

THE IDEA OF EUROPE

In the words of the organizers of this conference and our hosts, we are here in order to have a dialogue or a discussion »in culture«, and thus this »European encounter in culture«, i.e. this encounter of European intellectuals, can help Europe »to find answers to the challenges of the globalization of the world«, first of all concerning Europe's »responsibility to humanity«.

A few months ago, in November 2007, in the inaugural lecture of the 2007 World Philosophy Day, whose theme was »Dialogue: Between whom? On what?«, I tried to scrutinize, but only a little, those things related to the fashion of dialogue that are taken for granted, as follows.

Many hopes are ascribed to dialogue: It is generally assumed that if peoples, cultures, religions know each other through dialogue, peace would prevail. It is also assumed that when two or more people come together and speak with each other, they have a dialogue –for example, when people belonging to different cultures describe to each other customs prevailing in their respective cultures, it is assumed that they have a dialogue.

If what separates people – as well as interests – are their different world views, modes of life and norms, i.e., what separates them are their cultures, their ideologies, their religions and sects, can »knowing each other's culture« make it possible to live together in peace without any change in their world views, norms, etc.? I very much doubt this. Common ground is necessary for dialogue.

This is why it is necessary to ask: »What are the conditions of the possibility of fruitful dialogue?« Or: »What can be this common ground?« Here I shall say

a few words, bearing in mind above all the conditions of a dialogue aimed at finding ways to tackle the global problems of our day, e.g., poverty, terrorism and other such calamities of our times.

The most basic *objective* conditions seem to be that those engaging in dialogue:

a) *really* have as a common objective finding solutions which lead to a better protection of the human rights of all (involved);

b) are able to make a common objective diagnosis, explanation and evaluation of the situation with which they are dealing, and for this 1) are able to make a common objectification of the issue of dialogue, and 2) possess *knowledge* of the content of the concepts they use, as well as philosophical/ethical value knowledge.

8 Today, bearing in mind recent general and specific developments in Europe: increase of racism and xenophobia, terrorism, the unscrutinized defence of so-called »freedom of expression« as a basic human right, the division of European states into two parts in the face of Kosovo's declaration of independence etc; I shall take a bird's eye view of the intellectual background of these developments through the 20th century on the ground of considerations of European philosophers, which, together with historical developments, lie behind my suggestions.

More than one hundred years ago, a European philosopher, Friedrich Nietzsche, put the finger on a fact of the European politics of his time: What is called nation in Europe, is rather than a *res nata*, a *res facta*, or to put it more correctly, a *res ficta et picta*.

»Owing to the morbid estrangement which the nationality-craze has induced and still induces among the nations who with the help of this craze are at present in power, and do not suspect to what extent the disintegrating policy they pursue must necessarily be only an interlude policy, owing to all this, and much else that is altogether unmentionable at present, the most unmistakable signs that *Europe wishes to be one*, are now overlooked, or arbitrarily and falsely misinterpreted.«¹

Many decades were to be spent, including the experience of two world wars and the butting against what we now call »world problems«, until some European politicians became aware of this wish.

»This artificial nationalism is as dangerous as was the artificial Catholicism, since it is, in its essence, a martial law violently imposed by the few

¹ Friedrich Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*, trans. by Helen Zimmern, The Modern Library, New York 2000, p. 256.

upon the many, and needs cunning, lying and oppression in order to remain in esteem. It is not the interest of the many (of the people), as it is usually said, but before everything else the interest of certain prince-dynasties, as well as of certain trading classes and social classes that promote this nationalism,«² says the same philosopher. Did the endeavor to transgress nationalism and create *one* Europe during the past decades, prove to be, in fact, free from group interests? I very much doubt it. On the contrary we are seeing an increase in racist nationalism.

This same philosopher, Nietzsche, calls the attention of his contemporaries also to another fact, concerning the different situation in a few European countries and especially in Russia: »There the power to will has been long stored up and accumulated, there the will – uncertain whether to be negative or affirmative – waits threateningly... I do not say this as one who desires it; in my heart I should rather prefer the contrary – I mean such an increase in the threatening attitude of Russia, that Europe would have to make up its mind to become equally threatening; namely, *to acquire one will*, by means of a new caste to rule over the continent, a persistent, dreadful will of its own, that can set its aims thousands of years ahead; so that the long spun-out comedy of its petty-stateism and its dynastic as well as its democratic many-willedness, might finally be brought to a close.«³

These predictions of Nietzsche, considered macroscopically, have become true to a great extent in the 20th century. But has Europe to date acquired *one* will?

So far as I can see, Europe, even at this moment, does not appear to possess *one* will. It has to shape it. But a will for what? Or which will? Even »la bonne volonté peut faire aussi de dégats que la mechanceté, si elle n'est pas éclairée,« as another European philosopher, Albert Camus, tells us.

For what do we want one Europe? We have to scrutinize this question; since a bird's eye view of the marking events of our century, characterized, among others, by the spirit of revolt, can show us the result of losing sight, even of an unscrutinized »what for«.

As is well known, we have inherited the idea of the necessity of revolt from the 19th century. Yet revolt against what? And what for? Revolt against the hypocrisy of the morals prevailing in Western democratic society, so that free creative individuals may propose new aims for historical development, is the answer of one of the great preachers of revolt in the 19th century – Nietzsche's answer; revolt against the alienation of man from his own nature, is the answer

² Friedrich Nietzsche, *Human All-too-Human*, op.cit., p. 475.

³ Friedrich Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*, op.cit., p. 208.

of the other preacher of revolt, Marx's answer, so that man may become free, i.e., so that human beings can live »together«, each man being an aim in itself, not a means,

However, those answers concerning revolt *divorced from its »what for«*, caused the wrong echoes. And those wrong echoes, coupled with the image of man of positivism and the historical conditions of the 20th century, shaped contemporary culture⁴ and its tradition of revolt⁵ – a culture characterized by the effacement of Man's face, as I call it – and in action by the prevalence of the »everything is permitted« principle or by the belief that »anything goes«. At the end of the seventies, I worded this state of affairs, approximately, as follows: »We are living in and witnessing one of the most intense moments of the struggle between the two main ideologies of the age, though both appear to be in a deadlock: the deadlock of those who keep speaking of 'human rights' and of those who keep speaking of 'peace' at every opportunity, but do not hesitate to violate them every day – their typical examples being the attacks of the Soviet Union on Hungary and Czechoslovakia, and the Mogadishu, Guatemala, Cuba, Chile issues.«⁶

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What we need now is *knowledge* of what »spiritual Europe« – *das geistige Europa* –, as Husserl calls it, is: i.e., knowledge of what European thinkers – philosophers and poets in the broad sense – have contributed to the mainstream of world history, and knowledge of value and values; we need knowledge of the specificity and amount of *this* contribution, compared with other contributions to this mainstream, as well as knowledge of the significance of this contribution for humanity as a whole – a knowledge to be put forth not only by Europeans, but by thinkers from anywhere in the world, by thinkers who, Europeans or not, dispose of the intellectual tools for such an evaluation.

⁴ By »culture« I mean here the concept of man and the concept of what is valuable, which prevail for a longer or a shorter while in a human group, whose limits can be drawn according to varying view-points and which determine the way of living (so-called »modern« approaches in the sciences, arts, language etc. and also social institutions and their functioning); i.e., I mean here »culture« in the plural sense, which I distinguish from »culture« in the singular, denoting human activities deemed to »cultivate the soul«. For this distinction see my »Cultures and 'World Culture'«, in: *Philosophy and Culture*, Proceedings of the XVIIth World Congress of Philosophy, IV, Editions du Beffroi, Editions Montmorency, Montreal 1986, p. 457-460.

⁵ See also my »Tradition and Revolution or Philosophy and World Politics«, in: *Philosophy and Civilization*, Proceedings of the First Afro-Asian Philosophy Conference, Cairo 1978, p. 185-196.

⁶ Ibid.

Many people assume that »modernity«, equated with »rationality«, constitutes the »cultural identity« of Europe. Some ascribe value to *this* »modernity«, but some others negate this »value« and claim that Europe has undergone a metamorphosis.

Nevertheless, there is a trend in Europe at present, which is developing parallel to similar endeavours within the United Nations: an attempt to develop common norms for Europe – to develop a common law. This can be a *promising* attempt, if and only if it can be freed from some European *idées fixes*, which lead to the enforcement of *discrepant* norms, and if it is nourished by philosophical – epistemological and ethical – knowledge.

The »unity of Europe« – and not only of Europe – can be created as a unity of a *special kind of basic norms* set as a common goal, i.e., of norms which are deduced *not from* the existing (different) empirical conditions, but *in* the existing conditions from the knowledge of the value of certain human potentialities, the products of which only some of us enjoy.

This common goal, constituted of basic principles, of the kind of principles that we call human rights – still *not* of all these principles that are considered at present *to be* »human rights« – could become the object of the *one* will, of which Nietzsche spoke. Putting *this* goal and carrying out its implications would also be a victory of spiritual Europe over empirical Europe.

Goals are, nevertheless, only points of orientation. In order for them to determine practice, often another kind of principles, of more limited scope, are necessary. Such intermediary or historical principles, as I call them, constitute the »conditions of the possibility« of making determinant, in a given historical reality, the demands that basic human rights express. Secularism, for example, is such a historical principle.

The most acute problems faced, and to my mind the main handicaps in Europe connected with the question of norms, are the prevailing concept of the so-called »fundamental freedoms« and the well-minded demand for »equal respect to all cultures«, which lead to the enforcement of discrepant norms.

Europe, more than any other continent, has to become able to avoid enforcing discrepant norms. For this, a *new secularism* seems to be needed in Europe: a secularism which prevents cultural norms in general (including what is considered good or bad in European culture) from determining the deduction of law; i.e. a secularism that guarantees that cultural value judgments do not constitute the major premise in the deduction of law, so that clearly conceived human rights can, directly or indirectly, play this role.

At this historical moment in which we live, which often reminds me of the turning point between the classical epoch and the Middle Ages, we need, and especially in education, *enlightenment in the Kantian sense*, i.e., enlightenment understood *not* as a historical period or as a world-view, but as »the courage to use one's own intelligence«, to which I wish to add: in the light of *philosophical value knowledge*.

Twenty-five centuries ago Plato and Aristotle, and in our age phenomenology, have shown, to my mind sufficiently, *how* we can get such knowledge – knowledge clearly distinguished from other products of human endeavor. This is knowledge from which »universal ideas« and universal demands or principles are deduced – »universal« denoting here the specificity of a kind of norms as norms: those which demand treatment that *can be demanded for every human being*, and *not* their being accepted or valid globally, since *any* norm, independently of its quality as norm, can be made valid, by consensus, on a global level.

12 The Europe of today is accused, from »inside« and »outside«, of using double standards. The Europe of tomorrow – that empirically unpredictable Europe – has to be shaped and reshaped in the light of such »universal ideas« and principles, conceptualized by philosophy, so that these ideas constitute *clear* points of orientation, and do not remain mere words, about which only positive value judgments float around. Such a conceptualization is a prerequisite, at this historical moment, for deducing directly and indirectly from *them* – and *not* at random or from any (valid) cultural norms – their implications for action, uncompromisingly, i.e., beyond group interests. Fuzzy good will is not sufficient for that. The deadlocks to which the so-called »fundamental freedoms« very often now lead in Europe – and not only in »Europe« – can be considered to be examples of this claim.

I wish to give a few examples of these deadlocks related to so-called »freedom of expression«, to which also freedom of opinion and freedom of thought are reduced.

1. In a central European country, a few years ago, a law enforced by the parliament against hate speech was abolished by the constitutional court of the country, with the justification that it violated freedom of expression. Do we demand human rights with a view to protecting hate speech?

2. Another example of the deadlocks to which conceptual confusions prevailing with concepts of human rights lead is "the right to offend and the right not to be offended" that we read on the cover of *Equal Voices* (issue of June 2006), the Bulletin of the European Monitoring Centre on Racism and Xen-

ophobia, in Vienna, now transformed into the Fundamental Rights Agency. What criterion (or concept) of human rights makes it possible to call 'offending' a human right?

In the same issue of *Equal Voices*, we read an interview with Franco Frattini, Vice-President of the European Commission. In this interview, Mr. Frattini says: »Let me be clear: even if European societies become multicultural, freedom of speech, as an essential part of Europe's values and traditions, is simply not negotiable. Governments or other public authorities do not prescribe or authorize the opinions expressed by individuals. Conversely, the opinions expressed by individuals engage these individuals, and only them. They do not engage a country, a people, a religion. And we should not allow others to pretend that they do. At the same time, freedom of speech cuts both ways: Freedom of speech is the basis not only of the possibility to publish an opinion, but also to criticize it. All this is an inherent trait of our contemporary democratic European societies, and we have a duty to preserve it.«

Coming now to the specific issue of racism, there are limits to freedom of expression that are defined and enforced by the law and the legal systems of the Council of Europe and the Member States of the European Union. These limits are set to protect other fundamental rights. In particular, Member States' domestic legislation already prohibits, albeit to a more or less far-reaching extent, racist and xenophobic behavior and speech.

Let's dispel a myth: there is no contradiction in simultaneously protecting people against racist speech and making sure that freedom of expression is and remains one of the key pillars upon which our societies, and the EU, are founded. How to do it precisely may not be an easy task, and I am the first one to admit that it requires careful consideration and in-depth discussion.

3. My last example is related to the prohibition just mentioned. As you know, in certain European countries there is a prohibition against denying the holocaust and this is considered by some to be contradictory to freedom of expression. Now, if freedom of expression is assumed to be a basic right, and a non-negotiable one, there is, in fact, a contradiction. However, if we possess a clear concept of human rights and also of freedom of thought (distinct from freedom of religion) and of freedom of opinion, it is not difficult to see that there is no contradiction.

We have, in fact to revise the prevailing fuzzy concept of freedoms, including the »free« market.

The Europe of tomorrow should be a Europe in which the sincere and enlightened will to protect basic human rights in the existing, *empirically differ-*

ent conditions becomes the ultimate »what for« of *all* endeavors – still not only the basic rights of Europeans, but of all human beings in the world. Human rights and some historical principles deduced from them, are, by coincidence, whether we like it or not, among the products of European thinking mainly, but they demand a certain treatment for (and from) every human being – a treatment to which all human beings (even those who reject human rights as a Western product) aspire.

14 Are we sufficiently courageous to shape *such a single* will? In other words, to put sincerely as the principal objective of our »national«, European and global policies the protection of clearly conceived human rights, i.e., *only* the protection of human rights, and not their protection *among other things*, as happens now? Are we sufficiently courageous »to use our own intelligence«, not for making better and better calculations of group interests, but for discovering, in each case we have to face, the implications of the clearly conceived human rights? And European decision-makers, are they sufficiently courageous to carry out what these implications necessitate in practice? These are crucial questions. Political Europe has to settle accounts with itself, with the help of its intellectuals.

The »unity« of Europe should *not be* a search for a new equilibrium of interests within Europe, *not* a unity of European interests to be protected against the interests of other continents or »cultures« of the world, *not* an attempt to create a new »superpower«, *nor* a new example of »eurocentrism« or »europeanism«; but a sincere project to create, *by means of law and education*, a Europe possessing *one* will – the sincere *and* enlightened will to ever increasing protection of all kinds of basic human rights in the different existing conditions of the world.

This is why I wish to make two concrete suggestions concerning the needs I have mentioned. One of them, concerning the need for clarification of the concepts of human rights, is that the European Union develops a project with a view to conceptualizing the terms of human rights and justifying this conceptualization by showing its different consequences for practice and for the protection of human rights; and if this is satisfactorily done, to revise its human rights instruments.

The other one concerns a different approach to teaching of human rights. This is to promote and expand what I call the philosophical-ethical teaching of human rights. This is an education focusing not on those whose rights will be protected, but on those *who will protect* human rights; an education which aims at awaking in the learners a sincere will to protect human rights and at

equipping them with the necessary knowledge for this protection: the conceptual knowledge of human rights and knowledge of the way to discover their implications for legislation and action in the different existing conditions of our world. We need to teach human rights first of all as ethical principles aiming at protecting human dignity and not only as law.

Europe has to remain true to its historically contingent main characteristic of having introduced into the mainstream of world history, among other ideas and ideas of varying qualities, the idea of human rights – »remaining true« meaning here »finding and carrying out its implications« within the European space, as well as its implications *for* Europe, in view of the ever increasing protection of human rights on a global level, thus becoming an example of a different – different from the now prevailing – concept of politics: an example of enlightened, ethical politics.