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Paper: *The Building of a European Society: From the Enlightenment to the End of Borders*

The manifesto of Spain's *Federal Party*, drafted by Francesc Pi Margall in 1894, expressed the intention to move forward within the *confederation of nations*, calling for *the creation of a body to regulate international relations* and, in a nutshell, *the replacement of war by peace, and of weapons by reason and law*. Long before, from the 15th to the 17th centuries, Poland, put federalism, in a very broad sense of the word, into practice with the Republic of the Two Nations. Once this political experience, worthwhile for numerous reasons – not least of which was religious tolerance – concluded, and once that declaration of intentions was disseminated, with Pi Maragall's optimistic commitment to federalism, based on the thinking of Pierre-Joseph Proudhon, both Poland and Spain –within Europe as a whole– would undergo interminable decades of suffering, of confrontations between brothers, of two conflicts known as World Wars but whose true European scope was that of genuine *civil wars*, of totalitarian regimes marked by ruthlessness and oppression. And of course Europe had yet to endure, in the very core of its humanistic conscience, the cruelty that became the driving force of Nazism and which led to the only crime that the world is likely never to forgive: the *Shoah* or Holocaust.

The portrait Europe paints of itself oscillates between Saturn, the god who devoured his own children, and the beautiful woman with a breast revealed and wearing a Phrygian cap. Between, then, the horror of one of Francisco de Goya's most celebrated paintings and the aesthetic of Liberty Leading the People by Eugène Delacroix. While both are true images, it would be wrong of us not to shake off the cumbersome legacy of the former work.

Although horror has indeed existed in our past, my feeling is that, aside from recalling its errors so as not to repeat them, European social thought has to free itself of this guilt complex, of regarding itself as a monster. Only by so doing can it move on to build a future on the solid pillars of a shared cultural heritage and a constitutionalism with common characteristics. After Classical Rome's founding of civilisation on law and the assumption of an imperishable concept of Justice, it would not be until the Renaissance progressively gave way to the Enlightenment that human beings were able to reflect on themselves as human beings. It was the period when science strove to win its battle against superstition and when, precisely for the purpose of enhancing science's freedom, the Academies came into being. Science acquired a strength which, owing to its very nature, made it immune to borders, and scientists shared their discoveries heedless of the flags that protected them. Science developed with a commitment to universality, and the interchanges between men and women devoted to it would be a first indication of the possibilities of one day attaining peace.

The Enlightenment would lead the *philosophes* to develop the theoretical bases for peace in its deepest sense, derived from the configuration of humanity as sacred; and to advocate a rapprochement among the European peoples who one day would be called upon to form a single nation. That dream of the Enlightenment philosophers would be handed down from one generation to another as an impossible aspiration, blurred almost to the point of non-existence by the growing intensity of the wars, yet firm in their militant perseverance. Those that sought peace were treated as madmen or traitors until, in the latter half of the 20th century, such groundbreaking events as the creation of the Council of Europe or the fall of the Berlin Wall, began to reveal Europe as a land of peace and freedom. Gradually, Saturn lost prominence to the young woman who vindicated liberty with her Phrygian cap. The seed of the *European republic* fell on fertile ground: although not without contradictions, the European Union has taken shape not only – and not even in large part – in its Western focus, but rather completely, in the felicitous reencounter between East and West.

As I have already pointed out, since those closing years of the 19th century, which witnessed the germination of the impossible dream of a federal Europe, a long road has

been travelled, one that every nation has followed in line with the avatars of its own destiny. For some it might seem that the nations' separate histories irremediably condition the differences between the countries, thus making a rapprochement impossible. Plurality would thus be the determinant sign of social thought, and unity, a pipe dream, something even undesirable and invasive. Nonetheless, such a hypothesis might be contradicted by means of a scientific test: by finding thinkers from other countries whose work we feel identified with, we will discover what might be one of the bases for Europe's unity. I myself have performed the experiment and discovered among Polish intellectuals the example of *Krzysztof Michalski*, an extraordinary philosopher. Since the early 1980s, Dr Michalski has played a formidable role in consolidating political and cultural dialogue between East and West. His achievement has contributed to Polish society's emancipation from Communism and to the development of democratic civil society in Central and Eastern European countries. Dr Michalski proposes that all of us, both citizens in general and we scientists in particular, *rethink* the respective positions we have heretofore defended, some of us in the East, others of us in the West, so that *together* we can face the new challenges of a united Europe. And, in that rethinking of our conception of the world, it is no coincidence that two of Dr Michalski's works bear the titles *What Holds Europe together?* (2006) and *Europe and Civil Society* (1991).

As I see it, the key lies in that endeavour to rethink Europe, which concerns us scientists, first and foremost, and then the rest of the citizenry. Borders are artificial creations by small or large powers that have subjugated human beings throughout history. Borders are daughters of war. For this reason, doing away with internal borders, establishing a common currency and implementing the use of a burgundy passport are much more than technical tools: they constitute the foundations of a European citizenry, the substratum of a truly European society. The absence of borders is the daughter of peace, conceived out of knowledge, recognition and love.

Rethinking Europe is much more than a theoretical possibility. It is an imperative duty. We cannot accept the viewpoint that Europe is the result of the imposition of the strong on the weak. Of course not. Yet nor can we content ourselves with the hackneyed observation that complexity is Europe's principal character trait. While complexity is indeed a reality with

which we must coexist, it is not a sign of identity. Complexity has to be managed with the means within reach of a secular *republic* founded on the principles of democracy and liberalism, in other words, government by the majority and protection of the minorities. However complexity can never again be an excuse for eluding knowledge among those who until now might have viewed themselves as different. Granted, rethinking Europe is no easy task and too crucial to be left in the hands of politicians or civil servants. I heartily applaud the role of the European Parliament elected by direct universal suffrage. It deserves our support and our attention. But rethinking Europe is civil society's mission.

Then again, does a European civil society exist? Or are those who deem it to be devoid of content correct in their thinking? My response is that the negation of Europe by certain authors (or, expressed otherwise, Europe's transformation into a merely rhetorical reference) only finds justification in either nationalism conceived as a defence against fear of the unknown or in the communitarist splintering of the citizenry into groups confronted by ethnic group, language, ideology or religion.

Nationalism and communitarism are seeds of destruction and lead to the reproduction of the conditions that have nourished all wars. The Europe of perpetual peace that Emmanuel Kant once dreamed of is found in reason, in human rights effectively guaranteed to all and in the creation of living conditions that enable each person to develop his or her personality independently. The dilemma between the unity and plurality of European social thought is solved through the conception of a federal unity, which comes into being from what we all share, from what is best in each one of us. Here is where I believe the challenge of rethinking Europe lies.

The creative strength of a federal Europe has a powerful driving force in the philosophy of tolerance that John Locke once contributed to our collective heritage. Of tolerance understood not as amoral permissiveness of whatever we find offensive, not as the absence of stable values, but rather tolerance expressed as the framework of respect for the different human options capable of coexisting in harmony. I would like to stress that tolerance excludes those who are intolerant and is the sure path that encourages us to discover one another's virtues. Tolerance urges us to reduce the intensity of our

convictions and our identities to what is necessary, to leave a breathing space for other convictions and other identities that are capable of doing likewise for us. Tolerance is thus the backbone of the European republic and an incentive for discovering the defining traits of civil society.

Today Europe is undergoing a process of change triggered by the unification of the basic legal standards arising from the Treaties and regulatory activity of the European Union. It is a place for the exercise of civil liberties and is subject to the authority of the European Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg. It has structured more or less effective mechanisms for territorial economic rebalancing. True, Europe still needs to fulfil many goals, such as becoming one of the prime movers in international peace relations and Third World development. However, if we look merely at what we do have, we will see that we have already embarked on an intense living experience (albeit with undeniable differences according to the social sectors) concerning what it means for Europe to be a *republic* and a setting for a different society. Scientists, students in exchange programmes, business organisations and labour unions are already coming to grips with what it means to be European. With even further enhanced mobility, with greater possibilities for communication, such as the Internet, with cross-border personal and family relations, and with the no-nonsense adoption of English as our *lingua franca*, ... with all this we will finally be on the road which I believe to be the right one: that of the development of a truly European social thought, one that will lead to a Europe that is proud of herself and the guarantor of a better world.