzsche, he identified himself with the European tradition of “free spirits” against nationalism, decadence and nihilism. At the beginning of the 20 century there emerged also a wave of cosmopolitanism. The cosmopolitans, as Romain Rolland, Albert Schweitzer or Stefan Zweig, understood themselves as Europeans. Yet after the Nazi occupation when Stefan Zweig applied for a British visa he was refused. It was then he discovered that the cosmopolitan idea remained ineffective. He said: as long as I had a valid Austrian passport in my pocket I was a European, the moment I have none, I become a refugee.

Yet Europe still existed as such in the second half of the 19 century and the beginning of the 20th century it as the Europe of the gold standard, of industrialization, of scientific discoveries, of social democracy of the free market, of one hundred years of European peace.

A Europe of peace was, indeed, a new story at that time, although it has been proposed earlier, e.g. in Kant’s writing on the perpetual peace. The idea of perpetual peace joined by the idea of cosmopolitanism, remained at that time, as we have seen already from the story of Stefan Zweig, a utopia of goodwill. But a new utopia, the preamble of a new European story. With WW1, the original sin of the 20th century, from where all the evils of this century originated put the end to all utopian hopes.

The story of Europe in the 20th century is a story of continuous nightmares. Europe went mad. It started to write stories of madness. These stories seemed to be entirely new, stories of total discontinuity to all the previous European autobiographies. Yet, this interpretation is self delusion. Europe went crazy, yet not without precedents, neither without preliminaries. The idea of progress yet also the idea of freedom initiated movements which did not know limits.

There was a delusion of grandeur in the air. Europe went mad through its own practice of crossing all the limits, through the constant, never ending uprooting of traditions, through the conviction that modern men can invent something entirely new at every moment, that one a man, a self/made man can replace the Messiah followed by everyone. The delusion of omnipotence mobilized by hatred against the “other” and creating murderous hatred against them, filled with concentration and death camps the body of the European continent. This was the Europe of Auschwitz and the Gulag. And this is also a European story, belongs to Europe’s autobiography. It needs to be kept in remembrance as the story of warning.

Let me turn now to the third representative European narrative. This is the story of negative self identification. Europe does not tell a story of its superiority, but a story of its inferiority, moreover, of its own crimes.

This third narrative was first created by European intellectuals, in fact by those who were regarded as the “conscience of Europe”, or started to trod in their footsteps. Although the story was attempted earlier, it came forceful after WW II. In the wake of decolonisation on the one hand, and by losing the pride of a “freedom loving Europe” on the other hand.

This story has also several branches. According to the story told in one of its branches, the development of technology, modernization, even democracy, leads to nihilism, to the loss of independent thinking. What is called progress is verily the manifestation of decadence, decline. According to this branch of the third story, Auschwitz and the Gulag result from progress. According to another branch, modernity destroys traditional cultures and offers nothing but hunger and devastation. Instead of increasing freedom Europe expands the does the division of labor and makes us all slaves.

The new third version of European stories is interesting not just because it coins a new fiction for Europeans, but because it simultaneously offers the same fiction to the “others”. Moreover, the “others” use the European fiction for creating their own identity and coin the image of the other as “the European” Sartre’s preface to Fanon’s book represents this fiction fully.

This story has then several sub branches such as a kind of cultural relativism, putting a premium on difference against universalism. And here I stop to tell stories about stories.

I started this lecture with raising the philosophical question about Europe’s identity. The “what is” question I gave a preliminary answer first: Europe is the histories told about Europe. Following up this line of presentation, I started to describe a few European fictions, especially those fictions which strongly determined Europe’s identity at least during the last five hundred years. But by describing those fictions, I have not answered the question what Europe is, rather the question what Europe was. For the story writing continues. In the present and is going to be continued in the future

To explain myself in a little pathetic manner, the question which I would like to raise with you today is not whether there existed Europe a such, but whether it is about to exist. Europe existed, since it has several stories, sympathetic and abhorrent ones alike. Whether there will be Europe depends on the question you are going to raise, the youth of Europe today you will invent new stories, based or not based on the old ones, Europe will be identical with the stories you are going to write. Your fictions, especially your effective fictions, that is fictions you are ready and willing to act upon, will be the Europe of tomorrow. And today is already tomorrow.

To put it bluntly, it depends on you, who are gathered together in this room, on my who are now my audience, whether there will be Europe in the future or not, and which kind of Europe that will be.

I do not know what your new European story will be; only what I would prefer. Yet, I guess what it cannot be.

Your new story cannot be anymore the story of progress, technological development and not even the story of modernity. For by now the whole world became modern or is about to become modern. Modernity, technological development or sciences are no more the differentia specifica of the European subcontinent. One teaches the same physics in all the universities of the world as one uses the same cell phones or tv sets. Moreover, in the contemporary art museums one can hardly notice any difference between installations made in Europe or made in Africa, between Japanese or Hungarian music. There is a cosmo polis in high arts as there is also a cosmo polis in the world of entertainment. .

One of the dominating European narratives remained, however, in want of constant interpretation, defense and elaboration. It remained a burning issue and demands continuous defense and innovation. This is the freedom narrative whichever form it now takes. Europe's first narrative was the freedom narrative. It was several times distorted, abused and belittled. The freedom narrative is the story citizens of the European Union should never abandon.

At that time of the Treaty of Rome, fifty years ago, Europe was still divided between democracies and dictatorships, even totalitarian dictatorships. Those states which entered the treaty committed themselves to the democratic order. And all nations which join the treaty since do the same. Moreover, 50 years ago, an old European utopia, which has never been effective up today, became for the first time, at least among the partners of the treaty, effective. This is the idea of peace.

Europe has always been a warring continent. French and English, English and Germans, French and Germans, Catholics and Protestants could not share the same continent without fighting. The treaty of Rome, which created the European Union, was already a commitment for the European peace.

Yet there is not necessary harmony between the freedom narrative and the peace narrative. Because, as you may know, they can require two irreconcilable commitments. There is peace within the European Union. Yet, there is no peace in the world. And, until yesterday, there were still wars in Europe and there can also be other wars in the future. The youth who is going to write the European fictions in the future, needs to be conscious about some eventuality of grave importance. Namely, that there can come to a value choice between freedom and peace. To a general value choice on the one hand, and to pragmatic, contextual choice on the other hand. As someone who lived in a dictatorship and survived two totalitarian regimes before having the first experience in democracy, I dare to give you one single advice. Give preference always to freedom in case of value collisions irrespective of the context. Following this advice may lead temporarily to unfavorable consequences, yet not to fatal ones, whereas choice to the opposite can prove fatal.

The future stories of Europe will be written by the citizens of Europe, surely under certain given circumstances. Those circumstances can partly follow from the previous choices of European citizens. After all, it is still true, that if the fathers eat sour grapes, the teeth of their sons will be set on edge. If you choose other values, than freedom in case of an either or, your children will be confronted by the consequences.

True, the circumstance of your choices and actions in general can be also independent from your fathers' choices and actions. Europe belongs to the world, and must answer to the challenges of the world. And we live in an age where everything that happens even in a remote part of our globe influences the lives and the choices of the European citizen. And, perhaps, European citizens can influence the course of events in a remote part of our globe. This is a new kind of responsibility, a kind of enlarged responsibility, which can be termed "planetarian" responsibility"

For example, although totalitarianism has disappeared from Europe, it has not disappeared from the world. It is an ever present mortal danger. There are only two typically modern political institutions, ways of rule or domination: liberal democracy and totalitarianism. Totalitarianisms are constituted by totalitarian parties and guided by totalitarian ideologies. These two political formations, two kinds of rule, namely totalitarianism and liberal democracy are each others mortal enemies. Totalitarian ideologues know this very well yet citizens of liberal democracy sometimes forget it. The world has always been a dangerous place. It is still a dangerous place and will remain so. The European Union defends its own citizens against dangers within Europe, and it will not create dangers for other continents. But the European Union cannot prevent the emergence of totalitarian states or empires which also threaten them. This should not be forgotten.

Political history does not develop alongside laws. There are several entirely contingent factors which can change the political climate to the worse or to the better, yet precisely because these factors are contingent they cannot be foreseen, one cannot prepare oneself for contingencies.

It is also for situations resulting from of unforeseeable contingencies that I would recommend that you let yourself be guided rather by certain values, than rely upon ad hoc pragmatic choices. Yet sticking to values or to ideas has nothing to do with being committed to ideologies. To rely upon an ideology is as dangerous as sticking just to pragmatic decisions. Being committed to an ideology resembles to making a package deal. In case of a package deal one has to buy everything included in the packages. If someone is guided by an ideology, the situation will be similar. One has to take everything that belongs to the ideological core. All facts will be interpreted by the application of a ready-made frame. If someone is guided by an ideology, one will lose the capacity to think with one's own mind and, simultaneously think also from the perspective of the other, finally to think consistently. Immanuel Kant described three maxims as the maxims of common understanding: think with your own mind, think from the position of the other and think consistently. Ideologies of any kind prevent our mind to follow those maxims of common understanding. Think in the spirit of those maxims. This is all, that I based on my experiences, learning from my own mistakes, might propose to you.

In what follows, I will briefly enumerate a few problems you will be, in all probability, confronted with.

To avoid misunderstanding. I will not enumerate problems that you, the young citizens of Europe, are about to solve. Life is not a problem, which can be solved. Really important, serious conflicts are like life: they cannot be solved, because they have an inbuilt paradoxical or at least antagonistic aspect. But even if not solved, they can be treated, tackled, in order to prevent catastrophes. I will speak solely about contradictions, occasionally developing into paradoxes, for those are the most difficult ones to tackle.

First, the question of the relation between center and periphery.

The European Union is atypical Empire. Why Empire and why atypical? It is an empire like similar in many aspects to the European empires before WW1. At that time almost the whole European subcontinent was ruled by empires, such as the Ottoman, the British, the Habsburg, the German empire. And even Holland, Portugal, Spain, Italy and France had colonies, and insofar they were colonizing they could also be termed empires. Those empires had an advance as against the nation states established after the process of secession. Namely, an empire has an economic weight far greater than the sum total of the economic power of the composing nations. An empire is a big body composed of different nations and people who speak different languages and who cherish different traditions. And this a great advantage as against unrelated, independent, yet suspicious and sometimes even hostile nation states. Similar is the case in the European Union.

Yet there is an essential difference. Contrary to the old European empires, in the European Union no single state occupies a privileged place, there is no official language, and instead of an emperor there are central democratic institutions. This is an entirely new invention. In fact, modernity allows inventing entirely new institutions, forms of integration and of rule. I already mentioned that both liberal democracy and totalitarianism are entirely new invention. Liberal democracy, as a new form of rule replaced old republics on the one hand and liberal monarchies on the other hands, totalitarianism replaced military dictatorships and despotism, and the European Union as a new formation replaced the old European Empires. It is very likely, that if liberal democracy expands, similar Unions can be established in other continents as well.

Yet there are a few problems to face, not entirely different ones from the problems the old European empires have faced. There is still, or at least can be, a conflict between the center and the periphery, because, just like in the case of most of the old European empires, the center is richer than the periphery. In addition the European Union shares an important tendency with traditional empires, namely that territorial and economic expansion is its life element. And the more it expands, the more the center-periphery distinction gains in importance. There is, certainly, institutionalized redistribution. But no institutionalized redistribution can close the economic gap. This economic tension can, in the future, appear in the form of political tensions, to the increase of radical movements, of populism both in the center and the periphery.

Belonging to the same Union requires integration. All member states need to be integrated in the whole. Populist movements interpret integration as if it would be a process of assimilation. And the tendency of assimilation is usually followed by the counter tendency of dissimilation. Assimilation is phony, dissimilation is disruptive.

I said at the beginning of this section, that the European Union is an atypical empire, for it has replaced the European Empires. It is a Union where the member states have equal standing, and where they remain independent nation states even if with a kind of self restricted sovereignty. The difficulty to devise and to accept a constitution binding for all member states with their own constitutions is a default resulting from a merit.

And second, the European Union is an atypical empire, because it has no army. And empire without an army is defenseless, for it must rely only upon its economic power or the military power of others. This problem needs to be tackled by the next generation. And it is not an easy one. If Europe develops military might of its own, it will be far more ready and able to withstand blackmail. Yet then it needs to sacrifice one part of its wealth. The conflict between freedom and welfare will appear, in all probability, on the horizon of the Union in your lifetime. But even without facing this issue, no integration can be secured by economic advantages alone. Those advantages as they come can also go.

But even if the conflict between freedom and welfare is a matter of the future, another conflict has already appeared on the European horizon. This is the conflict between welfare and planetarian responsibility. By "welfare" I do not mean solely economic well being in this case, yet also the right to a conduct of life without imagined or real threat.

I mentioned the problem of integration versus assimilation in case of the relation of the member states, the states in the center and the states on the periphery I now turn to the same problem within the member states.

When I mentioned the issue of the constitution, I said that the difficulty to come into agreement has to do with the independent nation state status of the member states, that this debit is a credit. But this credit is also a debit in another relation. Nation states have serious difficulties with integration. I mean with the integration of people coming from other continents to a European nation state for economic reasons or as asylum seekers Europeans have a planetarian responsibility, they have to offer at least some of them a place under the

sun. Yet Europeans, at least the majority of them fear for their well being, they have a right to their ways of life they feel threatened.

This is not a new issue Nation states are in general very bad at integrating members of other cultures. They do not accept the “stranger” but on the condition of full assimilation the stranger can receive citizen rights, but is not accepted by society, discrimination is spontaneous and also organized, anyhow rampant .The case of the emancipation of the Jews has been a typical case in the 19th century. The host nation required from them total assimilation not just to take up the life style, language, mannerisms and religion of the host nation, but to forget entirely their own. This is an imposed and self imposed, still a psychologically impossible task, which can result only in character distortion, for example in the case of the parvenu type. There exist is no unforced assimilation, only integration can be freely chosen. Forced assimilation leads normally to dissimilation. Thus centrifugal and centripetal forces alternate. This is even the case when the member countries are essentially different in cultures, traditions, languages, without ever having created a nation state. The dissolution of the Hellenistic Empire through centripetal forces shows this clearly.

I mentioned the European past only to make my claim. In a Union where the member states are not nation states like in the Unites States or in Australia, it is far easier to tackle this problem, after discovering and facing it, than in a Union of nation states.

Integration means from the perspective of the immigrants to accept and to follow the house rules, which include not just the law, but also social rules and the knowledge of the language of the host nation - in the USA not even the latter but I do not consider this a good thing . Integration means from the aspect the host nation, to provide equal opportunity to the newcomers and accept their difference.

It is a fact, that difference makes people afraid because it endangers their belief and confidence in their own lifestyle, in their own concept of right, good and true integration, that accepts difference means that everything that is, could also be different. The fear of relativism is an existential fear, where the word “existential” is used in another interpretation. How can this fear treated, socially or even politically?

I used the term “political”, because, at least in nation states with an actual problem of immigration, radical movements, especially populist movements, play on the strings of these existential fears. As they also play on the strings of the fear in case of all the other kinds of difference. Blaming scapegoats, canalizing life problems into hatred and resentment against the other are the oldest trick of humankind. Because it is the oldest it is also the newest. I repeat, that I do no tell you that you should solve an insoluble problem, but that your responsibility will be to tackle it to the point a lasting, albeit always temporary reconciliation. The loss of positions and economic advantage is another existential fear.

I want briefly mention three other issues which are in waiting to be included into a few new European narratives. More precisely, these are stories I am afraid of, and I now want you to share my hope that they will not become effective though your actions

The first issue is anti-Americanism. It seems to me that lately some Europeans -and they are many - want to create and reinforce European identity by a forceful anti-American rhetoric and sentiments. It is not about the critique of president Busch that I am speaking, but about the one sided and emotional rejection of America, which started already in the eighties in the so called peace movements, where European youth defended the Soviet Union, directly or indirectly, against the Unites States. Some Europeans, and they are many, begin to forget, that Europe went down to its knees before the United States twice to rescue them from totalitarianism, first from Hitler, later from Stalin, and they did it twice. You can say, that it was also their interest. Surely, all states are cold blooded animals, as Nietzsche once said, they are not altruists. Yet, without the military and economic help of America, there would be today no European Union. The United States is the sole traditional democracy of the world.

We can learn from them that democracy is difficult and sometimes violent but can always rejuvenated from within. And it is not a minor point, that anti-Americanism at least in its extremely emotional expressions, is often the side effect of anti-Semitism, given that the United States support Israel.

My second fear is slightly connected to the first. Americans are, perhaps, narrow minded, yet they believe in freedom and democracy. It is easily understandable that after the decades of real and forced enthusiasm required by totalitarian institutions, Europeans get sick of believes, became skeptics and sometimes even cynical. There is a European tradition to turn always to the central authorities asking them to put the wrong right. Paternalism and the support for paternalism are always the signs of shortcoming in democratic mentality. Simultaneously with expecting everything from state-father or mother, many Europeans, young people included, turn away from politics, share the prejudice that this is a lowly profession and that all politicians are either stupid or corrupt or at least power seekers. The relation to the political class, to the state, truly resembles the relation to a weak yet autocratic parent. One expects everything from them, but despises them.

Politicians are in average not worse than doctors, teachers or chimney sweepers, neither are they better, they are just like them. They have to perform their task well, and if they do it, they deserve praise and confidence, but not love. Only tyrants and dictators ask for being loved. And as far as power is concerned, we are all power seekers. Without being empowered to do something one can do nothing, achieve nothing, one remains impotent. Bacon was right, when he said that knowledge is power. Every student seeks knowledge, thus she seeks power. There is “power for” and “power against” something. Yet even “power for” requires sometimes using power “against”. After all, we are all the heirs of the French Enlightenment. One can well employ one’s power if one has at least some conviction, I repeat, not ideology, but conviction. There is no European Union without European citizens who believe that it is a good thing to be the member of this Union, to have it, who care for it, take responsibility for it, desire to empower it. No democratic citizen without democratic mentality.

Now I turn to my third and last fear.

Who were writing the stories about Europe? Who invented the many narratives which have established and still do establish European identity? Chroniclers, historians, philosophers, writers, painters, sculptor, journalists, movie directors, poets, theologians. Technology does not invent images, natural sciences, that is sciences proper, are not concerned about the question of who we are. Whether there will be new European narratives, whether the old ones will be recollected, modified, challenged, depends on the importance or the very existence of the story tellers. Without stories told about Europe there is no Europe. Without stories been told in the future, Europe will not exist in the future. The continent yes, the Union perhaps, a piece of land without spirit, an institution without spirit.

The predictions of the most significant European philosophers was rather gloomy. They predicted that instrumental reason; the spirit of technology will not destroy, but transform the spirit of Europe. Problem solving will replace story telling. Until yesterday, European intellectuals influenced public opinion, politics, and mentality. This was the great advantage of Europe as against America. Europe had its cultural elite and cherished it.

A cultural elite is different from professional elite. A professional elite is subjected to the division of labor, and there is nothing wrong in it. Specialization is the condition of good results. Yet a cultural elite is not about specialization, even if its members can also be specialists. It is about democratic mentality, yet also about the breath of interest, about the readiness for reflection, for disinterested conversation, for public intervention

Is this still the case? Is there still cultural elite in Europe? Is it in the state of disappearing, or, perhaps, is it in making? You would say that a cultural elite is the remnant of

a social elite, antidemocratic, a kind of luxury. I do not deny that it is luxury. So are the flower pots, so is poetry, even emotional love. Who would like to live without luxury? Yet this is not what I wanted to say when I raised this, last, issue. There is no democracy without a cultural elite, as there are no stories told without it.

My prediction is, however, not gloomy. Modernity survives by being supported by two kinds of imagination: technological imagination and historical imagination. I do not believe in the demise of either of them,

But it is up to you, the youth of the European Union to refute the gloomy predictions and to give a further chance for hope by continuing to write the stories of Europe and maintain thereby our European culture, heritage by changing it.