THE EUROPEAN IDENTITY

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Abstract: European identity is not only a scientifically interesting question, but also a politically important issue: in fact, sixty years after the signing of the Treaty of Rome, the European Union finds itself for the first time facing risks that threaten its own existence. The European Union is a limited and incomplete project because Europe's economic integration has not been accompanied by a genuine supranational political union and greater cultural integration. The deficit of democratic representation and cultural integration is due to the fact that the community process is based only on economic rationality and not on a feeling of common belonging. In the current situation in which the Union faces difficult challenges which threaten to undermine the future, it necessary to affirm the policy of interests with a policy of identity. In this essay, we will first concentrate on the concept of identity – that is on the nucleus of values and common institutions –; then we will discuss how the European identity has changed over time (also in relation to national identities) and what are the mechanisms that may favour its taking root in the current situation. The European project of political unification needs to be re-emphasized, finding the way to a European collective identity, not contrasted with but alongside the different national identities, referring to loyalty and shared commitment to a whole collection of cultural values: fundamental human rights, civil liberties, democratic political institutions, rule of law, freedom of movement of people, goods and capital, social justice and non-violent resolution of conflicts.

Keywords: Europe, Identity, *koinè*, Cultural Integration, Political Unification.

PREFACE

Does a supranational economic and political entity such as the European Union possess a recognizable identity? And if this identity indeed does exist, what are its distinctive features? Has it changed over time? How does it differentiate itself from the identities of other European citizens and in particular from their national identity? This not only deals with scientifically interesting questions that are complex and controversial but also politically relevant because today, sixty years after the signing of the Treaty of Rome, the European Union finds itself for the first time facing risks that threaten its own existence. There is a strong need for Europeans to recognize themselves within a set of shared values, institutions, and common living standards that legitimize common institutions.

First of all, the difference between concepts of collective identity and identification must be clarified. The concept of identification defines a set of individual attitudes of a cognitive

nature – both emotional and evaluative – having to do with belonging to a community, the sharing of a common destiny and of consequent behaviours of loyalty, trust and solidarity. On the contrary, the concept of identity refers to an aggregating and motivating nucleus of values, symbols and meanings that translate into norms of coexistence, political and social institutions as well as life practices (Smith 1991). Identification consists of subjective dispositions and people's behaviours. Collective identity is a social fact connected to institutional realities. The identity of a group of people is the result of a genetic process of shared values that become symbolic-cultural factors of aggregation (*mitopoiesis*). It has to do with values and institutions codified within the democratic constitutions that also sometimes may not be immediately manifest. The two concepts are linked in the way that the contents of identity are at the basis of the process of identification. They delineate the borders between those who belong and those who do not belong to the community, influencing others' perception, while the way and degree in which the members of a community recognize them modifies the content itself. Another way to define the two concepts is to distinguish between the subjects (who identifies you and with whom you identify with) and the objects or content of the identification (values, meanings, symbols, norms, institutions) that permit us to define who we are. A large part of empirical research on the European collective identity are of the first type and examine whether, to what extent and for what reasons European citizens identify themselves with the European Union as a community or with Europeans in general. But there are also contributions that, like this, examine the substance of European collective identity, deducing it from philosophical arguments (the inheritance from the Enlightenment), historical and sociological studies (on modernization), normative principles of constitutions, but also analysis of the content of the elite's discourse, produced by popular culture and by both the traditional and digital mass media. In this essay we will first concentrate on the concept of identity as we have defined it, that is, on the nucleus of values and common institutions, then we will discuss how the European identity has changed over time (also in relation to national identities) and what are the mechanisms that may favour its taking root in the current situation.

The study of the European identity has become one of the most widespread fields of research from Fifth Framework Program for research and technological development in the

EU, promoting an growing body of research on vastly differing topics, from heritage and the cultural conflict to linguistic diversity, from national museums to artistic festivals, from European institutions to the European public sphere, from the relationship between media and citizenship to the interaction between national identity and European identity. This research has produced a multiplicity of publications, policy reviews, conferences and has provoked interesting debates of theoretical nature and methodology in the context of different disciplines (sociology, political science, social psychology, contemporary history, political philosophy, comparative law), improving our knowledge of the phenomenon but leaving a series questions unresolved.

The question of European identity is, in fact, scientifically interesting, complex and controversial not only for the multiplicity of interpretations which give rise to the phenomenon but also for three fundamental reasons: first of all, because through the centuries Europe has been an open and multiform world in which diverse cultural identities have crossed and compared themselves and the unifying ties: the reason for which many consider it more appropriate to speak in plural terms when speaking of European identity. Second, because, even as a result of this, only some of the constituent elements of a people's collective identity are present in the case of European identity. It shows that neither a European *demos* nor a unique historical memory exists. From the moment it is not possible to transform the mythical and celebratory epic into an experience of shared events – the military victories of one are the defeats of others, Austerlitz is celebrated in Paris, Trafalgar is celebrated in London. Neither a common language transfigured in value (as in the case of *koinè* Greek) nor a network of relationships of kinship, lineage and race (mixed marriages are still a minority, even though growing, and only a small percentage of European families are related across national borders). Third, because European culture has become an integral part of the culture of modernity, progressively permeating the whole world and producing, even in a multiplicity of different forms, a global modern condition: one which leads some scholars to think that today it is difficult, or even impossible, to identify a European specificity.

Concerning the first objection, I note that the variety of cultural codes and the plurality of paths towards and through the modernity of European peoples does not prevent recognition of the existence of certain cultural values and attitudes

(distinctly European from a distant past) but are crystallized into a specific regulatory nucleus with the advent of modernity, producing profound structural transformations and bold institutional innovation. The recognition of distinctive traits and common roots does not, however, mean that they constitute an almost unchanging primeval nucleus, and that the development of European culture has been a homogeneous and continuous process, without fractures and critical junctions (Rossi 2007).

With regard to the second objection, it must be remembered that citizens of member countries of the European Union share a common historical memory that is not only divisive – in the sense of belonging to the same civilization, characterized by the same historical processes and events – even if it is true that the epic transformation of most of these is not possible. I also observe that the absence of a single common language becomes one of the symbolic elements of greater aggregate value, but it does not prevent the formation of a European cultural *koinè* and does not constitute an insurmountable obstacle to the interplay of daily interaction and communication between the inhabitants of various European states. The conscious renunciation of linguistic homogeneity is therefore justified as the price to pay if they want to affirm cultural diversity and the conservation of the extraordinary mosaic of languages and culture of the European continent as the European Union's founding values. Comparative social-historical research shows that the collective identity of a people can be very strong even with the absence of ethnic-cultural homogeneity historically acquired ask in the case of the United States of America. What does not exist and what cannot exist is a Europa nation; but what can exist is a European federation of peoples and different states.

Concerning the third objection, I note the fact that European and occidental origins of modern civilization and its progressive spread to other regions of the world with the end to configure a modern global condition does not imply at all that every process of modernization must inevitably proceed towards a unique cognitive structure (scientific rationalism, instrumental pragmatism, secularism) and identical institutional structures (a certain kind of economic, government and administration structure). What we really see is the development of multiple modernities (or variants of modernity) or of changing cultural and institutional forms that are influenced by the variety of specific contexts in which the modern project is

constantly interpreted, reinterpreted and transformed, also in response to challenges, threats and opportunities deriving from the distinctive features of Western modernity (Martinelli 2010).

European identity is not only a scientifically interesting question, but also a politically important issue. The European Union is a limited and incomplete project because Europe's economic integration has not been accompanied by a genuine supranational political union and a greater cultural integration. The deficit of democratic representation and cultural integration is due to the fact that the community process is based only on economic rationality and not on a feeling of common belonging. It is therefore necessary to affirm the policy of interests with a policy of identity, in the current situation in which the Union faces difficult challenges that undermine the future.

These are the theses that I will discuss in this chapter, reasoning in particular on the following six aspects: *a*) The diverse identities of the European peoples coexist with a common European identity that is the result of a long historical legacy of common cultural roots (Greek philosophy, Roman law, Jewish and Christian religious traditions, Renaissance civilization) and consists of a nucleus of specific cultural attitudes organized around the dialectical relationship between rationality and individualism/subjectivity. These common roots are long-lasting European features but crystallized in the specific historical context of modernity and the culture of the Enlightenment, producing fundamental institutional innovations: market economy and industrial capitalism, representative liberal democracy, nation-states, research universities. In this perspective, the European Union's construction project is still a modern project. Far from being completed, it is an expression of radical modernity, which imagines modernity as a future-oriented, better than the present and the past (Habermas 1985). The development of European identity and culture has not been a homogeneous and continuous process, without fractures and critical junctures, but a constantly changing process that has evolved into heterogeneous manifestations in the various national and local contexts, in a dialectical relationship with the different national identities.

b) A common European identity, while referring to a shared memory, is not the passive preservation of past ideals, but is the active implementation of an open, dynamic project, powered daily by "spontaneous" integration processes "from

below" even more than by the deliberate action of the institutions from above. The European project came from the decision to put an end to European civil wars and the perception of common economic interests, but to achieve it requires the strengthening of values, cultural attitudes, specific institutions, political and economic freedom, constitutional democracy, rule of law, scientific rationality, and a welfare state.

c) The core values and institutions of identity has not materially changed over time, but both the significance attributed to them in the process of political integration and the intensity of identification of European citizens have changed.

d) The European project is an ambitious project because it proposes to build unity through diversity, confuting solid beliefs that what is different is intrinsically hostile and that identity can only be built on the contrast between "us" and "them". European identity is not exclusive, it may seem weaker than traditional national identities, but is certainly more suited to the characteristics of democratic governance in a globalized world: mutual understanding and respect, multilateral cooperation and peaceful international relations.

e) The difficulty encountered by the development of a European identity is witnessed by the impetuous rise of nationalism, fuelled by the intertwining of the economic-financial crisis, the refugee emergency and terrorism and are due to two contradictions in the integration process: the project of building a supranational union using national states as constituent elements, the illusion of ending connected nationalisms and the transfer of increasing portions of national sovereignty from the state to the supranational level without a corresponding transfer of commitment and loyalty from the citizens of different member countries to the institutions of a supranational community that is in the process of evolution.

f) The widespread insecurity arising from the entanglement of crises makes it all the more necessary to reaffirm the reasons for cooperation between the peoples and states of Europe and the values and institutions of a European identity as a synthesis of multiple identities of European citizens. To this end, multifaceted experiences of interdependence and coexistence must accompany reforms that improve the quality of European democracy and to make effective identity techniques.

EUROPEAN IDENTITY: ONE AND MULTIPLE

Throughout the course of the millenary history of European peoples, many different collective identities developed which were fuelled and codified in the process of building nation-states, interacting with a wide range of other identities: sub-national, transnational, ethnic, religious and class. This multiplicity of identity cultures was the source of fractures, conflicts, idiosyncratic controversies and even serious crimes and errors, but also showed a remarkable ability to assimilate, integrate and create extraordinary opportunities for scientific and technical progress, economic growth as well as social and cultural innovation. European civilization has been characterized by the intersection and intertwining of different cultural attitudes and institutional arrangements, but also by a strong orientation both of city-centres and suburbs towards common goals and ideals (including the fundamental autonomy and responsibility of the individual and the tension between worldly and transcendent order); has created an open and plural society that constantly questions its beliefs and ties: a great social laboratory in which unity and multiplicity interact in a continuous tension between antinomies and deep contrasts. Distinctive aspects of European identity are the constant dialectics between different and often conflicting *Weltanschauungen* and the development of critical thinking that constantly challenges the dominant mode of thinking and forms the basis of European scientific thought.

The attempt to define European identity today must start from the critical interpretation of the great historical processes that created modern Europe, analysing the dialectic between change and persistence and the alternation of openings to other worlds and closures within their own geographic and ethnic borders, reconstructing the sequence of struggles, first of all between the supranational entities of the pope and the emperor, and the national and local entities such as the city republics and the nascent sovereign states, and then among the various national states that clash with continental political hegemony, examining the great fractures between centre and periphery, state and church, city and country, bourgeoisie and proletariat along the troubled path towards and through modernity (outlined in the geo-political map of Rokkan 1970). From historical recognition, it is clear that contemporary Europe is a Europe of difference and diversity and that its distinctive character is the extraordinary complexity of the cultural heritage,

where different realities coexist in both cooperative and conflictual forms (trade and war) without losing their specificity. The values and attitudes of European culture have nourished and have been fed by a relatively open and autonomous social structure characterized by a multiplicity of elites, classes, ethnic, religious and political entities with defined boundaries and constant redefinition, frequent interactions between the centre and suburbs, a high degree of social mobility, a legal system relatively independent from politics and religion as well as highly autonomous cities (Eisenstadt 1987).

Recognizing this European peculiarity allows us to avoid two opposing and equally unsatisfactory positions: on the one hand, the precise definition of a list of exclusively European consolidated cultural elements that would distinguish us from all other peoples; on the other hand, the denial of any common cultural trait and the connotation of a European identity only in negative terms, as a permanent conflict and a confused crossroads of ethnic, local and national identities.

In the new Europe, the plurality of identity cultures, which has for centuries contributed to a semi-permanent state of war, can now be considered a common good and a fundamental resource for the development of a peaceful and prosperous, pacifically diversified community within itself and yet also open to the outside. Intertwined with the different national identities, however, there is a core of shared elements, traceable in varying degrees and forms to the various regions of Europe, constantly altered and differently inclined in the different historical and geopolitical contingencies that connote a specific collective identity. I have thoroughly analysed these elements of an institutional and cultural nature in the book *Transatlantic Divide* (2007), whose essential aspects I will discuss here.

RATIONALISM AND INDIVIDUALISM

The fundamental value of European and Western identity can be identified in the constant tension between rationalism and individualism/subjectivity, considered as opposing and complementary principles at the same time. These two principles have characterized the whole of European history but have coagulated in a specific set of cultural orientations and institutional arrangements only with the advent of modernity. They express the tension between individual freedom and so-

cial organization, desire for autonomy and a need for security, and have created the specific modern attitude of the European identity that consists of the constant effort to free itself from constraints and to overcome its internal and external boundaries (D'Andrea 2001). We can generally define rationalism as the ability of the human mind to know, control and transform nature (according to a conception of the world as an environment that can be shaped to meet human needs and desires) and individualism as a legitimate aspiration to self-realization, responsible autonomy, and reflexivity, such as the confidence of humans in their ability to pursue their own ends and ultimately to be the creators of their own destiny.

Rationalism manifested itself in Europe in a variety of different forms: from Romanesque architecture to Renaissance painting, from Descartes' philosophy to the music of Bach, from the concept of the democratic citizen of the Enlightenment to the postulate of *homo oeconomicus* of classical economic theory. With its confidence in the power of reason to control and transform nature, European and Western rationalism has been the terrain for cultivating scientific and geographic discoveries as well as technological and entrepreneurial innovations. Confidence in reason is closely linked to the perception of the absence of limits, to that particular restlessness of the Europeans, symbolized by the paradigmatic figures of the Danteque Ulysses and the Goethian Faust, and is exemplified by so many events in European and Western history, from transoceanic travels to colonial adventures, to the "American spirit of the frontier".

The value of knowledge, present in both ancient and modern civilizations of the various regions of the world, has received a special impetus from European modernity, where knowledge has been freed from its subordination to a given religious truth or for a specific political goal. The incessant search for the unknown is the product of the critical mind, which originates from the *ethos* of Greek philosophy and has developed into modern philosophical criticism, in particular that of the Enlightenment. The development of science is linked to the enthralling force of technology and capitalism which is in turn linked to the belief in progress. European modernity was the era of Shelley's *Prometheus Unbound*, which expresses the absence of ethical and religious limits in the technical dominion of nature. Capitalism is a mode of production based on technical instrumentation and economic

rationality which are both necessary to compete successfully in the market.

Reason, on the other hand, was also conceived as a system of shared rules that makes coexistence possible in society. Kant did not write an apology of reason, but an investigation of its limits. The rational mind is strong only if it is aware of its limits, if it does not pretend to know the absolute truth, but paves the way for relentless pursuit. In this sense reason is intrinsically anti-totalitarian and directly related to the individual's freedom.

Rationalism is closely connected, complementary and altogether opposed to the other fundamental characteristic of European and Western identity: individualism/subjectivity. I adopt this terminology because individualism and subjectivity are not synonymous – they are not identical concepts. There is a tendency by scholars to use (preferably) the first that has a positive view of modernity, of which the consciousness of their individuality is considered a distinctive trait, along with the confidence in scientific knowledge, the development of a secular vision, the doctrine of progress and the contractual conception of society. The concept of subjectivity tends instead to be preferred by those who criticize the negative aspects of modern culture such as the tendency to pragmatic calculation of utility, arid search for enrichment and a lack of moral passion. They affirm alternative values such as self-care, spontaneous expression and the authenticity of experience. In fact, economic and political individualism as well as moral and aesthetic subjectivity are both dimensions of the same principle. This principle, in turn, interacts dialectically with the principle of rationality. These are not the roots of two alternative concepts of modernity (one more praiseworthy and more critical, the other more attentive to structural processes and another more concerned with cultural aspects), but rather elements of the same cultural and institutional syndrome (Martinelli 2010). The world of the capitalist entrepreneur is a world of relentless change and creative innovation that also offers a favourable environment for the aesthetics of the self. Imagination and reason are not enemies but are rather allied both in their work as that of the scientist or the artist. Each of them tries to explore and experience everything without limiting themselves. Even where I use the only term of individualism, it should be understood in the twofold style I have specified.

In time and space, even individualism has taken on many differing forms of expression: the evangelical personalism of

Christians, the individualism of free inhabitants of autono-
mous medieval republics, the rational economic subject in the
market, the free citizen of modern liberal democracies and the
reflective subjectivity of contemporary Europeans. Like ra-
tionalism, individualism has developed within the cultural her-
itage of European history, but it has emerged only with the
advent of modernity. Its affirmation was not only the symptom
of the dissolution of the primacy of the community in its tradi-
tional religious significance, but also the necessary condition
for the discovery of society in a strictly secular sense. As long
as the ideological primacy of individual interests and passions
had not been postulated, the constraints imposed on such in-
terests and passions by an autonomous social and political or-
der, subject to its own laws, were not defined.

Individualism is at the root of the principles of freedom
and equality affirmed by the Natural Law Theory (which as-
serts that all human beings are the same in that they are en-
dowed with reason), Anglo-Saxon political thought as well as
the French and German Enlightenment. The principles of lib-
erty and equality were recognized in the prerogatives of the
English Parliament after the "glorious revolution" of 1688-89
and solemnly proclaimed by the American Constitution of
1776 and by the *Declaration de Droits de l'Homme et du
Citoyen* of 1789. These principles affirm the inviolable rights
of individuals to life, freedom and full realization of their po-
tentialities. Freedom is expressed both as a negative freedom –
a protection of human rights against abuse of power, or as a
positive freedom – the right of citizens to participate in the
formation of the common will. Equality was initially defined as
equality of rights and duties of citizenship and equal treatment
by law but soon became also equality of opportunity and of
chances for life, thus opening the way for progressive liberal-
ism, social democracy and welfare policies, inspired by the
third principle of modern revolutions – fraternity and solidari-
ty – and constituted an essential component of the European
political culture of the twentieth century. The struggle to
achieve satisfactory and effective compromises between free-
dom, equality and solidarity has been a leitmotif in the history
of European political thought. Being European should also
mean engaging in the realization of the "sacred principles" of
freedom, equality and fraternity. The increase in socio-
economic inequalities between and within EU member states
as well as the refusal of some governments to share the duties
of common citizenship and solidarity policies pertaining to

refugees are today alarming signs of a crisis of the common European identity.

The dialectical relationship between the principle of rationality and the principle of individualism/subjectivity also manifests itself in the double matrix of change and routine in which the modern self lives. "Each of those unforgettable figures of modernity – Marx's revolutionary, Baudelaire's dandy, Nietzsche superman, Weber's social scientist, Simmel's foreigner, Musil's man lacking quality, Benjamin's flaneur – is grabbed and dragged away by the rushing intoxication of an epochal change, yet it is determined and framed within a system of social roles and functions" (Gaonkar 2001). It is worth noting that this list of characters (to which I would add Schumpeter's entrepreneur) is strictly European, proving that the culture of modernity is closely linked to European identity (including in it the peoples of Europe outside of the "Europe"), although it should be pointed out that in the contemporary world there are multiple modernities or different paths towards and through modernity.

MARKET ECONOMY, NATIONAL STATE, POLYARCHIC DEMOCRACY, RESERACH UNIVERSITIES

Values, attitudes as well as interpretations of reality and the related cultural programs, combine in modern civilization with a set of new institutional forms, even those mostly experimented first in Europe and later spread in America and the rest of the world) giving life to market institutions and capitalist institutions, the national state and polyarchic democracy, the university and research community. European and Western science and technology define a particular approach to the knowledge of physical and human reality capable of transforming nature in order to meet individual and collective needs. The depth of Indian and Chinese religion and philosophy, the richness of Islam's scientific and religious thinking, the development of astronomical knowledge in Mesopotamia or pre-Columbian America, are only a few examples of the fact that Western knowledge is not at all exceptional. What is characteristic in this is the greater propensity to combine scientific discoveries, inventions and technological innovations under the constant pressure of both war and commercial competition. Specifically, it is also the greater capacity to design institutions that are particularly suited to the formation

and dissemination of knowledge: the Italian, French and Spanish universities of the medieval era, the British and French scientific academies of the seventeenth century, German research universities of the nineteenth century, and the large research laboratories of contemporary America. European modernity was not only a package of technological and organizational developments; it was closely linked to a political revolution and to an equally important transformation of the practices and institutions of scientific research (Wittrock 2000). Europe invented and refined a mode of understanding in science that has developed since the Renaissance and has become a global model. Its main features are the recognition of the role of mathematics as a measure of scientific accuracy, the union between freedom of inquiry and freedom of criticism as well as the dependence of empirical knowledge on conceptual reflection (Rudolph 2001).

European modernity is also characterized by the development of industrial market capitalism. Its guiding principle is constant rational research to maximize utility in order to successfully compete in the market. The efficient combination of production factors in the industrial enterprise and the exchange of goods and services in the self-regulated market are the two fundamental institutions of capitalist development. The industrial revolution of the eighteenth century (a powerful process of innovation, accumulation of capital, exploitation of labour and market expansion) was also due to the availability of iron and coal and surpluses deriving from agriculture and long-distance trade but was first generated by the special bond with the scientific-technical revolution of modernity. Commerce and markets also developed in the ancient empires and in much of the non-European world, but the particular combination of the industrial revolution and the self-regulated market represented a European specificity that gave capitalist growth a force and dynamism without precedent. Capitalism was radically criticized, in particular by Marx and Marxist scholars, but proved to be a more effective model of economic relations than the alternative model of floor economics, was transformed through endemic crises, globalized and created variants of capitalism with different political and institutional structures (the market-driven Anglo-Saxon variant, the European-continental variant of the social market economy, the Scandinavian variant and the Asian authoritarian variant).

The third fundamental institutional component of European identity, the national state, is linked in a more controver-

sial way to the values of rationalism and individualism than they are to science and technology or to the market and the capitalist enterprise. From the late Middle Ages, in Europe, or at least in its western part, a composite society of peasants, gentlemen who recognized the authority of a king, traders and craftsmen, joined together in common ties of blood, tongue and religious faith (Mendras 1997). Society slowly took shape in this context – in opposition to multiethnic empires and a supranational church, to the national state, characterized by the unity of a people, a specific territory and culture. The nation-state is another typically European innovation that has been successfully exported to the rest of the world, a peculiar institution that arises from the encounter between a sovereign, autonomous and centralized political organization, endowed with, on the one hand, civil bureaucracy, an army, a navy, diplomacy, and on the other hand a community based on real or imaginary ties of blood, language as well as shared traditions and collective memory. The nation-state's relationship with the culture of individualism and rationalism is ambivalent and complex: one of the two components – the nation – is rooted in primordial ties, appeals to passions and emotions, and places emphasis on collective ends while the other component – the state – is a rational organization that has evolved through a relationship with the law and the development of an efficient public administration.

The deployment of globalization has led some scholars to misdiagnose the end of the national state, subject to the erosion of sovereignty from the top, by the global interdependence networks and the downside of the reaffirmation of local identities and the demand for autonomy from central control. In fact, it continues to represent the main incarnation of the political authority of modern society and the fundamental actor of contemporary global politics. It is true, however, that it is becoming too small an institution to deal with certain problems (such as those of the economic and financial crisis) and too large to handle others that would be better managed by local governments. This is why the European Union project is of particular relevance. As in the past, the risks of state centralization for individual freedom and cultural pluralism (drifting authority, the suppression of many socio-cultural autonomies of local communities of pre-modern societies) have been constrained, at least in part, by the development of institutions of representative democracy (as seen in Europe today). The opposing and speculative risks of national-populism and tech-

nocratic centralization can be countered by a regeneration of supranational democracy.

The advent of representative democracy that "civilizes" state power is favoured by the congruence of the values of individualism and rationalism with the institutions of the national state. Representative democracy (a political system composed of elected officials representing the interests and opinions of citizens in the context of the rule of law, based on popular sovereignty and citizen consensus) is in fact a fourth aspect of European and Western identity. The Greek *polis*, the Romanesque *res publica*, the free cities of Italy, Germany and the Flanders in the late Middle Ages, were all precedents of this European specificity. The various forms of parliament (majority government and minority rights protection, free and periodic elections, separation of constitutional powers, freedom of the press and association) are innovations born and grown in European culture, then developed in the United States of America (the first "new nation" built by European emigrants) during the three major modern democratic revolutions: English, American and French. The significance of the values and institutions of representative democracy in European identity is evidenced by the fact that, along with free market ones, they are considered necessary, scrupulously established requirements for joining the Union.

In the debates on the Constitutional Treaty, the relationship between the Christian religion and European identity was a particularly sensitive issue. The "catalogue" of the distinctive features of European identity would not be, in fact, complete without reference to the relationship between the principles of individualism/subjectivity and rationalism and the Christian religion. Christianity is a transcendent monotheism that postulates the direct relationship of every creature with its Creator, but has since its origins been a strong element of communion that manifested itself in the early Christian communities in the transformation of the hermits into monastic orders starting from the one founded by Benedict of Norcia (particularly in Catholic and Orthodox traditions) and in the mediation between the believer and God exercised by religious ceremonies and clergy. It gave rise to the most ancient and long-standing institution existing today: the Roman Catholic Church. Two aspects, the subjective one, which originates from the individualism of the Gospel message and re-emerges periodically in various forms of mysticism and asceticism, and the collective/institutional one, finds expression in the hierarchical or-

ganization of the church and in liturgical rites and ceremonies, dialectically, causing violent conflicts such as those between Rome and Byzantium and between the Reformation and the Counter-Reformation, struggles against heretical movements and religious wars.

Christianity has profoundly influenced European culture and institutions sometimes as a source of inspiration, sometimes as a dialectical boundary. On the one hand, along with Greek philosophy and Roman law, it contributed to the development of European and Western individualism. According to the well-known Weberian thesis, the great rational prophecies of the Bible, the rational life plan of monastic orders, and the theory of predestination have all contributed to the growth of rational mentality. Our highest values and the rules associated with them, such as the dignity and inviolability of the person, human rights, conscience and individual responsibility, cannot be extrapolated from the historical experience of Jewish-Christian religious tradition, but are rather defined and articulated through it. On the other hand, the notion of the absence of the limit and the belief of man as the creator of his own destiny (distinctive features of the modern mentality) were strongly opposed by the anti-modernist positions of the Catholic Church – from the trial of Galileo Galilei to the struggle against the theory of Charles Darwin. It is only through secular struggles that the division between temporal power and spiritual power (which originates from the famous "render unto God what is of God and unto Caesar what is Caesar") has become a consolidated principle of modern Western democracies. Although born in Palestine, Christianity strongly identified itself with European civilization, and then extended through colonization to other regions of the world. The religious factor, however, has not been translated into either a monopoly or an undifferentiated unity in the culture of Europe. Because other religions (such as Islam) have had a significant presence as well as the great religious diversity of Christianity itself with its many heretic movements – the schism between the Orthodox Church and the Catholic Church and the Protestant Reformation. In many ways, European life is secularized, but religion continues to play an important role: many European citizens claim to belong to a church, institutions, and religious leaders have a significant influence on the political and cultural life of EU member countries: there are deep convergences between Christian doctrine and lay ethics on many issues. The continuing presence of the

Christian religion in the contemporary life of Europeans is also based principally on the fact that the great expressions of architecture, painting, music, literature and even philosophy and science are not interpretable without taking into account the role – inspiration or critical, benevolent or repressive – carried out by Christian doctrine and ecclesiastical authority.

AN UNUSUAL AND CONTROVERSIAL IDENTITY

The necessarily succinct picture of the European identity I have outlined risks to propose an uncritical and ethnocentric image. Some clarifications are therefore needed to avoid misunderstandings.

First, it should be noted that the characteristics identified are defined as fundamental aspects because they have played a significant role in building a European identity but are not present in a uniform and pervasive way in contemporary Europe, as the case of religion shows. Fundamental values and institutions are also not necessarily positive or ambiguous. As already noted, European history has been the source of deep fractures, violent conflicts, idiosyncratic disputes, as well as many crimes and errors. The values of rationalism and individualism and the institutions of the market and national state have produced contradictions, violations, deformations such as the contradictions between capital and wage labour and between economic growth and environmental protection due to the commodification of human labour and nature, the conflict between colonial (and neo-colonial) exploitation individual freedom and collective freedom of non-European peoples, not to mention wars, mass murders, and genocide. From each of the basic elements of European culture one can derive dialectical polarities and give contrasting images: the universal faith of Christian love has been in certain historical phases in strident contrast with the wars of religion and the intolerant repression of the infidels. In the heart of the 20th century, the European political order collapsed due to devastating totalitarianism; the free market constantly produces monopolistic annuities and financial crises; the struggle for political independence degenerated into aggressive nationalism. Jaspers (1947) argues that it is not possible to isolate substantial values that characterize European culture in a non-ambiguous way, because for every valued orientation, Europe has also pro-

duced its opposites: faith and reason, tolerance and religious war, democracy and totalitarianism.

Nevertheless, those who criticize inclusion among the constituent elements of European identity of aspects that have also have morally reprehensible effects forget that the European project shows that history can be the object of reflective reconsideration through a learning process, that is, to draw lessons from mistakes and crimes of the past. Rooted in the contradictory identities of religious fundamentalism and belligerent nationalism, the religious wars of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries and the national conflicts of the 19th and 20th centuries were subsequently rejected establishing the principle of religious pluralism and integrating the European antidote against the repetition of the multi-century "European civil wars". The conception of history underlying the efforts to establish an ever closer political union is not formulated in terms of any "manifest destiny" of the continent or Europeans as an elected people, it is the conception of the disciples of history, not of its masters. The cultural foundations of the new European institutions are a collection of lessons from the recent history of European modernity, the lessons of nationalism and other dangerous "isms" that need to be regulated (Therborn 1995).

Furthermore, the fundamental aspects of European identity are not exclusive to the contemporary world. The reason for this non-exclusivity does not lie in the fact that these elements are shared from the origins of other peoples as they are "exported" and assimilated/reinterpreted in other regions of the world. The thesis that European culture, having spread throughout the world, is intrinsically de-territorialized, can no longer define the specificity of a single part of the world (D'Andrea 2011) does not convince because it forgets that any transition to modernity requires a process of creative adaptation and does not imply the mere spread of a single type of mentality (scientific rationalism, instrumental pragmatism, secularism) from so-called "developed" countries to so-called "emerging" countries, but processes of contamination or hybridization (such as the coexistence between modern technology and traditional culture in post-restoration Meji Japan or the combination of market economy and unique party regime in contemporary China). The encounter/confrontation between modern European civilization and other civilizations deeply changes the identities of both.

The thesis of the Europeanization of the world, unduly charging the whole world with the experience of countries with less cultural attainment than Europe. If, in fact, European identity is not easily distinguishable from the "Western" countries of the so-called "Europe outside Europe" and if, indeed, fundamental features such as individualism and scientific-scientific rationality are even more frequent among Americans that among Europeans (Martinelli 2007), cultural differences are far more profound with the inhabitants of the non-western regions of the world and unequally affect the various aspects of the culture of modernity. Scientific rationalism, technological innovation and market capitalism have become more popular because cognitive and institutional tools are more efficient than others and to a certain extent are indifferent to their objectives. Individual rights, cultural and political pluralism, the rule of law, separation of powers and representative democracy face greater difficulties because they collide with alternative models of the relationship between the individual and society. Comparative literature on the "varieties of capitalism", welfare state models and political regimes shows how there are widely different responses to common problems such as those of the economic and financial crisis, the relationship between competitiveness and social cohesion, sustainable development as well as problems of political order.

CHANGES IN THE CONTENT OF EUROPEAN IDENTITY AND THE PERCEPTION OF THEIR MEANING

I have argued that within the historical legacy of the European peoples, alongside different national and local identities, exist the common cultural roots that, with the advent of modernity, have transformed and crystallized into a specific nucleus of boldly innovative values, meanings and institutions, constituting a collective European identity. I have pointed out that this content is constantly evolving and is prone to exceptions in different national contexts. In order to appreciate whether and how the nucleus of European identity has developed, we will briefly discuss the foundations of the reconstruction of Europe after the end of World War II and, in particular, Jaspers' thesis (1947), which identifies that in freedom, history and science are the three factors that make up the essence of Europe. The desire for freedom is in fact universal, but developed to the highest degree in Europe, was allowed to

defeat despotism by transforming itself into concrete institutions and by fuelling the feeling of justice and the constant sense of restlessness and turbulence felt by Europeans. Freedom nourished the second factor, the need to understand historical time and to play an active role as humans within the *polis*. True freedom is in the pursuit of political freedom within the community or in the development of the individual together with that of the social world that surrounds it. The third factor: science, or the constant effort to penetrate into the heart of all that can be penetrated, is also linked to freedom because it is knowledge and love for knowledge that liberates humans by attributing them not only the external freedom acquired through the knowledge of nature, but also and above all the inner freedom that flows from the knowledge of oneself and of others.

Closely linked to individualism/subjectivity, freedom remains as the fundamental value today, further strengthening over time, extending from the defence of peace, liberal-political democracy and economic freedom (from an authoritarianism and self-planned economy of the Eastern European Communist regimes) to the protection of human rights codified in the Charter of Fundamental Rights of Nice (Articles 6-19 are dedicated to freedom, Articles 1-5 are dedicated to dignity, Articles 20- 26 to equality, Articles 27-38 to solidarity, Articles 39-46 to citizenship and Articles 47-50 to justice). The promotion of science, closely linked to rationality, continues to be another founding value, constantly reaffirmed in the documents of the European Union as the one outlining the "Lisbon Strategy" aimed at transforming the European economy into a knowledge-based economy: the most competitive and dynamic in the world. Lacking, however, is the other factor identified by Jaspers: the full, historically conscious exercise of political freedom which did not make significant progress since the European Union's long-suffered crisis of democratic representation (Martinelli, Ispi 2017). Crisis also shows fundamental values of solidarity and the contrast of inequalities.

What has changed significantly during the seventy years of the history of European integration is the role attributed to European identity by European leadership classes and the intensity of identification with Europe and its own nationhood by European citizens.

Regarding the first aspect, in the post-war decade, a sense of patriotism and common citizenship of peoples belonging to the "European family" was wished by many European leaders,

beginning with Winston Churchill in his famous speech to the students of the University of Zurich in 1946. The defence of peace was the fundamental value, which subsequently became increasingly closely linked to the protection of human rights which, although not included in the original project of European communities but in the Council of Europe, were progressively appropriated and claimed as originals until their solemn formulation in the Charter of Fundamental Rights of Nice. In the post-war era, European identity was regarded as an antidote to the disastrous nationalisms that had caused the World War II catastrophe, a prerequisite for the continent's moral and economic reconstruction and the most effective alternative to the resurgence of separate national identities and opposing nationalisms. It was believed that the stronger the sense of belonging to Europe, the more it weakened nationalist ideology.

This antagonistic conception of the two types of identities, and the related interest in the issue of European identity, progressively faded as the integration process progressed for two orders of reason. Firstly, because the national states were the foundations on which the supranational union was built and perpetuated by it along with related national identities and sovereign views. Secondly, because of the 1957 Treaty of Rome, the process was developed mainly in its economic dimension of the integrated single market rather than in the political and cultural dimension.

At the beginning of the 1970s, there was a renewal of interest in the issue of European identity in order to manage the growing diversity and disparities resulting from the enlargement from six to nine member states. In 1973, with the signing of the Declaration on European Identity in Copenhagen, a change of perspective was sanctioned in the explicit expression of the compatibility of the European identity and national identities. This concept was reaffirmed in subsequent documents, in particular in the 1992 Maastricht Treaty, which states that respect for national and regional diversity and the flourishing of different national cultures are an integral part of the appreciation of the common identity and legacy of European culture.

The thesis of "unity in diversity" formulated at the beginning of the 1990s became a central aspect of the European project and summarizes the EU's strategy of placing itself in an intermediate position between an almost national concept of European identity (which is unrealistic for the reasons we

discussed earlier) and a universalistic concept (which would
negate its specificity). It involves self-limitation both of unity,
in the sense that separate identities are constituent elements of
common identity (which does not claim any priority over
them) and of diversity, in the sense that none of the separate
identities question the existence of the common identity.

The most advanced version of the European project re-
quires, however, a subsequent step: achieving unity through
diversity. The memory of a common past is not enough to cre-
ate a strong sense of belonging to Europe unless it is accom-
panied by a sincere and active sharing of the political project
of a federal union in which unity is strengthened through the
enhancement of diversity. It is the sharing of the project that
distinguishes the EU from the other half of Europe made up
of Russia and the countries that have chosen not to be a part
of the Union, while sharing the same historical past.

Whether and how much common cultural heritage con-
tributes to political integration is debatable, but one cannot in
any case apply the national-state model in the sense of a uni-
vocal collective identity that legitimizes the unification of Eu-
rope as a single political entity because there is a lack of cen-
tralized power as well as a standardized culture that is articu-
lated through a common language. Nor should this model be
applied, because building a European identity cannot be
based on opposition between ourselves and others. Lessons in
history: religious fundamentalism, political dogmatism, and
aggressive nationalism should have taught us that this negative
and arrogant way of defining one's identity merely in opposi-
tion to someone else's (from time to time, the infidel, ideologi-
cal foe, alien) threatens peace and is therefore not a road
through which to travel in order to reach the contemporary
world.

For the first time in the history of Europe, political au-
thority does not rely on military structures to integrate such a
large and economically developed territory, but rather relies
upon a legal and economic community while not endeavour-
ing to deprive its members of their cultural specificities. The
European Union is a multicultural entity with a strong core of
shared principles (democratic citizenship, scientific freedom,
competitive market, human rights, social cohesion and solidar-
ity, respect for different cultural heritages, peaceful relations
with all peoples of the earth), which in turn establishes com-
mon institutions. Already in ancient Greek philosophy we find
the notion of harmony that emerges from contradictory ele-

ments. If you postulate unity at the outset, it results in an eternal tendency to return to the original lost design. If, on the contrary, diversity is postulated, unity is conceived as the constant effort fed by conflict and competition – never predetermined. European culture can only be differentiated and plural, united in its diversity, forged and continuously renewed by it. Unity calls for the redefinition of identities, both of the different European peoples and also those of immigrants from other regions of the world: the redefinition of identity does not require their abolition. European citizens can get used to having identities that are multi-urban, regional, national and supranational.

The formation of a united Europe can build itself around a concept of unity that derives from diversity and multiple citizenship. And yet, one must be aware of the difficulty of this path, because recognizing multiple identities within a single supranational political entity can be a destabilizing factor, as it alters the delicate relationship between *ethnos* and *demos*. For this reason, while reaffirming that European peoples and governments must build unity through diversity and that European identity and citizenship must be multifaceted, we must realistically enhance those traditional attributes of nationality, of a cultural-symbolic nature, which result as being compatible with the supranational and multicultural project and which can integrate and strengthen the civil-political identity of Europeans, even with appropriate identity techniques.

HOW THE IDENTIFICATION OF CITIZENS HAS CHANGED WITH EUROPE

Along with the significance attributed to European identity by community institutions, the kind and degree of identification with Europe and its nation of European citizens has also changed over the years. The two aspects of the issue are linked to the fact that the self-image and self-definition of the European Union influences the reasons for identifying Europeans with their fellow citizens and with the community. We have defined identification as the set of cognitive orientations (recognizing oneself as European, member of a European cultural family defined by values, norms and institutions, considering this fact as a constituent element of personal identity together with other collective identities), emotional and evaluative, (sympathy, common sense, the reasons for and pride of a

common belonging, the perception of sharing meaningful and
to some extent exclusive experiences, the development of
identity values, institutional expressions and common memory,
the adoption of a *Wir-Perspective*) as well as related and co-
herent behaviours of mutual trust, solidarity as well as the will-
ingness to make personal or group sacrifices for common
goals. Periodic surveys of attitudes and views of representative
European citizens such as the Eurobarometer are not without
methodological critique but they still provide us with an indi-
cation of the changes in the intensity of identification, signal-
ling for some years the erosion of European identity guidelines
in addition to the support accorded to EU institutions. Survey
data, however, should be supplemented with other data on the
variety of forms of social interaction, (work, study, economic
and cultural cooperation) as well as political participation and
the percentage of European citizens who have experienced
them. An attitude of identification ("measured", for example,
from the affirmative answer to the question "do you feel like
European citizens") is in fact not a sufficient enough condition
to ensure consequential behaviour, as opposed to a negative
response can be given to citizens who actually live as members
of the same supranational community.

The development of a genuine identification process
starts, however, from the awareness of a common member-
ship, but is completed only with consistent practices and be-
haviours. In this regard, the intensity of the sentiment of iden-
tification with Europe leaves something to be desired. In the
various referendums that have taken place over time (Norwe-
gian, Irish, Danish, Spanish, French, Dutch) where citizens
were asked to express their consent or dissent for the acces-
sion or ratification of a treaty, the response was rather negative
and almost always fairly modest. Participation rates in the Eu-
ropean Parliament elections are low and worsening over time.
Decisions and concrete actions, which involve sharing the
problems and the costs to be paid for their solution, demon-
strate in their entirety the fractures existing among the citizens
of the different member states. For example, German citizens
(from the western part of the country) show a great deal of
willingness to accept their government's decision to devote
very substantial resources to east *lander* development, express-
ing a high level of identification with those who are considered
as nationals of their own nation while not being willing to (at
least in part) subsidize the sovereign debt of countries such as
Greece. This shows an inadequate degree of identification

with those who should be considered a European fellow. Such behaviours are more eloquent than the answers to the Eurobarometer questions.

What are the main factors influencing the change of type and degree of identification with Europe? There are three in particular: generational culture, the legacy of the recent past that precedes the entry of a country into the European Union, the change of interests and economic conveniences and the distribution of costs and benefits amongst various social groups. Each of these factors confers significant fractures existing within the EU: between social groups favoured or threatened by economic and monetary union, between countries of the North with strong northern economies and southern countries with weak economies in the South, between Western countries more historically integrated countries and the more recent entry of eastern countries, between governments with a community orientation and governments with a sovereign orientation, between advocates of a European market conception and supporters of a social Europe. These fractures contribute to nourishing the most important alternative identities, or anyway, with respects to the common European identity: namely generational, national, and that of class.

The generational factor is important and shows greater adherence among the younger and the elderly than the intermediate generations. The generation that had a direct or personal experience of World War II feels a common identity with greater intensity and awareness but its importance must be declining. Memories based on direct experience or on the tales of fathers and grandparents who lived through those events as protagonists or spectators, are destined to fade away irretrievably. Younger generations are growing up today in a Europe that has never experienced such a long period of peace in its history. Fortunately, they have not had a direct experience of war. There have been and there are still conflicts in eastern Europe (ex-Yugoslavia, Chechnya, Ukraine). The consequences of war in Middle East are evident in the form of the millions of refugees fleeing to Europe and the attacks of fundamentalist Islamic terrorism. But these are challenges and threats that do not have such an intensity that, at least for the moment, they provoke an intense emotional reaction convincing the majority of European citizens to mobilize themselves to seek greater co-operation and greater supranational solidarity. Young people from the "Erasmus generation" who have a direct experience of a transnational European society also feel European

(Italian-European, French-European, German-European, Polish-European, etc.) but as many of their peers, they take for granted the benefits coming from the European Union, while many others are ready to take responsibility for the problems and difficulties they face in their daily lives: unemployment and underemployment, cuts in social spending as well as increased insecurity and violence.

The historical past is the second important influencing factor mainly for two reasons. States that belonged to the Soviet sphere of influence in the decades of the Cold War came out of a state of limited sovereignty and are now reluctant to surrender spontaneously to supranational institutions portions of that sovereign power that they only recently regained. Furthermore, ancient fractures as well as ethnic, national and religious tensions that were reabsorbed and anesthetized in the bipolar context of the antagonism between the USA and the USSR were then re-invented, favouring the overwhelming resumption of alternative identities and in particular of nationalist-populist ideology.

A third factor, which adversely affects the sentiment of identification with Europe, was represented by the 2008 financial crisis and the long economic downturn that deepened the inequalities between strong and weak economies and the sharp contrasts already produced by globalization among those who benefited and those who were harmed. The economic and financial crisis has further deteriorated the condition of globalization losers, increasing employment precariousness and reducing social protection policies, so that many of them tend to identify the European Union with the neoliberal set-up of the global economy by involving them both in a single judgment of rejection and condemnation.

THE RISE OF NATIONALISM

The phenomenon that most readily shows the difficulties encountered by the development of a common identity is the rise of nationalism that today threatens the European Union project. This rise is favoured by the current intertwinement of crises (economic-financial, refugees, terrorism), but it is also due to the two major contradictions of the European integration process. The first contradiction is the project of building a supranational union using national states as constituent elements, threatening an end to affiliated nationalisms. The se-

cond is the contradiction between the transfer of increasing portions of national sovereignty from the state to the supranational level (firstly, the common management of important economic sectors, from metallurgy to agriculture, and subsequently the measures designed to create a single European area for the free movement of people, goods, services and capital, the establishment of a court of justice, the introduction of a single currency) and the still inadequate transfer of commitment and loyalty from citizens of different member states to the institutions of a supranational community in evolution.

The two contradictions are closely related. Political decisions taken at the Union level unequally distribute costs and benefits not only between the various social groups but also between the various member countries, fuelling sovereign re-nationalization claims. These claims could be countered and depreciated by strong feelings of membership and adherence to a common project which, however, are stalled because of the largely incomplete nature of European democracy and the defect of its democratic representation. Democracies in European national states all live to varying degrees in a crisis of democratic representation for a complex set of reasons (from the decline of political parties to the personalization of politics, from the erosion of governments' sovereignty to the populism of digital democracy). It is not however compensated by the development of a genuine European supranational democracy. Decision-making in the EU is still largely top-down, despite efforts to build an alternative model of more engaging democracy the involvement of civil society. The members of the European Council, the most important decision-making body in the tripartite structure of European governance (heads of state and governments as well as their ministers), are not chosen by a pan-European constituency but derive their legitimacy from their respective constituencies and therefore tend to put the interest of their country above that of the common European interest. The attitudes of the peoples do not differ from those of their leaders, and are often more nationalistic (Westle and Segatti 2016). The links of cultural affinities and shared values are still much stronger at the national level also as a result of the decline of the great ideological narratives. Idiosyncratic national mentalities and stereotyped images of the national character of "other" Europeans are slow to die. European citizens do not sufficiently identify with European institutions and often oppose common policies based on nationalistic and particularistic interests and identi-

ties. The Europe of nations of the Gaullist matrix is also the Europe of nationalisms. Nationalism blocks the way for a stronger political community which could in turn legitimize more comprehensive supranational governance.

With intentions of most of its political and intellectual founders, the European institutions should have progressively extended beyond the borders of the national states to replace them, but the process was carried out realistically under the control of the national states. This sovereign approach did not prevent the transfer of increasing shares of sovereignty to the supranational level: a process further stimulated by globalization, but blocked by attempts to create a federal union. After the slowdown in the European integration process in the 1970s, there was an acceleration in the next two decades (driven by the awareness that a supranational union can face the new challenges of globalization much better than any one economically powerful or politically ambitious member country), followed by a new slowdown since the beginning of this century due to the challenges we have described. In some ways, it is ironic that the European integration that was intended to replace the national state actually guaranteed its survival and its adaptation to a more complex world. But, it was an effective compromise because it allowed significant progress on the path to integration, even if it had a negative turn: the survival first and then the strengthening of the nationalism of member states in times of economic-financial crisis and general insecurity.

The European Union has not replaced national states which are at the same time strengthened and weakened by the integration process. To the extent that the various sociocultural components of European society are politically replicated by democratic elites that adopt a costume of cooperation and dialogue, the European Union can be considered as an example of "consensual democracy" (Lijphart 1999). But nationalism often makes agreement difficult. The role of national states in the European decision-making process has been tempered and balanced by multilevel and multistakeholder governance, which is divided into a variety of actions and decisions implemented at different levels (local, regional, national, supranational) by a plurality of public and private actors organized in an integrated decision-making hierarchy. But from the moment that nations continue to be founded on that which a supranational union is built (and therefore perpetuates through it), nationalism continues to

hamper the path to political integration, especially where it is used by populist leaders to increase their electoral consensus.

The second contradiction concerns the limits of a supranational government with little development of community feeling in achieving economic, legal and administrative integration. European integration ensues, even within these limits, thanks to special mechanisms. First of all, the spontaneous incremental processes deriving from the intrinsic logic of integration, that is functional and political spillover. Functional spillover occurs when the decision to integrate some economic sectors results in the need for member states to incorporate others by virtue of their interdependence. Political spillover is the expansion of community policy-making and associated lobbying activities, which induces national governments to transfer additional political functions to the supranational level. Secondly, the process has developed mainly as "negative integration" by removing barriers to the free movement of persons, capital, goods and services within the single market, which has received broad consensus because it has been perceived as a positive sum (although we should not forget examples of positive integration such as the innovative governance of the open method of coordination). Finally, the practice generally followed by the European Union with the end of reducing the opportunities of conflict is to obtain from the member states a minimum level of respect for norms and standards, tolerating frequent violations of its rules and procedures.

Economic globalization and the rise of the euro have changed the situation. Competition in the global market has a strong need for more positive integration, coordination and regulation, with the risk of generating strong reactions from national governments and influential civil society actors in the member countries. The common monetary policy has increased the interdependence of Eurozone national economies, but the European Central Bank does not yet have some of the powers of other central banks and there is not yet a ministry for the European Treasury. A common monetary policy would require a still-missing common fiscal policy and public spending that could give rise to consensus for EU decisions, counterbalancing the negative effects of rigorous EU institutions "checks on national governments" decisions that trigger widespread protests.

The economic crisis and the exit strategies implemented by the institutions of European governance have sharpened

the conflicts of interest between the countries of the Union, between the most successful economies and those with heavy sovereign debt and high unemployment, between the citizens of prosperous economies that do not want to settle the debts of troubled economies and citizens of the latter who protest for the sacrifices imposed by European and international authorities and the loss of national sovereignty. In the decade after German reunification, the citizens of West Germany accepted with minor complaints the decision of their leaders to allocate hundreds of billions of euros to the eastern Germans because they considered them compatriots. But the Germans themselves (which, let us not forget, are also European citizens) are reluctant to give very small amounts to Greece and to other partners in crisis because they do not feel as strongly the feeling of common belonging. As long as this situation persists, and as long as national policy becomes more important than European politics, political leaders will subordinate their supranational decisions to domestic electoral competition. Functional transfer and political mechanisms of the past are no longer sufficient. There is a need for a more convincing regulatory consensus and a stronger commitment to realize the shared project of European political unity.

The question of nationalism in contemporary Europe is not limited to ethnic and political diversity among member countries but also involves a growing immigrant population that enhances social heterogeneity. Immigration poses a question not of national sovereignty but of cultural fractures and concerns both the political/civil dimension as well as the ethnic/cultural dimension of nationalism. Immigration policies of member countries are on a continuum that goes from the pole of assimilation (every individual enjoys the same rights and duties of citizenship regardless of any ethnic, religious, linguistic difference, etc.) to that of multiculturalism (each individual is recognized as a member of a community and has the right to retain its distinctive values and behaviours) and implement various combinations of different models. It would be necessary to reduce the degree of fragmentation and heterogeneity of policies at the national level (which also contributes to nationalistic prejudice and xenophobic closures); but a shared European migration policy, based on multiple identities, will emerge with difficulty.

IDENTITY TECHNIQUES OF THE EUROPEAN UNION

Today, the development of European identity is at a point of crisis. Different but intertwined crises of the economic recession, the welcome and integration of millions of refugees as well as terrorism fuel aggressive neo-nationalism that adopts a populist rhetoric and proclaims the necessity to re-nationalize political choices, recover national sovereignty and dismantle the common European building. This is precisely at a stage where a revival of the political union project, which is also based on a shared European identity, would be needed. In order to revive the project, the institutions of European democracy must first be reformed and the opportunities for participation and cooperation among citizens needs to be enhanced, but "identity techniques" must be put in place (Kaina and Karolewski 2013). Such techniques can only refer to some of the categories of symbolic content that contribute to forming the identity of a people (Tullio Altan 1999); not all relationships of kinship, lineage and race (*genos*) that produce closure, exclusion and discrimination, in a clear contrast to the founding values of the Union; not the common language (*logos*), because the defence of multilingualism is a fundamental requirement of the policy of respect and protection of different cultural identities in European society, even if other elements of a cultural *koinè* can be valued, ways of thinking, communicating and actions that are becoming increasingly similar to citizens from different European countries. Even the transfiguration of the space in which Europeans live (*topos*) can be of help. To a certain extent, cities, buildings, squares, parks, other European public and private spaces have common and distinctive features compared to other regions of the world, but cultural globalization with its global-local dialectics tends to mitigate this specificity.

We can and must invest more in the *ethos* (namely the basic values, the conception of the world and the ethical principles of knowledge and action) which outline the new European identity and define the rights and duties of citizenship and in the *epos* (the celebration of significant events and the memory of great historical figures that testify to the achievements of European civilization in science, art and culture). Both the *ethos* and the *epos* should inform the contents of the educational programs of young Europeans and the activities of the mass media in order to build a public space and a shared culture that guide the views of European citizens about im-

portant collective choices. Common values can be reaffirmed by means of authentically European memoirs such as monuments, museums, pilgrimages, celebrations, anniversaries, myths, heroes, feasts, flags, hymns, which today continue to have strong nationalistic expressions. Symbolic content of this kind is to be enhanced despite the difficulties encountered by the project of creating a Museum of Europe and the tormented work of the commission of historians responsible for drawing up the textbooks of European history. For example, it would be desirable to have an increasing number of streets and squares in the cities of Europe to bear the names of great artists, scientists, builders of peace, solidarity and European unity as a counterweight to all those who remember dates and places of battles won by each and lost by others. A flag (the 12 stars in the blue field) and a hymn (the hymn to the joy of the Beethoven's Ninth Symphony) already exist today (although not formally included in the current Treaty of Lisbon) just as each year Europe Day is celebrated on May 9th and a European Capital of Culture, symbolic events that side by side, do not replace, similar initiatives of member states.

The process of identity construction is not limited to these aspects. Strategic political decisions such as the creation of the common currency also have a strong symbolic significance. The euro has established a tangible link between the community's institutions and the daily lives of its citizens; its iconography has achieved an effective compromise between the commonality of values expressed in coins and banknotes and respect for cultural diversity that is expressed with different iconographic features (Risse 2003). Finally, the significance of the foundation myths that lie at the intersection of *ethos* and *epos* are the same, and so many of them play into the building of national identities. They, in fact, represent the glorious past of a political community to be conveyed in posterity, fuelling a sense of continuity between old and the new generations. Examples of such myths are the celebrations of "founding" acts and documents both of an intellectual nature such as the "Ventotene Manifesto", policies such as the Treaties of Rome, Maastricht and Lisbon as well as the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union (Nice).

However, symbolic identity techniques are likely to be mere manipulation mechanisms by the elite if they are not accompanied by truly shared experiences of sharing and policy reforms aimed at reducing the deficit of democratic representation and forming a genuine European *demos* that exercises

its own sovereignty within the limits and forms established by the European Union's treaties. To this end, we must revive the EU's economic and social development by multiplying the opportunities for meeting and collaborating. The sentiment of a common membership is favoured by the set of practices and symbols operating predominantly at the subconscious level, fuelled by the abolition of borders, the use of the same currency, easier and more frequent opportunities to study, work, travel and visit nearby countries. It is also necessary to strengthen the institutions that can feed loyalty and supranational commitment. The aim should be to create a European space for schools and universities, preserve multilingualism, develop pan-European mass media and to establish a civil service for all young Europeans. We must strengthen the participation of a democratically informed and active European citizenship through the formation of truly European parties, the election of European parliamentarians by common rules and unified nominations, the allocation of more powers to the European Parliament, the adoption of a referendum on issues relevant political agenda (and the possibility of direct elections for the top posts of European governance).

CONCLUSION: THE RENEWED RELEVANCE OF THE EUROPEAN PROJECT

"The whole of Europe is going through a decisive moment in its history, in which it is called to rediscover its identity. This requires rediscovering its roots in order to shape its future. In the face of break-up efforts, it is urgently necessary to update "the idea of Europe" to give light to a new humanism based on the ability to integrate, to dialogue and to generate that which has made the so-called Old Continent great" (papa Francesco 2016). In a Europe that faces the challenges of the financial crisis, refugees from violence and hunger, fundamentalist terrorism, there is a risk of closure within national boundaries, disseminating national-populist rhetoric, affirming separate and diffident identities, by resigning or even abandoning the European project of political integration. To counteract these trends, the current European project of political unification needs to be re-emphasized, finding the way to a European collective identity, not contrasted but alongside the different national identities, which refers to loyalty and shared commitment to the whole of cultural values, social

norms and common political institutions we have outlined: fundamental human rights, civil liberties, democratic political institutions, rule of law, freedom of movement of people, goods and capital, social justice and non-violent resolution of conflicts. This regulatory body has been codified in the Nice Charter, which was incorporated into the Lisbon European Treaties 2007, is the basis for Community documents and defines the unavoidable requirements of access to the European Union. But these identity values must above all be practiced in everyday citizens' attitudes and respected in the decision-making process of European institutions, promoting a European citizenship. The European identity, made possible by the common cultural heritage which innervates in various forms and degrees different European *ethonoi*, can only be developed through the growth of a European *demos* defined in terms of a set of shared rights and duties, capable of consolidating the constraints of citizenship within democratically elected institutions.

If this is to be done, if a sense of community is strengthened among Europeans, the legitimacy and effectiveness of European governance institutions, choices of sharing rights and duties, redistribution policies and majority-based decision-making processes will improve. If this is the case, Europe can return to being a key actor in the multipolar context of global politics. We can thus answer the question "who are we Europeans?": we are those who feel that they belong to a common space of civilization and intend to face together the challenges of our time.

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