The Europe of Melancholy

TOMMASO PADOA-SCHIOPPA

When I began to think about what I wanted to say to you here today,[1] my thoughts went back forty years to the time when I was at the Bocconi University in Milan. To tell the truth, it is hard to believe that it is so long since I was a student. Today, my thoughts are with the young people currently attending university, and above all with those, perhaps a considerable number, who are still unsure as to what to do after university, as to how they might combine necessity with freedom, the need to earn a living with their desire to serve a cause they believe in, and to be public-spirited in both the private and public spheres of their working lives.

I was drawn to the Bocconi as a result of my decision — influenced in part by my reading of Luigi Einaudi's *Il buongoverno*[2] — to study economics, a discipline that could accommodate my disparate and vague interests and motivations: a scientific but at the same time a humanistic field, knowledge and action, polis and home.

I subsequently chose public service, and not research, business or politics. I say "chose" because my generation, as it entered the working world in the 1970s, really did have the possibility to choose; in this, we were exceptionally fortunate, perhaps the most fortunate generation of the past century. Italy, in its transition from a poor country of peasants and subsistence farmers, consumers of their own products, into a modern transformation economy, highly competitive in the nascent European market, created a wealth of jobs and opportunities for graduates and non graduates alike. The fears and resistance, strong in the industrial and academic worlds, of those who had warned that we were not strong enough to rise to the European challenge were belied. The politicians were more farsighted than the ruling class which often regarded them with arrogance, as it also does today.

I would like to talk to students about today's and tomorrow's Europe and suggest that they take Europe as a point of reference both in their working lives, whatever profession or line of work they may enter, and

in their lives as Italian citizens, irrespective of their political leanings: in short, as a professional, cultural, political and civil point of reference. This is the subject of my discourse.

I am well aware that proposing Europe, to say nothing of European political union, as a point of reference in the current historical phase amounts to swimming against the tide: Europe is not a fashionable idea, and it is indeed perceived by many as a hopeless one. However, I am also aware that the very prospect of swimming against the tide can appeal to, or at least intrigue, some young people. Yet, I am not seeking to appeal to a vein of dissension here, but rather to the critical spirit, to the desire to view the world with passion while also, dispassionately, looking at it with far-sighted judiciousness.

The Black Bile.

Spheres such as politics, economics, the institutions, and associationism are the ones in which Europe seems to live and grow. Europe talks about trade, competition, technical regulations, subsidies, currency, and unemployment; on a more specifically political and institutional level, it talks about Parliament, the Commission, voting procedures, enlargement and majorities. So why am I proposing, as the central thread of my reflections here, the idea of melancholy, which seems to belong not to these areas, but rather to the life of the individual? A malaise so private that the melancholy themselves strive to hide it from the world?

I have chosen it because this state of mind, ancient, mysterious and ambivalent, perhaps characterises better than any other the phase that Europe, in all its greatness and all its dejection, is currently living through. In short, I do not believe that Europe is melancholy because it is in a state of crisis; on the contrary, I believe that Europe is in a state of crisis because our society is melancholic. This is true of economics, and also of politics.

In fact, for over twenty-five centuries, the black bile has preoccupied Europe's physicians, philosophers, artists, theologians and psychologists, and they have probed the question with a depth and constancy not matched in other cultures. Perhaps melancholy is a peculiarly European trait: if we can manage to understand it, perhaps this understanding might help us to find a way out of the present difficulties.

Society, like the individual, can be affected by diseases that weaken the body and the spirit; it, too, is overcome by states of mind that influence its course and its choices. By probing the gloomy depths where these

states of mind live and identifying the nature of the current disease we are better able to understand the phenomena that manifest themselves on the surface, in the political and economic spheres, too. We can talk of the mood of society and of the mood of an individual. We talk of euphoria on the markets, and we can talk of Europe's melancholy. "Depression" is a technical term used both in economics and in psychology, two disciplines whose relationship has been recognised by the Nobel Prize.

What is more, the earliest reflections on melancholy and on the influence of Saturn sought a common basis for the microcosm and the macrocosm. And in Robert Burton's famous treatise on melancholy (*The Anatomy of Melancholy*), we read that kingdoms, provinces, political bodies are equally sensitive and subject to this disease, as widely demonstrated by Botero in his politics. He says: "as in the human body, there are various alterations determined by different humours, thus there are many diseases in the community" as is easily intuited from the specific symptoms.[3]

So, Europe today seems sick above all with melancholy. I cite, first of all, its main symptoms: loss of faith, inaction, loss of interest in the outside world, a withdrawing into itself, and low self-esteem. There is also the introverted nature of the condition: Freud, distinguishing between mourning and melancholy, remarked that in mourning, the world is impoverished and void, in melancholy it is the Ego itself that is impoverished and void.[4] Finally, I think of melancholy as a characteristic trait of extraordinary natures, those drawn to the absolute, the disease of heroes (Gellio), of spiritual exaltation (Plato), and of excellence (Aristotle). Certainly, it is a loss of faith, but of a faith that has solid foundations. As Kierkegaard writes "Never, ever has the thought occurred to me that, among all my contemporaries, there was one more alone than me [.....] and deep down inside, I was, in my eyes, the most miserable of all."[5]

Interestingly, the unique and ambivalent nature of melancholy is confirmed by the fact that, in the section on synonyms and opposites, the Devoto-Oli (dictionary of the Italian language) contains no entry for "melancholy."

The Chronicles of Crisis.

If, conducting a search of the daily Italian and international press for the past six months, we were to combine the words "Europe" and "crisis", Google would come up with an almost endless list of references. Perhaps

"Europe" would show the highest correlation with the word "crisis", ahead of words such as "oil", "Iraq" "employment", "soccer" and "Alitalia."

We hear the sound of funeral bells ringing for Europe on a daily basis, every time we open a newspaper or turn on the television. On the rare occasions that the bells instead ring joyfully, the celebratory tone that accompanies them is so irritating as to leave one almost favourably disposed towards the anti-European rhetoric of those commentators who, in their editorials, delight in the devaluation or revaluation of the euro, the disharmony over Iraq, the violation of the stability pact, the low turnout at the European polling stations, France's rejection of the Constitutional Treaty, and the endless squabbles between the governments.

In recent years I have made a mental note of a great many instances in which illustrious papers like *The Financial Times*, after devoting four front-page columns to announcements of imminent European disasters, have, a few days later, devoted just a few sober lines, tucked away at the bottom of page 4, to the averting of that same disaster: I refer to issues such as the switch to the euro, the European Convention, and the enlargement of the European Union. Similarly, I recall the insistent way in which — a few days after the entry into circulation of the first euro banknotes — TV journalists, interviewing people in the streets, encouraged them to complain about the difficulties they were encountering, yet the people questioned, whether in Paris, Dublin, Milan or Hamburg, responded with smiles and expressed enthusiasm over the historic event that was the arrival of the single currency.

Bad news makes us depressed. Yet, in its turn, bad news — indeed, the fact that bad news makes a good news story — is the fruit of the black bile that is currently pervading European society, making it, as it were, lacking in appetite, bored with consuming, with investing, with generating offspring, with conceiving ambitious plans, and with seeking to look far ahead. When I use the expression "European society" I am clearly referring to a *geographical* and *social* space, but today it is easy to confuse this space with the fragile political construction that we call the "European Union", and to direct all our bile at it, and at the promise of "ever closer union" that it contains.

Thus we enter the spiral of melancholy. Employment levels fail to increase and it is all the fault of the rules decided in Brussels (the same rules that, for over thirty years, have favoured growth levels far superior to those recorded in the United States). We face the threat of terrorism, and pin the blame on the Schengen Agreement (the same agreement that

has allowed Italy to reorganise and strengthen its border controls). Globalisation is transforming the world and getting rid of barriers; yet we say that it is Europe that is eliminating barriers and suppressing languages, traditions and local production. Bureaucracy gets on the nerves of citizens and businesses and we complain about "Brussels red tape," forgetting that the Italian region of Lombardy, or the city of Munich for example, each have more employees than the European Commission in Brussels does. Perhaps because it is a rainy city, even the rain is blamed on Brussels, not only by the political class, which has the excuse of wanting to avoid courting unpopularity, but also by the intelligentsia, from which we might legitimately expect a more dispassionate analysis.

The Literature of Success.

This, however, is only part of the picture. Because while, on the one hand, the daily news relentlessly rehashes the sad story of the European crisis, on the other there is emerging a growing body of political writings — in the form of essays and books rather than newspaper articles and TV reports — that tells an entirely different tale, and that we might call the literature of success. It analyses all that Europe has done in the fields of economics, the institutions, international relations, state and market building, peacekeeping, development aid, and relations with neighbouring countries and territories, and it judges the European Union a resounding success, a new political model that should inspire international relations in the future: the blueprint for the world order in the age of global economic integration and the most important development of the past half century.[6]

A common feature of this recent literature is the fact that it does not examine European integration through the prism of an existing model, be it the nation-state, the confederation, or the federation. It seems to leave out of consideration twentieth-century Europeanism's two main historical references and sources of inspiration: the birth of the United States of America at the end of the eighteenth century and the nation-states in the course of the nineteenth. In addition, it does not seem to be pervaded by the ideological, enterprising, and sometimes even prophetic spirit that runs through many writings in support of or against European unity. The literature of success considers not so much ideas as facts; it observes Europe as it really is, with a pragmatic eye, without asking itself whether, and into what new form, it should evolve further. It is no coincidence that its authors are British and American; they practise the method of British

empiricism suggested by Hume: never confusing *is* with *ought* to be.

Robert Cooper,[7] a Brussels-based British diplomat close to Prime Minister Blair, maintains that 1989 marked a far more profound change in the course of European (and possibly world) history than other key years, such as 1789, 1815 or 1919. This is because 1989 brought to an end not only the Cold War, but also the system instituted by the Peace of Westphalia in 1648.

In that system, peace — illusory in that it was merely a state of non-war — rested on the equilibrium between the forces and on the non-interference among states. In the twentieth century, the conditions for this kind of peace, already precarious, were totally lost as a result of the rise of a Continental power of exorbitant strength (united Germany), and of the advent of technology that disproportionately increased the costs of war, and of a mass society that turned war into a clash not of armies but of peoples. Now, the world, and not only Europe, is looking for a new formula for peace, just as it did after the devastation of the Thirty Years War, when it found it, or rather believed it had found it, in the treaty of 1648.

According to Cooper, the new formula — the generator of a new order of peace that he terms postmodern — is the one that Europe worked out after the end of the Second World War, and is successfully applying in vital areas such as economic relations and security.

"The postmodern system — Cooper writes — does not rely on balance, nor does it emphasize sovereignty or the separation of domestic and foreign affairs."[8] The rules, he says, are self-imposed. In the European Union, everyone is concerned to keep European law alive. "The European Union is a highly developed system for mutual interference in each other's domestic affairs."[9]

According to Cooper, the Treaty of Rome, which established the European Economic Community (EEC, 1957), constitutes the first example of a postmodern community; but there are others, such as the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe (CFE, 1990), under whose terms participating countries undertake to keep each other informed of the location of their heavy armaments and agree to be inspected. Cooper maintains that it is important to realise that this is a genuine revolution. The normal, logical behaviour of an army is to conceal its strengths and its military capacity from its potential enemies. In the logic of war, treaties that regulate these areas are absurd: first of all, one should never enter into agreements with the enemy given that, if it really is an enemy, it is not to be trusted; second, one should never allow the enemy to come

and peruse one's military bases or count the arms in one's possession. And yet the CFE Treaty makes provision for just this. "Security, which once depended on walls, is today based on openness, transparency and mutual vulnerability."[10]

Certainly, the European application of the postmodern formula is restricted to internal relations and to relations with the surrounding geographical area, with Russia for example. But the formula can, and in Cooper's view should, govern all international relations in the postmodern, or we might say, post-Westphalian world.

I will shortly take a look at what is, in my opinion, the flaw in Cooper's thesis. The thing I am seeking to underline here, however, is the vision of European construction as a new, original and successful endeavour — the true, and positive, new development that has emerged in international relations since the Second World War.

Comparing the American dream with the European dream, Jeremy Rifkin examines these two protagonists of globalisation and international politics. As he analyses their economic systems and social models, he argues that it is the United States that is in fact the Old World, and Europe the New World. According to Rifkin, the American dream embodies the thought of a particular historical moment, which history made concrete and transported by sheer force to American shores in the XVIII century, where it has since determined the American experience right through to present day. He goes on to say that successive generations of Americans chose to live out the Protestant Reformation and the Enlightenment "in their purest forms, making us the most devoutly Protestant people on Earth and the most committed to scientific pursuits, private property, capitalism, and the nation-state."[11]

But this model, he observes, is reaching the end of its historical cycle. It is ill suited to a world in which not only the economy, but also the function of government, is structured as a network and not bound to a defined territory; in which the quality of life and of social relations is seen to be more important than the individual accumulation of material goods, where the natural world is more threatened than threatening. The reality suited to this new world is not the heavy and monolithic America, but rather, Europe, which is, to use some of Rifkin's adjectives, discursive, networked, transnational and orchestral: this Europe that is not a state, that does not have a territory, because its territory continues to belong to its member states, that is neither centralised nor hierarchical, and that has no clearly defined borders. "Europe is busy preparing for a new era, while America is desperately trying to hold on to the old one."[12]

Let us take the economy, today considered Europe's weak point. As Rifkin reminds us, the European Union is the world's largest integrated market; it is the leading exporter of goods and services in the world economy; it is creating integrated networks in the fields of transport, energy, telecommunications and finance; and it is running important educational programmes (such as Socrates, Leonardo, and Erasmus). Unlike America, Europe does not rely on credit in order to maintain its high standard of living. Its total product is almost the equivalent of America's, but of superior quality, given that a smaller share of it goes on military expenditure and crime fighting, and is wasted on energy. Fourteen of the world's leading banks are European, as are eight of the ten leading insurance companies, the top five life insurance companies, six of the top eleven telecommunications companies, and six of the top twelve car manufacturers. In the line-up of the world's best fifty companies, compiled by *Global Finance*, forty-nine are European.

But it does not end with the economy. In Europe, there is a better quality of life, greater protection of privacy, more stringent environmental protection, a keener sense of social solidarity, and a more cautious attitude to scientific experimentation and technological innovation, and Europe also has a greater capacity to propose and to transmit to other countries and world regions its own model of social, political and international relations. The book contains analyses, facts and references relating to each of these fields.

Rifkin writes in support of a thesis, and his work might almost be described as a pamphlet; he is addressing, above all, the American reader, seeking to put him on his guard against the illusion of omnipotence that currently seems to be influencing a section of America's politicians and intellectuals. But his "pamphlet" is, in reality, a hefty, 400-page work, full of facts and figures, which here, for simplicity's sake, I do not cite. His analysis is detailed, and his arguments strong, numerous and convergent.

Similar considerations can be found in Mark Leonard's brief and highly effective book. Europe, he observes, has founded a new system of government and a new way of operating in the field of international relations. Both are based not on secrecy but on transparency, not on exclusion but on inclusion, and not on threat but on persuasion. Europe's method is law, and European law is also the instrument of its foreign policy. Leonard talks of "passive aggression": "rather than relying on the threat of intervention to secure its interests, Europe relies on the threat of not intervening – of withdrawing the hand of friendship, and the prospect of membership."[13]

Through this method, the European Community (subsequently Union) has transformed not only the economy, but also the rule of law, institutions and politics of countries aspiring to join it, including the ten countries that joined the European Union in 2004; today "for countries such as Turkey, Serbia, or Bosnia, the only thing worse than having the bureaucracy of Brussels descend on your political system, insisting on changes, implementing regulations, instigating state privatisations and generally seeping into every crack of everyday political life, is to have its doors closed to you."

America and Europe face similar threats on their doorsteps, "drug trafficking, large flows of migrants across leaky borders, networks of international crime," but their responses could not be more different. "The US has sent troops into neighbouring countries more than 15 times over the last 50 years but many of the countries around it have barely changed […] The European response, on the other hand, has been to hold out the possibility of integration to neighbouring countries."

Europe Is Not a Finished Thing

Thus, what we can say is that while the newspapers paint a picture of a Europe in crisis, books present Europe as a triumphant success story. Certainly, it is difficult to find even one detailed and intellectually rigorous analysis of the crisis that has the breadth and depth of a book or an essay, rather than the superficiality of the umpteenth account of breakdowns in negotiations, or of the latest tirade against bureaucracy, politics, and modernity generally.

All this is true; and yet I do not feel that the question ends here. Yes, the anti-European rhetoric is short on arguments and, as a result of the literature of success, the onus is now firmly on it to produce some proof. And yet at the same time, no one who sees the profound reasons for European unification can simply dismiss as false the depiction of a weary Europe, lacking the capacity to influence world history that, for centuries, it possessed.

The signs that prove the truth of this depiction are right under our noses: the inability to find a common stance on the major questions of foreign and security policy and on agricultural policy reform, the huge wastage of resources due to the refusal to join forces in pursuit of common objectives, the ridiculous show of meanness over the reduction of the Community budget, the undignified quarrels over how to spend the meagre funds that are available and the diatribes on the stability pact, the

Lisbon promises and the blocking of the Bolkestein directive, the revolt of the French electorate and the desertion of Europe's polling stations.

These disparate and contradictory signs need to be understood singly before we can consider them as a whole. In them, we find, in fact, the contradictions and hypocrisies typical of any normal political process, but we can also see the arduousness and tortuousness of the path to what Machiavelli called "gli ordini nuovi" (the new orders); we find the miserable failings of Europe's ruling classes and a discontent among Europe's citizens and voters, which can largely be attributed to these very failings.

Whereas for *the press* these signs all seem to shout out only one word, "crisis," for *the books* they amount to little more than distant background noise, hardly worthy of note.

The coryphaei of success seem to say: "it is fine as it is, you have finished Europe and it is perfect. Stop here, there's no need to take things any further." Indeed, Robert Cooper, in an illuminating passage in his book, points out that although some still dream of a European state, they are a minority, a very small minority. He calls it a dream left over from a previous age and says that if the nation-state is a problem then the super-state is certainly not a solution.[14]

And it is here that we find the hidden flaw, the ambiguous element that prevents the literature of success from being able to reassure us. The flaw is the fact that Europe is regarded as a finished thing, whereas, in fact, it is not finished at all. Of course, if we consider the centuries of history in which it is rooted, then we can say that Europe, in the space of just fifty years, has made enormous progress. But if we consider the speed at which the world is changing and its desperate and urgent need for what Europe has conceived of, but what, gripped by sloth, it is still hesitant to realise, then we can see that it still has not come nearly far enough. To use Michael Howard's wonderful expression, Europe has "invented peace" but has failed to turn its invention into reality.

The Method Is New, Not the Formula.

Let us ask ourselves a question: does all that Europe has progressively achieved since 1950 constitute a new and now perfect formula for political aggregation, or is it an unfinished work that seems new precisely because it is unfinished? In my view there can be no doubt: the second answer is the correct one, the first is just a misleading illusion.

In politics (which is about power) there is no such thing as a new

formula for union, just as in mechanics (which is about motion) there are no formulas that can free us from the force of gravity or give us perpetual motion. The basic rules of politics, just like the foundations of peace and of law, cannot be separated from the availability of means of coercion. The history of relations among states amounts to a succession of truces and fiercely fought battles: the peace described by Dante in *Monarchia* and by Kant in *Perpetual Peace* is possible only if it is built on a superior power. Certainly, truces can be enduring and wonderful, particularly if they come in the wake of terrible wars that have imparted harsh lessons in wisdom and moderation. But they are still truces.

Thus, the European Union, the EU, is not yet a union; it is a truce, not peace. The entity that, in Maastricht, was given this name lacks the essential requisite of a political union: a founding pact on the strength of which staying together, deciding together, and acting together are guaranteed *not only in moments of accord, but also in moments of discord*. If, and only if, this solid pact exists can a union truly be said to have been created, because it is only at this point that its members recognise that being together is a higher and stronger motivation than all the differences in outlook and preferences that will always emerge (within ourselves first, and only subsequently in our dealings with others) over the concrete questions that reality forces us to confront. In this essential sense, the European Union is still *not* complete. And the results achieved so far, remarkable as they are, are thus fragile, partial, reversible or, to use an economic term, unsustainable.

Seduced by this young Europe, rather in the way one might be by the charm of an adolescent, many forget that this same person, in order to become an adult, will have to lose much of his or her appeal. The charm will be lost, but strength and maturity will take its place.

Cooper and Leonard thus give us the truth, but not the *whole* truth, nor, in my opinion, its crux. They fail to acknowledge that the Europe that has been created so far is *not* ready for today's or for tomorrow's world, that it does *not* possess the means to prevent its civilisation from coming to an end or its economy from declining, that it is *not* strong enough to stop — and perhaps only Europe could do this — the world from plunging into self-destruction, as it did in the last century. Europe has not completed the transition from truce to peace and therefore is not properly equipped to help the world itself build peace.

The formula for union, as I said earlier, is not new, even though the variation on it that Europe is working out can probably be said to be original. It makes provision for the distribution of the power of govern-

ment on a number of levels, according to the dimensions and the nature of the questions of common interest, of the *res publicae* (plural, note, not singular). Applying the formula means overcoming the idea that a state can be called a state only if it recognises no power over itself; it means recognising that a supranational power restores rather than suppresses sovereignty. In the technical language of political science, this formula is termed the federal model, even though nowadays simply to utter this term is to expose oneself to outbursts of irritation of the kind once (but no longer) prompted by crude and vulgar language.

As for the method, this is certainly new. Europe is trying to build a union of states not, as it did for centuries, through recourse to arms or marriages of convenience between reigning dynasties, but through democracy and law, through the gentle force of persuasion and consensus: it is an amazing feat, especially if one considers that the states that are part of it are among the world's oldest and proudest, the very ones that, for so long, proclaimed and applied the doctrine of their own unlimited sovereignty. Even though it has not been finished, it is nevertheless a new and a majestic endeavour.

But let us not foolishly confuse very two different ideas of unfinished here. We all know very well that history is never finished, or complete. But Europe is not only unfinished in this general sense: it is also unfinished in the more specific and worrying sense that it has not yet realised its own design for union. Europe today is already enjoying more benefits from having set about this project and from having realised a part of it than rightly it should be doing: it is already reaping the rewards of a future that can by no means be taken for granted. Even before it has been completed, Europe is already cashing in on its reputation.

And it is precisely from this, in my view, that Europe's spiral of melancholy derives. "The only thing we have to fear is fear itself" said Roosevelt, in an attempt to shake up the America of the Great Depression. The depression, the black bile, of Europeans is at once the cause and the effect of the failure to do enough, of the failure to seize opportunities, of the time that has been wasted, of the fear to carry the task though to completion. It is the guilty conscience that results from our saturnine procrastination, from the undeserved advantages we enjoy, from the task we have left undone and from which we avert our gaze. This guilty conscience is feeding our gloom and paralysing Europe.

It is not that the meagreness of what we have accomplished *explains* this depression, since the work done is anything but meagre, and the fact that it is unfinished should spur us into action rather than deter us from

it. Instead, it is that our own melancholy *prevents* us from carrying it through; it is fear, our own oppressive heaviness that stops us from forging ahead. And we feel responsible for this heaviness, guilty in some cases, and we respond to this not by rolling up our sleeves and, with humility, setting to work, but by indulging in the displays of melancholy that have been known for over twenty-five centuries: we procrastinate, we decry ourselves, we pour scorn on what has been done, we are sluggish.

Can We Hope for an External Power?

"Noi ci allegrammo, e tosto tornò in pianto": I have lost count of the number of times that, when thinking of today's unfinished Europe, these words of Dante have sprung to mind.

After the end of the Cold War, and with the failure of the experiment in real socialism, huge spaces for democracy and for the market opened up the world over. And while Fukuyama, today a well-known follower of the old nationalist ideology that inspires the American government, was announcing the end of history, a pattern all too familiar to Europe (characterised by successions of equilibrium, hegemony, opposing alliances, threats, wars and truces) was preparing its return.

There are almost two hundred countries that declare themselves sovereign in the Westphalian sense of the word, replicas or would-be replicas of the nation-state that is resistant to the placement of any restriction on its power. The United States, despite supporting — in the last century — efforts to give the world a post-Westphalian order (first through the League of Nations, and subsequently through the UN), heads this list. But the aspirations and the influence of other giant nation-states, such as China, Russia, India, Brazil, Mexico, Iran and Nigeria, are growing rapidly. No European state will ever be able, by itself, to enter this select circle. And in the meantime, there abound challenges that are beyond the capacity for government even of the largest of these countries: guaranteeing security against terrorism, the rise of the Asian continent, the lack of renewable sources of energy, the instability of the international market, and the problems related to climate change.

History seems to be moving rapidly towards application of the logic of Westphalia on a global scale. When it was only Europe that was governed by this logic, tensions and ultimately wars, resulted from the upsetting of a regional equilibrium. They were resolved, in the end, through the intervention of an external power. This external power was

the United States, Europe's own offspring. Reproduced on a global scale, the logic of Westphalia is far, far more destructive than it was during the century and a half of European domination, because the world does not have an external power to look to, to say nothing of a benevolent, democratic and enlightened external power, which is what America was for us Europeans.

But doesn't it? Could it not be that Europe itself might be that "external power" that the world needs; external not in a spatial sense, of course, but in the sense that, because it heralds an order other than the Westphalian, postmodern order, it is already projected forwards in time? There are many factors that combine to put us, in Europe, in a unique position. We are equipped with *knowledge* — we have experienced the system of unlimited sovereignties right through to its catastrophic conclusion, and we thus know that it is precarious and unsustainable. We have a *responsibility*, a moral and political debt to honour, for having made the world pay for our internal struggles and our colonial domination and for having generated the evil model that harbours the seeds of destructive conflict. We have *resources*, the means to play an influential role in world affairs; we are already the leading providers of development aid and we do not live on credit. We have *principles*, because we accept solidarity and multilateralism as constituent parts of the world order. We have *credibility* because we have already planted in our territory and begun to tend, with promising results, the seeds of a different pattern of inter-state relations.

The literature that I have called the literature of success describes very effectively this privileged position and special role enjoyed by Europe, and it is truly remarkable just how many results Europe, despite being almost defenceless and politically unfinished, has already recorded in the sphere of world politics.

Today, the threat to security is global, because the framework of the states is global, as is the non-territorial violence of terrorism, the hatred of the poor for the rich, the loss of control of the relationship between man and nature, and the fanaticism and hatred practised in the name of religion. The fact that Europe is unfinished now constitutes a grave danger not only to Europe, but to the world, because only Europe holds the key to solve these global threats. The two conflicts that we call the World Wars were, in truth, European Wars. In the same way, the only possible world peace, by which I mean true peace and not an illusory truce, is perhaps a *pax europea*.

The Way out of Melancholy.

It is now almost sixty years since Churchill delivered, in Zurich, one of the most memorable speeches of the last century. In September 1946, much of Europe was in ruins, hungry, and weighed down by resentment, shame and desperation. It was destroyed, but it had saved its civilisation.

Six years earlier, having been called upon by his party to lead the government (more as a way of getting rid of him than really to put him at the helm), Churchill had, in the space of just five days (his first five days at number 10 Downing Street) completely altered the course of the war. How he managed to do this, almost single-handedly, is recorded in John Lukacs' masterly reconstruction of the events of that time.[15] Lukacs recounts, almost by the hour, how from May 24th to May 28th, 1940 — as his foreign secretary schemed with Germany, the generals declared military resistance impossible, France capitulated, the Soviet Union was with Hitler, practically all of Europe was occupied by the Nazis or governed by their dummies, and America watched but did not intervene — Churchill managed to transmit to his countrymen his own furious determination that Britain would fight, and would continue to fight whatever the cost. These were not the days in which Hitler lost the war, but they were certainly the ones in which he lost the possibility of winning it.

How can one fail to spot, here, those signs of passion, of folly, of heroism and of spiritual exaltation that, according to Plato, are typical of the *humor melancholicus*? How can one fail to see, also, embodied in Churchill, a heavy drinker, the analogy between the range of manifestations associated with the black bile and the range of effects associated with alcohol, an analogy that Aristotle broadly developed precisely in order to explain "why it is that all those who have achieved eminence in philosophy or politics, or poetry or the arts are clearly melancholic?"

Of melancholy, Churchill was well acquainted not only with the passion, the exaltation and the heroism, but also with the dark desperation, the sense of void, and the desolate loneliness that he, employing and making famous an image already used by James Boswell, Walter Scott, and R.L. Stevenson, called "the black dog" on his back. Reflecting from an ethical and religious perspective, Romano Guardini remarks that melancholy is "nostalgia for that which is simply perfect […] the price to be paid for the birth of eternity in man […] the unease of the man who perceives the closeness of infinity."[16]

There is a remedy for the "tragedy of Europe," Churchill declared in

Zurich, and "it is to re-create the European Family […] We must build a sort of United States of Europe […], a sense of enlarged patriotism and common citizenship […]. The first step in the re-creation of the European Family must be a partnership between France and Germany. In this way only can France recover the moral and cultural leadership of Europe." He went on to say "But I must give you a warning. Time may be short. At present there is a breathing-space."

Guardini considers the remedy to melancholic tension to lie in ethics and in faith. Even the secular Churchill, in Zurich, repeated the expression "act of faith" :"If Europe is to be saved from infinite misery, and indeed from final doom, there must be this act of faith in the European Family and this act of oblivion against all the crimes and follies of the past."

Today we can say that this task is still unfinished, but that the "breathing-space" remains.

At the start of this piece, I mentioned my wish to urge students today to take united Europe as a professional, civil and political point of reference. I will now explain the connection between this wish and the considerations that I have set forth here.

During my years in Frankfurt, I held regular monthly meetings, each lasting an hour, exclusively for the European Central Bank's youngest functionaries — young people who rarely entered my office and, when they did so, rarely ventured to speak up — for an absolutely free discussion on any topic of their choice.

These extremely well-read thirty-year-olds, graduates of leading universities, had been adolescents when the Maastricht Treaty was signed, just as I had been when a history and philosophy teacher at my high school in Trieste spoke to us over the school's internal radio of the newly-signed Treaty of Rome. But that teacher's speech helped to direct my life, providing it with a political point of reference long before I had decided the course my studies would take, or indeed chosen my profession. As an adolescent, my earliest recollections were of the bombing of Genoa and of the bridges along the Riviera, of the round-ups by the German troops and the passage of the American ones, of my reunion with my father, almost a stranger to me, on his return from the front and from imprisonment. War did not figure in the childhood recollections of those thirty-year-olds in Frankfurt, and their memories of their adolescence were full of inter-railing and Erasmus projects.

Those young people were crossing the boundary between university and the working world. They were fascinated by economics and proud to

be at the summit of Europe, and yet they viewed their daily work as a narrowing of their horizons, a descent into detail, a sort of shelving of and failure fully to exploit all the knowledge they had acquired, a sinking into repetitive routine. Exaltation and mortification, the full spectrum of melancholy.

The topics of our discussions rose above the routine of our daily work, but they were still connected with it: Where is the enlarged Europe heading? What will become of the Constitution? How can we boost growth? What can be done to turn the ECB into what we want it to be? I often noted an attitude in these young people that was more contemplative than active, a certain refusal to believe that they really could "make a difference." It was not easy to convince them that the answers to their questions would come by themselves, that the future of the euro, the future of the ECB, the future of Europe itself, and of the project for union designed by their grandfathers or great-grandfathers was now in their hands. The Europe this generation knows is peaceful and prosperous, but it is also melancholic and even apathetic. It is a Europe that looks finished, but is not; a Europe that lives under the shadow not of destruction but of decline.

And yet there is a task that is waiting to be completed, one that demands and deserves effort and sacrifice. Adopting a point of reference means taking as one's guide something that, while connected to the times and the place in which we live, lies on a higher and more distant plane and, as such, is able to give meaning and direction to our advance. This something is not a prediction, and neither is it a wager: it is an objective and a purpose. It requires us to lift our gaze and see beyond our own particular moment in time.

And so my advice to students is this: do not become discouraged, do not lose the determination that has seen you through your studies, do not withdraw into the private sphere, do not worship the idol of career or of financial gain, and do not turn to psychologists. Give yourselves, choose yourselves, points of reference. The way out of melancholy is to look inside ourselves and to set our sights high.

NOTES

[1] This is a version of the lecture delivered by the author on October 28th, 2005, to inaugurate the Academic Year 2005-2006 of the Luigi Bocconi University in Milan. The text is published in Italian in the journal *Il Mulino*, LV(2006), n.1.

[2] L. Einaudi, *Il buongoverno: saggi di economia e politica (1897-1954)* (1954), edited by E. Rossi, Rome – Bari, Laterza, 2004. This text is still recommended reading, also for students of economics.

[3] R. Burton, *The Anatomy of Melancholy* (1621).

[4] S. Freud, *Lutto e malinconia* (1915-1917), in *Opere*, vol. VIII, Turin, Bollati Boringhieri, 1976, p. 128.

[5] S.A. Kierkegaard, *Vom Sinn der Schwermut*, in R. Guardini, *Ritratto della malinconia*, Brescia, Morcelliana, nuova ed. 1993, p. 15.

[6] I cite several authors from this body of political writing: R. Cooper, *The Breaking of Nations: Order and Chaos in the Twenty-First Century*, London, Atlantic Books, 2003; J. Rifkin, *The European Dream: How Europe's Vision of the Future is Quietly Eclipsing the American Dream*, New York, Penguin, 2004; T.R. Reid, *The United States of Europe: The New Superpower and the End of American Supremacy*, London, Penguin, 2004; M. Leonard, *Why Europe Will Run the 21st Century*, London, Fourth Estate, 2005; G. Morgan, *The Idea of a European Superstate: Public Justification and European Integration*, Princeton, N.J., Princeton University Press, 2005. As the reader will see, some of the subtitles are even more revealing than the titles.

[7] Cooper, *The Breaking of Nations*, cit.

[8] *Ibidem*.

[9] *Ibidem*.

[10] *Ibidem*.

[11] Rifkin, *The European Dream*, cit., p. 85.

[12] *Ibidem*, p. 83.

[13] Leonard, *Why Europe Will Run the 21st Century*, cit., p. 51.

[14] Cooper, *The Breaking of Nations*, cit., p. 37.

[15] J. Lukacs, *Five Days in London. May 1940*, New Haven, Conn. - London, 1999.

[16] Guardini, *Ritratto della malinconia*, cit., pp. 63, 67-69.

* Translation not reviewed by the author