

## The Alternatives of Europe

### Alternativile Europei

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#### Abstract

*The specialised investigations in the last century and a half have led us to the comprehensive understanding of Europe as a culture that was set up and has developed being nurtured by three major sources: Jerusalem, Athens and Rome, plus other numerous sources. The triangle of the three cultural metropolitan cities in history, which have essentially given us the religion and the vision upon the human fate, science and philosophy, law and civil dignity, remain the most adequate metaphor to summarise the decisive sources of Europe. The destiny of Europe cannot be thematised without examining these sources.*

*Europeans today live in captivity with the present, with a culture somehow amputated by the lived dimension of the future.*

*For this reason, the future has to become again a priority objective in democratic societies, and philosophy has the opportunity to develop a concept of rationality that includes science in an integrative understanding, which clarifies its meaning, without preventing the success of scientific action.*

*Such a reason may set Europe in motion again with everything that is specific to it.*

#### Rezumat

*Investigațiile specializate din ultimul secol și jumătate ne-au condus la înțelegerea cuprinzătoare a Europei drept cultură care a fost creată și dezvoltată pe baza a trei surse majore: Ierusalim, Atena și Roma, plus numeroase alte surse. Triada celor trei orașe culturale metropolitane din istorie, care ne-au dat esența religiei și viziunea privind soarta omului, știința și filozofia, legea și demnitatea civilă, rămân metafora adecvată pentru a rezuma sursele decisive ale Europei. Destinul Europei nu poate fi tematizat fără examinarea acestor surse.*

*Europeenii de astăzi trăiesc în captivitatea prezentului cu o cultură oarecum amputată de dimensiunea trăită a viitorului.*

*De aceea viitorul trebuie să devină din nou un obiectiv prioritar în societățile democratice, iar filozofia are ocazia să dezvolte un concept de raționalitate care include știința într-o înțelegere integrativă, care îi clarifică sensul, fără a împiedica succesul acțiunii științifice.*

*O astfel de rațiune ar putea pune Europa în mișcare din nou, cu tot ce are specific.*

**Keywords:** *European culture, research, philosophy, values, European democracies, solutions*

**Cuvinte cheie:** *cultura europeană, cercetare, filozofie, valori, democrații europene, soluții*

European culture was shaped in the world by some of the thresholds it had created. This culture brought a concept of science, as knowledge of the general, which would finally be the "modern science" or the "Galileo-Newtonian science". Science was understood as factual knowledge, orientated towards the identification of the correlations with a legal character and, first of all, of the cause-effect correlations, which could be mathematically expressed. This is knowledge laid at the disposal of problem solving, mainly to solve technical problems. The European culture connected the production technique and science and made the technical civilization possible. This culture brought about the economic behaviour characterised by obtaining a plus in relation to the

invested energy – that is the output principle. In this culture, not only the activity of production, but also the administration of the society and other behaviours have been subordinated to the output principle.

Still, in European culture, subordination has never been exclusive. This culture has framed the administration and the behaviours in a law characterised by personalism, formalism and legalism. The European law assumes the human being as subject, reference and purpose. In European culture, the individual is conceived as a person endowed with freedom, but freedom understood as autonomy, in the etymological meaning of the term composed of “*auto*” and “*nomos*”. This implies a liberty framed by rules and accompanied by responsibility. The European culture assumed the construction of the human being as a private sphere relying on imprescriptible rights and freedoms. The private sphere is here continuously connected to the State’s public sphere.

European culture has conceived the State’s political will and, generally, the state policy as a derivative of the public debate on issues of general interest. This debate is assumed as an environment for problem solving. Communication is taken, together with work, reflexivity and self-consciousness, as another indispensable environment for the meaningful reproduction of life. Argumentation in public life and the prevalence of better arguments are part of the culture which lies at the basis of the functioning of the public sphere.

The European culture is orientated towards open problems, research, and has acquired its profile as a culture of research, of systematic knowledge and of transformation of the reality according to the individuals’ needs. It assumes the surrounding reality not as a foreign body, but rather as a processing material in the service of individuals. The European culture assumes that reality before our eyes is the sole world of our lives, given the mundane conditions. It continually connects the assumption of reality and the individual’s promotion, knowledge and reflexivity, theory and vision, the immanences of the world with what is transcending it.

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The European culture has an identity conferred by its history, i.e. by its very “sources” (“roots”, “legacies” etc.). We are now situated after the overcoming of several restrictive understandings of the “sources”. For instance, we are now after the understanding of Europe just as an extension of the Greek and Roman heritage, characteristic of the classical German idealism, by seeing and understanding the major importance of Christianity. Moreover, we are now after the overcoming of the European Christianity understanding only from the perspective of the Gospels about Jesus of Nazareth, taking into account Judaism as well, the actual framework where the Father of Christianity and his teachings formed, which have altered world history the most. We are now after overcoming the understanding of Christianity as opposed to science and citizens’ freedoms in the modern world by acknowledging their irreplaceable value in a “successful life (*gelungenes Leben*)”. Finally, we are after the overcoming of the understanding of modern science as autarchic knowledge by the inevitable “prerequisite” of any scientific knowledge, comprised in the genesis and implementation contexts, which confer its meaning.

The specialised investigations in the last century and a half have led us to the comprehensive understanding of Europe as a culture that was set up and has developed being nurtured by three major sources: Jerusalem, Athens and Rome, plus other numerous sources. The triangle of the three cultural metropolitan cities in history, which have essentially given us the religion and the vision upon the human fate, science and philosophy, law and civil dignity, remain the most adequate metaphor to summarise the decisive “sources” of Europe. The destiny of Europe cannot be thematised without examining the value of these “sources”.

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We may thematise Europe’s destiny only by observing the issues or problems raised today on the continent. These issues, one must say, are not usual and do not let themselves reduced to

frequent questions related to the better functioning of a whole. They are crucial matters, decisive for our destiny.

With the identity described and with the major sources that have been indicated, Europe faces many difficulties today. Some are faced by any culture of our time; others are temporary, pertaining to fluid contexts. However, Europe also faces profound difficulties that endanger its identity.

For instance, Europe has recorded a substantial decline in its population, so that the number of indigenous Europeans decreases continuously in favour of the immigrants from a different cultural background. The Europeans' post-war tendency to emigrate to America and Australia is continuing, with the brain drain it implies. Europe is going through a severe shortage of leaders, different bosses and leaders taking the leading role at different levels, being incapable of exerting the necessary leadership under the new historical conditions. Europe's decisions of major importance are taken slowly and they are often ambiguous or uncertain. Pluralism, instead of setting new energies in motion, often paralyzes decisions and turns responsibility into anonymity. Instead of being the instrument for developing better solutions, democracy is practised on a large scale as a sort of periodical technique of election of representatives, who afterwards escape from the public control. Poverty and social discrepancies increase once again, even if at a different development level than in the past. Administrations are often conceived as an end in themselves and are rather refractory to the citizen's reactions. The legal, ethical and administrative systems, as well as other types of systems, have lost the consciousness of their historical background and of the meaning of their establishment, sometimes becoming rigid skeletons, hard to invigorate. The future is beset with fear, while negative futurism, coagulated around the saying "let's not change what already is, as it could get even worse!", has occupied many minds. The process of the political decision is concluded for the great majority of the citizens, who respond with political and civic apathy. For many Europeans, life is reduced to work and, perhaps, to consumption. Money is perceived, on a large scale, as the meaning of life, instead of being the means for personal and public actions. Education is transformed into a technology for the formation of competencies, being deprived of vision from the very beginning. A decrease in the professional level in Europe is approaching. Values are being functionalised, if not transferred to a mere subjectivity. The ethics of labour and the passion for creation have reduced their intensity. Europe has committed itself to the path of enlightenment, but is late in opening its vision upon enlightenment itself and upon the historical conditions of its emergence. Religion is regarded suspiciously, while alienation, loneliness and violence are widespread. The techniques used to obtain, to exert and to perpetuate power, used by Mussolini, Hitler and Stalin, come back insidiously, overwhelmed by relativist conceptions. Once a subject of world history, Europe is today absent from the adoption of the geo-political decisions or is just one of the participants in the discussion. The dynamics of other cultural areas or cultures started to exceed it several decades ago.

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Never does reality have only one alternative to evolution. There are several possibilities lying right in front of it. Given the state of affairs, what are the evolution alternatives of today's Europe?

Let us observe, as a first step in finding answers, the diagnoses given of the European societies of our time. We shall take into consideration the past three decades, certainly maintaining the possibility of examining things much further into the past.

For instance, Jean François Lyotard brought to our attention the "postmodern society": a society suspending its comprehensive and legitimating visions of modernity, reporting the systematic organizations and confiding itself to the "games" of the structures in which people have already got lost. In the essay *La condition postmoderne* (1979), the philosopher talked about a "un changement de fonction des Etats : à partir de ce syndrome se forme une image de la société qui oblige) réviser sérieusement les approches présentées en alternative. Disons pour faire bref que les

fonctions de régulation et donc de reproduction sont et seront de plus en plus retirées à des administrateurs et confiées à des automates. La grande affaire devient et deviendra de disposer des informations que ceux-ci devront avoir en mémoire afin que les bonnes décisions soient prises. La disposition des informations est et sera celle des décideurs. Elle n'est déjà plus constituée par la classe politique traditionnelle, mais par une couche composite formée de chefs d'entreprises, de hauts fonctionnaires, de dirigeants des grands organismes professionnels, syndicaux, politiques, confessionnels"<sup>1</sup>. The current European society is the scene of a wide-scale atomization.

Another French philosopher talked about the "era of the void": socialization is no longer made in a "disciplinary" way, as was the case in the 17<sup>th</sup> century, nor by "captivation" as in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, but by the stimulation of personal subjectivity on various channels. We have entered, Gilles Lipovetsky says in the book *L'ère du vide. Essais sur l'individualisme contemporain* (1983), a "société flexible fondée sur l'information et la stimulation des besoins, le sexe et la prise en compte des « facteurs humains », le culte du naturel, de la cordialité et de l'humour"<sup>2</sup>. There was produced a "*mutation anthropologique qui s'accomplit sous nos yeux et que chacun de nous ressent bien en quelque manière, fût-ce confusément. Un nouveau stade de l'individualisme se met en place: le narcissisme désigne le surgissement d'un profil inédit de l'individu dans ses rapports avec lui-même et son corps, avec autrui, le monde et le temps, au moment où le « capitalisme » autoritaire cède le pas à un capitalisme hédoniste et permissif*"<sup>3</sup>. The individual, fallen into the cultivation of his/her subjectivity, becomes the new catalyst of social life.

Peter Sloterdijk shows, in *Kritik der zynischen Vernunft* (1983), that in Europe there has never resulted from enlightenment any enlightened society of human beings, who reciprocally respect their humanity, but rather, the instrumentalization of the other<sup>4</sup>. Current societies expand their cynical behaviour. Instead of increasing people's solidarity, these societies develop an instrumentalization. The ancient Greeks' *kynismos* required "naturalism" from the Greek aristocrats (as did Diogenes of Sinope from Plato). Cynics today are hostile to naturalism. Once, David challenged Goliath, now Goliath reminds David who is "above", "the strongest" and who is the "vassal".

We are in a "society of risk" – Ulrich Beck assures us with his work *Riskiengesellschaft. Auf dem Weg in eine andere Moderne* (1986). The explosion in the nuclear reactor of Chernobyl is already the clue to everyone's endangerment so that a new species of differences between individuals disappears. On the other hand, "dangers become blind passengers of normal consumption". Object production goes hand in hand with risk generation. There are not only personal risks as, in the meantime, risks have become "global"<sup>5</sup>. One cannot make a step in reality without stepping into risks.

Already with the expansion of the commercial implementation of cybernetics, after World War II, we were able to talk about a society of decisions informed about the stage and conditions for attaining objectives. The rapid development of computers and their use in communications, the widespread use of the Internet inside and outside the military defence systems did not do anything else but to highlight the "information society"<sup>6</sup>. As any worker knows today, information increases the achievements of works of any complexity. Mention should be made, however, that information is abundant in any field. Most of the times, the quantity of the information cannot be stopped and, without the techniques to process and use it, information overwhelms us to inhibition.

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<sup>1</sup> Jean François Lyotard, *La condition postmoderne*, Les Éditions de Minuit, Paris, 1979, p. 30.

<sup>2</sup> Gilles Lipovetsky, *L'ère du vide. Essais sur l'individualisme contemporain*, Gallimard, Paris, 1983, p. 9.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 56.

<sup>4</sup> Peter Sloterdijk, *Kritik der zynischen Vernunft*, Suhrkamp, Frankfurt am Main, 1983.

<sup>5</sup> Ulrich Beck, *Riskiengesellschaft. Auf dem Weg in eine andere Moderne*, Suhrkamp, Frankfurt am Main, 1986, p. 27.

<sup>6</sup> Dirk Baecker, *Studien zur nächsten Gesellschaft*, Suhrkamp, Frankfurt am Main, 2007, talks about the "computer society".

If one has in mind the wide infrastructure developed in the meantime to transfer information, which organises flows, then one may legitimately speak of a “communication society”. Most probably, in economy, the newest sector on the historic scale is that of communications. Still, is the “communication society” a “society of communication”? For the moment the answer is rather negative if by communication we have in view not only the news broadcast but also something more profound – the agreement between speakers and listeners on a certain topic. It is obvious that we change information more easily, in larger quantities and at larger distances than we did previously, that we have in our desk computer an instrument of rapid access to libraries, to archives of publications, to friends all around the world and that, to sum up, information travels fast so that coordinated action is more feasible than ever before. However, the major problems remain unsolved, at least for the moment: communication has been reduced to news broadcasting, the distinction between news and fuss has been broken, the importance of news has been brought to the same level, some are irreversibly the receivers while others have set up their monopoly on information, the elegance of surprising formulations has ceased before the mechanics of the economic messages and the bureaucratic approach took under its control the aesthetic self-consciousness.

It is just that, meanwhile, the “information society” has been replaced by one that comprises it – the “knowledge society”<sup>7</sup>. It has been long known – and Hegel exploited such an intuition at his time – that people live in communities sharing concepts, but it is only in the past decades that the production of concepts spread and accelerated so that human life depends on this production. If one calls knowledge this production of concepts and if one observes that public decisions are claimed from science, then one may also definitely say that we have entered the “knowledge society”. More recently, a question has rightfully been raised: is the “knowledge society” also a “wisdom society”<sup>8</sup>? The answer to this question is legitimately at least hesitating.

After World War II, the means of communication – radio, TV and the written press – spread widely, became transnational and even global (BBC even inaugurated the transnational radio, while CNN inaugurated the transnational television). On the other hand, the mass media have become autonomous so that they are no longer just a means, but an enterprise in itself, with their own purposes. Trusts gradually replace the employees in public communication. Horkheimer and Adorno, with their famous *Dialektik der Aufklärung* (1946), drew the following conclusion: we are entering the “cultural industry” that changes the previous public communication from its foundations and leaves serious questions behind<sup>9</sup>. Isn't it that, referring to the mass media, we can no longer speak about serving democracy but about its use for particular purposes? Isn't it that the aspiration of rendering reality has been replaced in the meantime by the struggle to create reality?

These questions advance up to the present day. We must say that we have entered a “media-related society”, which means at least three things: the autonomization of the mass media to the point of becoming a competitor on the widespread markets in the era of globalization; the transformation of media networks into power centres together with the economic, political, military and ecclesial centres; the dependence of reality on mediatization<sup>10</sup>. One may talk about whether the “media-related society” subsumes late modernity or whether it is just one of its manifestations. I am, obviously, in favour of the latter interpretation.

In fact, what prevents the “media-related society” from being a “society of transparency”? In the literature on the “media-related society”, from Horkheimer to Adorno and Vattimo, the main arguments have been formulated: a) through its way of acting, mediatization spreads the “common factor” of facts and cultivates the “levelling” of values; b) “functionality” is more cultivated within

<sup>7</sup> Peter F. Drucker, *Post-capitalist Society*, Harper&Collins, New York, 1993.

<sup>8</sup> Paolo Blasi, “The European University – Towards a Wisdom-Based Society”, in *Higher Education in Europe*, Vol. 31, Number 4, December 2006.

<sup>9</sup> Max Horkheimer and Theodor W. Adorno, *Dialektik der Aufklärung*, Fischer, Frankfurt am Main, 1973.

<sup>10</sup> Andrei Marga, *Diagnoze. Articole și eseuri*, Eikon, Cluj, 2008, pp. 50-54.

systems and less within the initiatives for change; c) what is intuitive, fragmentary is cultivated to the detriment of the subtle but tenacious correlations of the world; d) what is “consumable” is spreading to the detriment of durable values; e) the classical distinctions between the necessary and the accidental, the essential and the casual, truth and rumour, value and improvisation are blurred. Vattimo drew the conclusion that today people do not understand the situations more that their predecessors did, but on the contrary<sup>11</sup>.

In the book *La sociedad invisible* (Espasa, Madrid, 2004), the intelligent and very cultivated philosopher from Zaragoza, Daniel Innerarity, gives the following diagnosis: if one tries to interpret philosophically the society at the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, then most of the arguments are on the side of the “invisible society”, which means: “a society escaping our theoretical comprehension and our practical control”<sup>12</sup>; a society characterised by “complexity, contingency, non-transparency” where feelings such as “non-transparency, incertitude” are lived; a society where there are perceived “less objective variables than possibilities”<sup>13</sup>; a society dominated by a culture articulated less on recognizable than on the inherent “suspicion” of the “uncertainty”<sup>14</sup>. “Invisibility is the result of a complex process where mobility, volatility, fragmentation and fusions meet, as well as the multiplication of new realities and the disappearance of explanatory blocs, new alliances and the confluence of interests that are difficult to understand. Distribution of power is more volatile; the determination of causes and responsibilities is more complex; interlocutors are instable; presences are virtual, while enigmas are diffuse. Everything contributes to the fact that we are living in a more and more enigmatic world”<sup>15</sup>.

A few years ago, Klaus Eder and Jürgen Habermas – the latter in the memorable debate with Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, printed under the title *Dialektik der Säkularisierung. Über Vernunft und Religion* (2005) – coined the formula of the “post-secular society”<sup>16</sup>, considering that in the formation of the individuals’ reasons for action a profound change has come up”, which claims, more than in previous decades, its religious origin. Modernity assumed the separation of profane activities, political and economic mainly, from religion, as well as the autonomization of the secularised field in relation to the religious sphere; late modernity brings the reorganisation of the relation between the great forms of the spirit (science, arts, philosophy, religion) and a new motivation for actions.

Historians tell us that we have entered the “society of lies”. With *Unsere Lügengesellschaft*, Wolfgang Reinhard made the analysis of the presence of lies in the economy, the mass media, science, sentimental life, education and, especially, politics. With such a support, he tried to argue three theses. The first one is the thesis of the unprecedented expansion of lies. “Lies prove to be not only usual, but also necessary, and even friendly for the human being”<sup>17</sup>. The second thesis is that of the complicity in lies of those who lie and of those who are being lied to. According to this thesis, the political lie of those who govern is part of the political lie that includes everyone<sup>18</sup>. Finally, the third one is the thesis of political ineptitude, in the usual meaning, of those accepting complicity. “Sceptical and self-critical people are, because of this, weak politicians”<sup>19</sup>, especially in this era when politics separated from content-related problems and became a simple “fight between individuals”<sup>20</sup>.

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<sup>11</sup> Gianni Vattimo, *Societatea transparentă*, Pontica, Constanța, 1995.

<sup>12</sup> Daniel Innerarity, *La sociedad invisible*, Espasa, Madrid, 2004, p. 14.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 16.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 89.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 65.

<sup>16</sup> Jürgen Habermas, Joseph Ratzinger, *Dialektik der Säkularisierung. Über Vernunft und Religion*, Herder, Freiburg, Basel, Wien, 2005.

<sup>17</sup> Wolfgang Reinhard, *Unsere Lügengesellschaft*, Murmann, Hamburg, 2006, p. 9.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 13.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 14.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 30.

An author, Alexandra Viatteau, accuses the “infantilization” in the current European societies. We have entered the “infantile society”, as we are told in *La société infantile* (2007). Some time ago, people behaved more vertically, being motivated by beliefs that, in the end, alluded to more or less organised visions upon the world. Today, almost all have become individuals that move about loosely, without being constrained by beliefs, under subjective impulses, with the feeling of an unrestricted freedom<sup>21</sup>.

Another author talks about a “society of indifference”. In *La société d’indifférence* (2009), Alain-Gérard Slama reveals “un mal nouveau” in Europe after 1990, represented by the proliferation of indifference due to a utilitarian mentality. The cult of the result, of efficiency, has replaced the faith in principles and indirectly has made room for the concentration of power into only one hand. The electoral body is disconnected from public debate; political life no longer has certain reference points, while situations are considered projects of the leader. Left alone, the individual takes refuge in the “tribalism” ensured by different “identities”<sup>22</sup>.

Apart from all these diagnoses systematically elaborated and from the multitude of diagnoses owed to previous decades and centuries, I may say that Europe has entered the “uncertain society”<sup>23</sup>. I mentioned this in two previous texts<sup>24</sup>. The understanding of the present, the conception and assumption of the future hold many more uncertainties than certainties. As many as there were, in the field of knowledge and visions, certitudes have been subject to deconstruction, relativization and attacks. That is why, for Europeans, the problem preceding any other problem is the reconstruction of certitudes and the way out of the dissolving relativism of the era. Lucidly taking into account the uncertainties has nothing to do with lamentation or fear, but rather with making an effort to analyse in more depth the world and the human condition, as well as an effort towards responsible conceptualization.

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After establishing the European identity, I have shown that it is possible to grasp the European specificity by taking into consideration the technical competence, the economic behaviour, the administrative capacity, the universalised legislation, the liberty understood as autonomy, the politics based on argumentative debates and the spiritual culture oriented by a *telos*. This identity is “challenged” today by multiple difficulties and problems. Does not the expansion of cynicism, of the void of values, of lies, of consumption, of risks, of infantilism and of indifference have an alternative? Do we stick to the dismantlement of the integrative visions of the world, to the spread of knowledge to the detriment of wisdom, to the expansion of information without communication? Are we from now on condemned to uncertainty?

I share the belief that Europe was separated a long time ago from its classical period, from a history in which it held the leading role in the world evolution and that realities have to be taken into consideration in a lucid way. These realities just because we harbour illusions. It is necessary to have a rough estimation of what already is and to shape an alternative. Where does the reconstruction of Europe have to begin from?

A linear solution no longer exists in what regards cultures, as well as a monism no longer helps, as the causality of the situations is complex. I consider that the positive alternative for Europe, which is able to trigger several changes, resides in a multi-faceted turning point, which means: the reassumption of democracy not only as a technique of periodical election, but also as a form of life; the reassumption of the social state under the new conditions; the reassumption of a

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<sup>21</sup> Alexandra Viatteau, *La société infantile*, Hora Decima, Paris, 2007, pp. 30-31.

<sup>22</sup> Alain-Gérard Slama, *La société d’indifférence*, Plon, Paris, 2009, p. 180.

<sup>23</sup> Andrei Marga, *Diagnoze. Articole și eseuri*, Eikon, Cluj, 2008, pp. 61-63.

<sup>24</sup> See also Andrei Marga, *Criza și după criză*, Eikon, Cluj, 2010, pp. 101-108.

naturalised conception of the economy; the reassumption of values in European practices; the reassumption of an unrestricted understanding and of the meaning of science. Let us elaborate.

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In modern societies, and not only there, politics is always the subsystem setting the direction for evolution. Other subsystems (the economy, ideologies etc.) may play, in determined situations, the leading role, but politics is the one setting the direction. In democracy, the electorate's (people's) sovereign will is the deciding one, at least theoretically.

Today, European democracies have to overcome some difficulties that may be empirically traced: the political and civil apathy, the lack of courage and vision of decisions-makers, the exclusionist decision-making processes and the small number of true leaders. If current tendencies are not suppressed – as many disappointed citizens refuse to participate in the electoral process, and political parties do not succeed in mobilizing the electorate and in presenting convincing political alternatives – then we shall find ourselves in a democracy of bureaucratised elites, which lost its connection with democracy as the citizens' power. Decisionism, in its varied forms, will insidiously replace the sovereignty of the people.

As Norberto Bobbio noticed, in *Le Futur de la démocratie* (2007), democracy, in its proper meaning, today faces certain “challenges” which claim new clarifications: the passage from the “*domestic economy*” to the “*market economy*” was made on a large scale a long time ago. This triggered the increase in importance of decision-making “specialists” and affected the decision-making process; ample and powerful bureaucratic apparatuses were formed to replace the democratic debate; not only has the civil society been emancipated from the “political state”, but it also controls it less and less<sup>25</sup>. European democracies have to overcome these “obstacles” and to find institutional solutions to some crucial problems: the distinction between political pluralism and democracy, very well knowing that pluralism cannot exist without democracy; the distinction between “public” and “the group interests presented as public”; the restoration of legitimacy as a basis for legality; the functioning of democracy under the conditions set by the concentrations of economic, political and media-related power; the quality of the legislation; the presentation of effective programmes anchored in political values in electoral campaigns so that the citizen is able to choose fully aware of the facts. If such steps are taken, then the European democracy may significantly pass from the mere technique of a periodical election of representatives to democracy as a form of life. Other steps implied by this passage are the denunciation of cultural confusions accompanying European democracies today (mistaking pluralism for a diversity of opinions neutralising one another, the reduction of democracy to formally free elections, the consideration of the executive power as property and not as an obligation to solve problems, the instrumentalist conception of laws, the understanding of the electorate as a community saying “yes” or “no” in the referendum).

Many observers of Europe in recent decades say there is a lack of true leaders capable of taking Europe outside crises. There is no Adenauer, no de Gaulle, no de Gasperi, not even a Willy Brandt or Jacques Delors or Helmut Schmidt. In fact, the situation is very complicated. Besides, comparisons are hard to be made as, before anything else, there are different contexts. What we may definitely say is that European decisions do not have the courage and vision of a broad and long-term perspective. Jürgen Habermas rightfully draws attention to the authorities' democratic duty to inform citizens so that they may form an informed opinion on what they have to vote. This is the only way to prevent “a formalistic understanding of democracy. The question is this: does participation in democratic procedures have only the functional meaning of silencing a defeated minority, or does it have a deliberative meaning of including the arguments of citizens into the democratic process of opinion – and will – formation?”. The implementation of procedures does not

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<sup>25</sup> Norberto Bobbio, *Le futur de la démocratie*, Seuil, Paris, 2007.



exempt us from adequately informing citizens and from a public, argumentative debate. This being the state of things, “what is needed in Europe is a revitalised political class that overcomes its own defeatism with a bit more perspective, resoluteness and cooperative spirit. Democracy depends on the belief of the people that there is some scope left for collectively shaping a challenging future”<sup>26</sup>.

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The economic liberalism – which led to the greatest dynamics of the European and world economy – came into being through the removal of all limitations to individual initiative. The individual was considered capable of rationally managing his/her life and of satisfying their interests, the state’s mission being that of ensuring the order that makes every individual capable of acting as an autonomous person. Classical liberalism is associated to personalism as a vision on the man.

In the meantime, the initial hope that the multitude of personalised individuals will be able to satisfy their interest through simple market competition has been shattered. The market did not prove to be that economic regulator which is capable not only of ensuring the use of resources and the largest tangible production, but also the distribution of goods so that each citizen is able to partake of the benefits. At the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, European socialism had already claimed this limit of the market capacity. Some of the socialists rejected the free market and anticipated state controls, therefore creating the aspiration of a “welfare state”<sup>27</sup>. Such an aspiration, however, proved to be an illusion: as there is no power in the world capable of controlling all individuals’ opinions, there is no power capable of solving all their problems. A state assuming too many responsibilities cannot satisfy most of them. As early as the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, reformers became aware of two things: the market economy needs a corrective and the solution is represented by reforms for distributing goods in a society so that each social category is able to enjoy the benefits of development. Bismark took the political initiative and, later on, Keynes was the one who advocated the equilibrium of public costs, tax policies and credit policies. The “social state” was set up on such a prediction of our time, i.e. that of the “*soziale Marktwirtschaft*”, which allowed for the rapid development of the post-war society and was assumed in the very fundamentals of the European Union.

Today, the “social state” is challenged by tough realities. On the one hand, taxes and contributions have increased continuously; therefore the sustainability of the social allowances of the “social state” has become a problem. The accumulation of public debts on social expenses excessively burdens future budgets. On the other hand, the “social state” was not able to sufficiently reduce unemployment nor the social, civil or cultural integration of the population. Today, the “social state” finds itself at a crossroads.

What is there to be done? In the meantime, on the European political scene, liberalism and the neo-liberalism conceived in the ‘30s (as an effort to revive the personal values of classical liberalism) have been replaced by a neo-liberalism inspired by Milton Friedman<sup>28</sup>, who turns the competition on the market into the basis of the state. The social measures of the state are considered to be mere relics that will have to be reabsorbed by the development owed to the market. This neo-liberalism takes the state back to the sum of individuals, discredits the corrective intervention of the state, confines the state to the maintenance of order, considers it a mere instrument and propagates apoliticism. Especially in the countries with a weak democratic tradition, leaders believe that it is time to conclude the deals and to give in to the “social state”. They recommend every individual to make it on their own and bring back to the ideological scene not only a social Darwinism, but also the well-known anti-social accents of Mussolini and Hitler.

<sup>26</sup> Jürgen Habermas, “Leadership and Leitkultur”, in *New York Times*, 23<sup>rd</sup> October 2010.

<sup>27</sup> Pierre Rosanvallon, *La crise de l’État providence*, Seuil, Paris, 1992.

<sup>28</sup> Milton Friedman, *Kapitalismul und Freiheit*, Seewald, Stuttgart, 1971.

Among the position-takings in the last decades regarding the “social state”, the most notable are those of Pierre Rosanvallon and Reinhard Marx. In *La nouvelle question sociale. Repenser l'État-providence* (1995), the French philosopher believes that the way in which “citizenship” and “civil culture” are understood has to be re-analysed and, more precisely, the “sampling (*prélèvement*)”<sup>29</sup> has to be modified. The “social state” is not historically overcome, as the propagandists of the current neo-liberalism insist, but it is something that has to be assumed and reorganised. With *Das Kapital. Ein Plädoyer für den Menschen* (2010), archbishop Reinhard Marx takes another important step: during the evolution of the market economy in the past decades “poverty moved closer to the centre of society”<sup>30</sup>. Late modernity develops traits of “primitive capitalism”. It is not a solution to go back to the “centralised economy” completely controlled by the state; neo-liberalism is not a solution either. Against its promises, neo-liberalism expands poverty and injustice and brings Karl Marx to the fore again, aggravating social differences and complaints. The well-known Catholic theologian draws attention to the fact that “justice (*Gerechtigkeit*)” will have to be reinstated as one of the values in current societies. A few other steps have to be immediately taken. “We have to ask ourselves what social justice can mean today – given the globalised economy and regarding those, so many, who are excluded from the market process and from the economic process”<sup>31</sup>. Reinhard Marx pleads for a distinction of the “social state (*Sozialstaat*)” in relation to the “warden state (*Versorgungstaat*)” and the reconstruction of the “social state”. “The state should not be removed from its own responsibility. It has to invest all efforts to strengthen the citizens’ self-responsibility as well as the construction of new forms of solidarity. Therefore, I plead for a powerful state, which establishes the trustworthy frameworks for a community in which everyone has a chance”<sup>32</sup>. Solidarity remains one of the fundamentals of society and cannot be derived from mere market dynamics.

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In 2007, Paribas Banque of Paris was not able to return the deposited money to some clients. The situation was repeated in the U.S.A., in 2008, when Lehmann Brothers, who had massively invested in real estate, was no longer able to honour the clients’ demands. Therefore, a financial crisis resulted, which afterwards transformed into an economic crisis (reduction in investments, decrease in sales, lay-offs etc.) and into the decrease in economic growth. The governments of the main economic powers (the U.S.A., Germany, France etc.) immediately intervened with large sums of money to support the banks in relaunching loans. The measures adopted to regulate the situations and to prevent new financial crises have not been adopted yet. Given the background, where the intervention to support the banks increased the states’ public debt, the crisis of the sovereign debts appeared: in 2011, the stock exchange markets started to react negatively to the financial uncertainties connected with the increase in public debt, the price of gold soared, while the price of oil plummeted. We are now in the following situation: the financial crisis displays new phenomenalizations in a context where profound measures to uproot it are missing completely. The theorem starting to win ground is owed to an excellent history of crises lived by humankind in the last centuries: crises similar to that of 2007-2011 are possible at any time within the current economic systems. “The lesson of history, then, is that even as institutions and policy makers improve, these will always be a temptation to stretch the limits”<sup>33</sup>.

What is there to be done? A crisis similar to that of 2007-2011 has its causes intertwined in a complicate way. Some are related to the market as such, i.e. to the self-regulating capacity of the

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<sup>29</sup> Pierre Rosanvallon, *La nouvelle question sociale. Repenser l'État-providence*, Seuil, Paris, 1995, p. 100.

<sup>30</sup> Reinhard Marx, *Das Kapital. Ein Plädoyer für den Menschen*, Knauer, München, 2010, p. 162.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibidem*, pp. 174-175.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 178.

<sup>33</sup> Carmen M. Reinhart, Kenneth S. Rogoff, *This Time is Different. Eight Centuries of Financial Folly*, Princeton University Press, 2009, pp. 291-292.

market. Others are related to the virtual expansion of financing (along with the large-scale transformation of banks into commercial banks and with the unlimited expansion of credits), to the current over-production, to the over-development of synthetic materials, to excessive debts, in one word to the replacement of the “natural economy” (where the use value keeps the exchange value under control) with the “built economy, mostly virtual”. How can we keep these causes in check and prevent major crises?

A banker suggests that we notice how in current economies many things are presented in an academic way, but are dishonest. The financial and economic rationality is no longer necessarily rational<sup>34</sup>. It is not necessary to abandon the market economy, but “new regulations” are required. A top economist, Paul Krugman, observes that economies are dependent on politics, so it is in that realm that the solution has to be found. Credit flows have to be relaunched and the expenses have to be covered, but the policy of “deregulation” has to be abandoned for good<sup>35</sup>. Jacques Attali calls for “a true revolution in the theoretical framework”, aside from neo-liberalism and providentialism, and, finally, a cultural change<sup>36</sup>. With a step forward, Cardinal Angelo Scola draws our attention, in *Buone ragioni per la vita in comune* (2010), to the fact that in the current crisis there are “precise cultural and anthropological roots that, in the end, lead to the detachment of the personal subject and of communication from the economic life”<sup>37</sup>. That is why the crisis will be overcome only “by going back to the most basic human needs, starting from work”, having in mind the fact that the market and bureaucracy have proved to be incapable of ensuring not only economic efficiency but also what European culture understood by “good governance” and “good life (*buona vita*)”. This in-depth line in the search for the causes of the crisis and of the solution to overcome it can be found in *Caritas in veritate* (2009), the famous encyclical of Pope Benedict XVI. The Pope rightfully showed that we, as humanity, have entered a new historical situation, with unprecedented interdependencies, but we do not have the right ethics<sup>38</sup>. Now, above all, we need a comprehensive view on the world and a “new humanistic synthesis”. In fact, “the crisis makes us plan our way again, give new rules to ourselves and find new forms of engagement, go towards the positive and claim the negative. This way, the crisis is the opportunity to distinguish and plan”<sup>39</sup>. There definitely is an anthropological, cultural and spiritual conditioning of the economy, and this is the premise that we have to leave from.

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If we take into consideration these conditionings, then we get to see the values employed by any economy. Reference is not made here only to financial and material values in a comprehensive meaning. It is also about civic, moral and political values. One cannot speak only about values employed in the economic behaviour: the position of work among the individuals’ preferences, the place of material goods in their lives etc. It is also about the founding values, such as truth, the good and the beautiful in the functioning of the economy.

European culture has explicitly assumed values – freedom and justice, first of all – and has remained strong and steady in that direction, being a culture of values. Today, in Europe, there is a hesitation to speak about values, falsely believing that efficiency, the result and the approval given by a group exempt one from a thematisation of values. Functionalism has overwhelmed ethical interrogations. Concretism, on the other hand, that vision according to which the solution in a

<sup>34</sup> Roger-Pol Droit, Francois Henrot, *Le banquier et le philosophe*, Plan, Paris, 2010, p. 24, p. 83.

<sup>35</sup> Paul Krugman, *The Return of Depression Economics and the Crisis of 2008*, W.W. Norton & Company, New York, Rondon, 2009, p. 175 and the following.

<sup>36</sup> Jacques Attali, *La crise et après*, Fayard, Paris, 2008, pp. 145-150.

<sup>37</sup> Angelo Scola, *Buone ragioni per la vita in comune. Religione, politica, economia*, Mondadori, Milano, 2010, p. 58.

<sup>38</sup> Benedict XVI, *Die Liebe in der Wahrheit. Die Sozialenzyklika “Caritas in veritate”*, Herder, Freiburg, Basel, Wien, 2009, p. 22.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibidem*, pp. 47-48.

concrete case (such as the creation of a bakery replacing the solution to feeding a community) takes more and more the place of the solutions seriously and durably conceived. Functionalism and concretism have set aside the interrogation of values in European culture. Not only is this originally related to the explicit assumption of values, but also remains European as long as it programmatically assumes its own values.

Certainly, the presence of values in actions and systems of actions is inevitable. In fact, choosing among efficiency, equality, freedom, solidarity etc. cannot be avoided and represents a choice of values. Any rule within the human life space implies values, at least in the sense that the rule itself results from the assumption of certain idealizations or that the rule as such materialises a value. In fact, we cannot separate rules from values nor vice-versa.

To make the presence of values as intuitive as possible, let us take into consideration the difference signalled between “having a profession” and “acting like a professional”. One may have the necessary instruction for a profession, but they act as professionals in the given field of competence only if they also make use of certain values: devotion, commitment to finding solutions, willingness to make efforts and even sacrifices. These values are not instrumental, but they condition that “good job”, which is the condition for success in a profession.

European culture is now faced with an alternative: does it leave its values absorbed by functionalism and Concretism spreading today or does it reaffirm its own values? Does this culture let itself be included into the nostalgia of a leading position in a past that cannot be brought back to life or does it try to explicitly promote its values? Does European culture settle for what it receives from other cultural areas in late modernity (for instance, consumption as an end in itself) or does it update its main messages (such as democracy)? I believe that Nietzsche’s urge to consider life a creation of values and to renew the European values in relation to the cultural heritage at large today gains importance in a self-trusting Europe.

Europeans today live in captivity with the present, with a culture somehow amputated by the lived dimension of the future. Not long ago, Daniel Innerarity, published *Le futur et ses ennemis. De la confiscation de l’avenir et l’espérance politique* (2008), after having researched the approach to the future in social sciences as well as the contemporary consciousness in a series of lectures delivered at Sorbonne. This has been, until now – leaving aside a series of books, such as Pierre-André Taguieff, *L’effacement de l’avenir* (2000), Konrad Paul Liessman, *Zukunft Kommt! Über säkularisierte Heilserwartungen und ihre Enttäuschung* (2007), Marc Angé, *Où est passé l’avenir?* (2008) – the most profound analysis of the political and intellectual efforts to destroy the consciousness of the future. No one has ever grasped the many ramifications of these efforts in a more synthetic and clear manner as did the eminent professor from Zaragoza. His thesis is the following: “the highest complexity favours a presentism lacking any perspective”<sup>40</sup> in the captivity of which we live today, a “presentism” (or “instanteism”) preventing us from making coherent decisions. Consequently, “the most urgent task of contemporary democracies is not that of accelerating the social process, but that of recovering the future. The future has to become again a priority objective in democratic societies. The future has to find again its political importance. Without this reference to the future, a continuity of human things – all those implying a prediction, the capacity for imagining future scenarios – and we could never rise up to the incumbent challenge unless we examine, based on our criteria of justice, the paths of the future that we claim to open or close through our decisions”<sup>41</sup>.

On numerous pages, Daniel Innerarity speaks about the “tyranny of the present”, which he illustrates in various ways. Along with the decline of “great narratives”, to assume Jean François Lyotard’s term (in *La condition postmoderne*, 1979), people focus on obstinately exploring what already is (“the acquired rights”) to the detriment of the articulation of a better future. Current

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<sup>40</sup> Daniel Innerarity, *Le futur et ses ennemis. De la confiscation de l’avenir et l’espérance politique*, Flammarion, Paris, 2008, p. 49.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibidem*, pp. 45-46.

policies envisage more the “administration” of what already is than the positive configuration of the future. Contemporary democracies become more and more dependent on the mass-media (“media-related democracies”) and fall under the control of the “insignificant” (we are looking at the “triumph of the insignificance”). A “society of the immediate satisfaction” gains ground. The expenses foreseen in the budgetary policies are financed not so much through taxes, but through loans and debts. The pension legislation indicates acute financing problems. The waste management, in the environment policy, is performed by transferring obligations to the future generation.

Obviously, Daniel Innerarity takes the arguments for the thesis of the absorption of the future by the present from the objective ethics, public policies and approaches to the future, which are cultivated today. The ethics widely spread on the surface of the society is a combination of “instanteism” (“seize the day!”) and “endism” (“this is the chance, perhaps the only chance!”); therefore, individuals struggle to exploit what already is, amputated by the future, by the consciousness of what may be. Public policies – health, education, environment and even the states’ budgetary constructions – deliberately ignore the future, placing themselves under the untroubled management of what already is. Daniel Innerarity insists upon the current expansion of the techniques to anticipate the future (“prognoses”). If, in the past, the future was radically conceived to be a completely different one, through somewhat romantic procedures, “irrational” to a certain extent, today the techniques of scientific forecasting proliferate, given the denunciation of the “double form of fatality: against the idea according to which the future is a pre-existent reality and against the idea of an inexorable destiny over which we have no power”<sup>42</sup>. Modernity is associated with the vision of the open, construable future that can be anticipated with a certain probability. The image of the future permitted however by the current prognoses is rather the multitude of events with different meanings and fundamentally hit by “uncertainty”. Today, “the future seems to be more uncertain than ever before”<sup>43</sup>. Already through the very procedures of forecasting, the future is more inaccessible than before. “Our knowledge of the future is inversely proportional to the progress and innovation”<sup>44</sup>. It is closely related to the generation of “opacity” connected with the future, because, as things today show us, the better we know the causal intertwining of events, the less we understand where they lead.

Daniel Innerarity sees himself obliged to find an alternative to the currently wide-spread understanding of politics as a simple administration of actual duties, amputated by reforms, accompanied by “negative votes” against existing governments and by a large absenteeism in elections. “Without anticipation, the political action is reduced to the management of emergencies, when there is no manoeuvre margin left. As Talleyrand used to say, ‘when it is urgent, it’s already too late’. Politics abandons itself to improvising solutions in difficult situations, short-term opportunities are ordered, while temporary solutions replace the great configuration projects, so that problems themselves end by reappearing on the political agenda. Politics therefore loses its role as an actor envisaging the future as adopting the status of a reactive player or of a simple technician of damage”<sup>45</sup>. Against the background created by the dissolution of the “great narratives” of history, which led politics to the temptation of a manipulative utopia, as well as against the background created by the compromise, through its incapacity to give durable solutions, of the “realistic politics” established instead of the “utopian politics” – the “renovation of politics” means the recovery of that understanding of politics that connects it with the present and with the future at the same time. “The recovery of politics goes through a reformulation of the cognitive anticipation of the future and of its reconfiguration, given the context of the current complexity. There will be no better future unless we form an image about the future. When there is a wish to modify the world,

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<sup>42</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 61.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 64.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 80.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibidem*, pp. 86-87.

the first step resides in a correct analysis of the future, so that different possible futures may be represented, starting from the one that is desirable”<sup>46</sup>. Between the utopian “centralising planning”, which has been compromised, and the absence of any consultation in today’s societies, which have already been compromised as well, there is still room for a “democratic self-determination of the society” that has become indispensable – a self-determination within which the “disagreement” is admitted as being natural.

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It is not only the future that is opaque. Science itself has become opaque, promising us the knowledge of what already exists. If we were to conduct even a brief survey among the top scientific researchers, we would observe not only the acuity and sometimes the expansion of specialised knowledge, but also the confusing character of the representation of the discipline and, especially, of the overall picture of sciences. The system of sciences has become opaque for specialists and, even more, for the public. Inevitably, this fact has consequences regarding decisions. As scientific knowledge has the prestige of rationality itself and because the understanding of scientific knowledge has become a problem, it is in the course of the implementation of knowledge that not only rationality is being promoted, but opacity as well. For instance, there is a large number of therapists that do not have any culture in what regards the meaning of the human being; there are engineers building highways without knowing the relief of an area; there are researchers measuring combinations and processes, but not understanding the natural theories; there are agronomists unable to manage a farm; there are intellectuals writing essays on ethics, but having no knowledge about society.

Submitting oneself to science, i.e. not to mythology, prejudices, pseudo-science, is not only European, but salutary as well. Science should be treasured more than it is in today’s media-related society, which mixes different calibres of knowledge with anything else. Today, however, in connection with the understanding of science, there is a dominating narrowing of perspective that damages science and its implementation. It is in this context that three problems have been posed, due to the reflections in the past decades: the map of current sciences, the prerequisite of scientific knowledge and the importance of vision in the implementation of science. Let us briefly indicate their solutions.

We are now already situated after an unprecedented diversification of sciences so that anyone using the singular form of the word has to give an explanation. In fact, we have “analytical and experimental sciences”, “strategic and experimental sciences”, “historical and hermeneutical sciences”, “sciences of critical reflection”, i.e. groups of sciences that are distinguished according to methods, basic conceptualizations, the types of proposition testing, object reference, the pragmatic sense<sup>47</sup>. Many researchers understand science only as “analytical and experimental sciences”, naturally ignoring the rest of the sciences. Not only do they disseminate a false image about science (in the end, they are ethical rules that contain knowledge just as indispensable to human life as the laws of physics and chemistry), but they also contribute to the continual encouragement of a narrow representation of science in European culture.

We are also situated after the varied exploration of scientific knowledge. Since analytical and experimental science has become the decision-making basis not only in technology and production, but also in the organization of institutions, of human interactions and of the individual’s image of himself, a question has been raised: is analytical and experimental science an objective (unconditional), autarchic knowledge (on which no influence is exercised)? After Husserl identified the intentional conditioning of any piece of knowledge, Popper observed that interrogation precedes

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<sup>46</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 87.

<sup>47</sup> The problem was first approached by Jürgen Habermas in *Erkenntnis und Interesse* (1973). See also Andrei Marga, *Filosofia lui Habermas*, Polirom, Iași, 2005.

any other operation of knowledge, Quine showed that any phrase has a meaning dependent on the set of phrases, Kuhn established the dependence of knowledge on paradigms and, through them, on “scientific communities”, while Habermas indicated “the knowledge-constitutive interests” as the most profound conditioning of knowledge – therefore, after all these, scientific knowledge and general knowledge is presented as knowledge conditioned by a “prerequisite” which predicts its meaning. Truth can no longer be separated from meaning<sup>48</sup>. In other words, even the most formalised science has a genesis context and an application context that have to be supplanted by a self-awareness of science. Any science triumphs by answering specific questions, developing their self-awareness in a rational manner.

Finally, we are at the end of a positivist period or, at least, an analytical period in European culture, which has corroborated not only that philosophical options are inevitable (even in their primitive form of pragmatic avoidance of philosophizing), but also that the employment of a philosophy fertilises action and knowledge. From higher ground one can see even farther and more, in width and depth, than from the usual positioning. Philosophizing may invigorate scientific research and artistic representation and also offers more profound benchmarks for action. Today, after having established the irreducible diversity of the types of science and having systematically explored the unarticulated prerequisite of any knowledge, philosophy has the opportunity to develop a concept of rationality that includes science in an integrative understanding, which clarifies its meaning, without preventing the success of scientific action. The theme of the “widened reason”, going from Hegel to Joseph Ratzinger, is revived, as such a reason may set Europe in motion again with everything that is specific to it.

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<sup>48</sup> I analysed this dependency in *Cunoaștere și sens* (1984) and afterwards in *Raționalitate, comunicare, argumentare*, Dacia, Cluj, 1990.