Rethinking the History of Europe: Old and New Approaches[1]

Diogo Ramada Curto

Echoing Demosthenes' berating of his fellow Athenians for their complacency in face of the looming threat from Macedonia, Marc Bloch's scorching indictment of the failure of his contemporaries to rise to the occasion and rally in favour of alternatives to the growing menace of Nazism continues to resonate with us and to demand, as perhaps no other, our own response to the question of the political responsibility of historians as intellectuals and citizens.

In Europe, no less than in France, perilously verging on collapse into that 'strange defeat' Bloch sought to come to terms with, it was imperative, he felt, to denounce the dereliction of responsibility and lack of patriotism thanks to which evil triumphed because men stood indifferent or helpless on the sides. His own patriotism encompassed a defence of European civilization, both threatened equally by Nazism. Yet, Bloch did not imagine that the civic responsibility of historians could be reduced to a conception of history simply adapted to the present moment's political demands. On the contrary, Bloch was particularly wary of such reductionism.[2] Setting out the *Annales* project, Bloch had already then denounced the 'obsession with politics' in French schools' history teaching programmes. A more adequate pedagogic approach, he argued, required at once deepening the time span and broadening the social scientific context within which to frame historical understanding and explanation. Half a century has passed, and Bloch's reflections on the secondary school teaching of history still make for sobering reading. In his conception, there was no paradox or contradiction between historians' simultaneous political commitment and responsibility to the present and their warding off presentism by putting their present into historical perspective. Distance, Bloch suggested, was a lesson of history teaching.

The same principle can be said to inform this book. The current and ongoing political process of forging a European Union is no mere incidental background to the conception from which our project first emerged as a series of lectures, or to its publication as a book. Its origin lies in a summer course for high school teachers and young journalists first organized at the European University Institute in July 2002.

The association of the lectures and the book with the Institute would itself point to issues about the European nature of the project. Lectures and book both proceed from the conviction that rethinking the history of Europe demands going beyond the academic world's often overdetached and at times arcane discussions. The fact that high school teaching programs are still heavily oriented towards the construction of national memories was very much on our minds at the annual summer courses as we discussed the role of war, violence, social discrimination, and the more emotional forms of allegiance to national identities. Yet, the lively presentism of so many of our discussions led us to appreciate even more the importance of critical distance from contemporary disagreements.

To cultivate this critical distance historians have different tools at their disposal. One is offered by historiography itself – in our case, the critical examination of the rich tradition of histories of Europe. Analyzing the different ways in which the history of Europe has been written, and the contexts in which they were written, better equipped us to more critically assess our own perspectives. Henri Pirenne's and Federico Chabod's histories of Europe, analyzed in the first part of this chapter, are here chosen to illustrate this point. But if distance from merely presentist discussions of the image of Europe is indispensable, it is no less our conviction that proper historical distance can only be achieved by means of concrete historical analysis. The second part, therefore, turns to the examples offered in the chapters of this book, and reflects also upon the more general implications of putting together the scholarly 'conversations' of the fifteen historians assembled in the pages of this book.

A critical reflection on the writing of European history in the twentieth century must begin with the question of historical object and its identification. Some of the criteria represented here proceed from the choice and nature of the texts discussed and our strategies of reading them. Texts and reading strategies are in turn reflected in the corresponding choice of time frames, geographical focus, and stress accorded to the realm of ideas as against the political, economic or social dimensions. Other criteria are more contextual, emerging from the biographical trajectories of individual historians, or the institutional settings in which these histories were written. Indeed, twentieth-century historical practice is characterized by a process of academic institutionalization which defines its routines and imposes constraints on historical writing. The personal charisma of certain historians in particular moments of their lives is no less illuminating. Many of the historians who have since attained the status of heroes in our discipline were actively engaged in the struggles of the two world wars, were victims of persecution by authoritarian regimes, or suffered the experience of exile. The relationship we can discern between moments of crisis, war and violence and the general search for deeper regularities that underpin the histories of Europe is a striking feature of their work.

The Belgian historian Henri Pirenne's *Histoire de l'Europe* offers a good example. The relevant facts concerning the history of the making of the Histoire are known and easily summed up. This work was written while Pirenne was a prisoner of war in

Creuzberg between March 1917 and the Armistice (1918). The book, which only partly corresponded to the planned work which was to span a longer period, from the invasions of the Roman Empire to 1914, was published soon after Pirenne's death in 1936 by his son Jacques.[3] The war above all had dictated Pirenne's sense of urgency in writing this history of Europe; with the war's end, finishing the manuscript or publishing it ceased to be a priority for him. Though incomplete, the *Histoire* makes clear its author's intent to search for alternative ways of conceiving the period since the fall of the Roman Empire, so as to address contemporary political events. The marked anti-German stance evident from the very first page is a case in point. It can be read as the very *leitmotif* of Pirenne's thesis on the history of Europe. Its presence in the treatment of the Age of Reformation is evident, with Luther emerging as the champion of a conservative mysticism, cast here as a throwback to the Middle Ages, precisely at the moment when the Renaissance values of Erasmus, More and Rabelais were laying the groundwork for the creation of autonomous spaces leading to the development of modern individual values. Luther's theology of Justification by Grace by removing the outcome of individual fate from the individual to God allowed Pirenne to find in religion the explanation for the German proclivity to willingly submit to authority. Moreover, what really decided the success of Lutheranism was not so much a process of individual voluntary conversion, but an imposition determined by the State, through princely choice. The German Protestant states, in other words, launched the model for State Churches, thereby, here too, laying the course from which authoritarian regimes would later emerge. The return of serfdom in the sixteenth century, finally, provided an explanation for the emergence of the militarized state in Germany. A military state would always be antithetical to the values of citizenship. In religious, political, social and economic terms, therefore, German history since at least the sixteenth century appeared to foreclose the conditions required to nurture the growth and values of individualism. Nazism grew on deep roots.

Pirenne's anti-German attitude actually constituted a decisive break in an intellectual trajectory otherwise largely shaped by a German education and dependent on a large network of contacts with German historians. Pirenne's methodological agenda – especially his orientation towards an economic and social understanding of history – was heavily influenced by debates taking place in Germany, such as his friend, Karl Lamprecht's attack on the dominance of the philological and erudite approach to history, and his rejection of antiquarian perspectives in favour of a more sociological and psychological conception of history. Calling for the comparative study of collective groups it rejected a Rankian history centred on great men and politics. Werner Sombart's focus on the dynamism of social forces in the making of a modern world, and Otto Hintze's studies of the military and bureaucratic structures of the State were good examples. Writing economic and social history also sought to correct a Hegelian history oriented primarily towards the understanding of thoughts and ideas.[4] The *Histoire de l'Europe* then bears the mark of Pirenne's anti-German sentiment and threads his stance towards militarized Germany into the very fabric of his narrative of European

history, while all the while drawing on a German influenced historiography. Though central and particularly instructive, this is by no means the only aspect of Pirenne's *Histoire* that is of direct relevance to our enterprise. Here, we must turn to the last complete chapter of the book.

In this chapter, Pirenne sketched a panorama of international relations between the second half of the fifteenth and the first fifty years of the sixteenth century. The rise of Catholic Spain, discussed here, with its close and orthodox relations between the Church and the State, including the Inquisition, constituted for Pirenne, another definitive moment of European experience and another reference from which we may elaborate what could be called Pirenne's counter model of European organization. Understood simultaneously as a close parallel to the militarized state in Germany and as an annihilator of nations, for Pirenne, emperor Charles V's reign represented yet another negative model. Despite his acknowledgement of the Emperor's great, nearly global authority – unparalleled since the time of the Romans – Charles V's politics were for Pirenne directly dictated by dynastic interests. From this followed the crucial distinction between him and his French rival, Francis I, as a matter, therefore, not of two opposed personalities, but of a fundamental antithesis between a supranational empire, as represented by the Habsburgs, and France, representing in Pirenne's narrative a sort of state that vested individuals and citizens with the responsibility to take charge of their national destiny. For Pirenne, the positive and progressive values of Europe lay in the emancipation of individuals, turned into responsible individuals who strove for the common good, as citizens of their nation states.

The most revealing example of Pirenne's contrasting judgments on different forms of political organization is found in his description of the Ottoman Empire. Although, through their involvement in the politics of Charles V and Francis I the Ottomans became part of what he calls the 'European community', they represent yet another authoritarian and oppressive state structure. If the Turks must be considered useful partners in the games of politics (in so far as politics could be separated from religion), they did so without sharing the values of European civilization and citizenry. The Ottomans, whom Pirenne could see only through the stereotyped paradigm of Oriental Despotism, only enslaved their population.

The Protestant States of Germany, Catholic Spain, the Habsburg Empire, and the despotic Ottoman regime thus represented a European counter culture – they collectively formed an image of what Europe must avoid becoming. Pirenne ascribed a positive valuation to the work of collective forces – the so-called 'civilizing forces', in his expression of the Church's Roman legacy – and collective values. Liberty, responsibility, intelligence and energy are the terms by which modern and civilized Europe is characterized, and the merchants of free cities were the group which best embodied and represented them. It is as well to remind ourselves that the reduction of Pirenne's historical narrative of Europe to a series of binary opposites, such as the ones here proposed, risk betraying the nature of Pirenne's authorial intent, for he rejected simple antinomies. It is nevertheless the case that the composite picture created from his articulation of the different dimensions – from the concept of State

to economic and social forces, from Church and religion to new forms of thought – reveals an antinomian vision informed by and translating into a set of value judgements on the history of Europe.

Moving to a different context, Federico Chabod's *Storia dell'idea d'Europa* emerged out of lectures delivered at the University of Milan in 1943–44.[5] As with Lucien Fèbvre's *L'Europe. Genèse d'une civilisation*, based on the author's lectures at the Collège de France in the academic year 1944–45, the context of war and violence also shaped Chabod's approach.[6] In both cases we see a similar project of rescuing the notion of Europe from authoritarian appropriations. We also see how efforts to rethink the history of Europe outside the ideological values of a new order led both historians to a more explicit presentation of the methods and scholarly tools of historical research. Febvre's reference to historical psychology and Chabod's defence of the history of ideas demonstrate too that the writing of history would henceforth follow a more academic path of specialization. As with Pirenne, we can identify the disciplinary trends that inspired Chabod's historical writing. His defence of the history of ideas was heavily influenced by Meinecke and Croce, and in successive elaborations of his work, Chabod sought to justify the validity of his approach in face of what would, in the 1950s, become the more dominant approach of economic and social history.[7]

Chabod's *History of Europe* can be examined from the perspective of three particular points of his approach: the defence of an erudite and philological treatment of primary sources; a clear reference to his political motivation in writing this work; and the simultaneous need to avoid the risk of anachronistic projections of the present into the past. The latter is discussed with reference to two telling examples. Discussing Charles V and his Empire, Chabod explicitly dissociates Charles V's imperialism from any sort of European-wide project, thus distancing himself from a long historiographical tradition that glorified the emperor and his imperial mission.[8] Elsewhere, Chabod was quick to suggest that Edmund Burke's emphasis on noble and religious traditions rooted in the medieval past as features of European superiority in face of Asian despotism should be seen as a *political reaction* to the French Revolution – as a form of invention of tradition.[9] As in Pirenne, then, so too with Chabod, these examples work as counter-models of how to write the history of the idea of Europe while creating a safe and critical distance from both conservative values (Burke) and authoritarian ones (imperialism of Charles V).

Chabod's idea of Europe is unapologetically liberal. It is also firmly located in the domain of the history of ideas. The contrast between Europe and the rest of the world constitutes the main, and perhaps most controversial, part of his presentation. To tell the story, Chabod goes back to Isocrates' contrast between Greek liberty and Asian despotism and to Aristotle's positioning of Greece as a median between the extremes of Europe and Asia. The digression through classical antiquity, then, lays the foundation for the contrast between the values of European citizenship and liberty in the face of Asian serfdom and despotism, but it is only during the Age of Renaissance and Discoveries that the concept of Europe actually emerged. The discoveries – as opposed to the Renaissance and the Reformation, oriented as they

were to the past – were predicated on a modern concept of time. Authors and writings inspired by the process of European expansion contributed to the construction of a sense of Europe vis-à-vis other, but contemporary, peoples and civilizations. In their more elaborate or refined expressions we find utopian and literary fictions opposing Europe to other societies, and historical works, geographical descriptions and travel accounts revealing a European perception of an 'othered' Rest – Chabod himself was particularly attentive to the critiques of Europe developed by writers inspired by and projected onto the New World, China, Japan and India.

For Chabod then, Europe's identity was in part created through this contrast with other societies and civilizations. One perspective which clearly lent itself to structuring this contrast was the tradition of European liberty versus Asian despotism. Elaborated in classical times, the topic had resonated through the works of Machiavelli, Botero, and Montesquieu. In Chabod's view, however, the question of the European perception of the rest of the world could not be reduced to this theme alone – and in this respect Chabod anticipates (and rebuts) the paradigm of Orientalism as it came to be defined by Edward Said some thirty years later.[10] Though unquestionably Eurocentric in his interpretation of the texts, Chabod's particular interest lay in exploring other dimensions of the European perception of the rest of the World. The emphasis on self-criticism developed by European writers at particular moments, as for example at the end of the sixteenth century, or during the 'crise de la conscience européenne', is one such dimension. This penchant toward self-criticism, Chabod argues, led more importantly to a *differentiation* between the spheres of knowledge and power. This is a dimension that clearly contradicts Said's thesis concerning European uses of knowledge about other societies in direct association with imperial or colonial powers. Similarly, the references, mostly in French texts from Lery and Montaigne to the Enlightenment, to life in society – ways of dressing, conversation, etc – also challenge the reductive collapsing of power and knowledge. The development of an autonomous sphere of sociability, born out of a comparison between Europe and other civilizations, created a 'factor of civility which was not dependent on politics or economics.'[11] By the same token, the view of progress – influenced by Botero's 'incivilmento' – laid the foundations for comparing different civilizations, while the attractions of an admittedly idealized Chinese civilization, led to a relativization of the importance of Europe as a model.

Besides the relations between Europe and the World, other elements in Chabod's history converge towards the creation of an image of Europe and a sense of European consciousness. For Chabod, the humanism represented by Piccolomini, Erasmus and Machiavelli, inaugurated in the cultural sphere a modern and secular view of Europe. The sense of European community – conceived as *respublica*, a space of civility and liberty – developed by these and other humanists from Italy to the Low Countries had very little to do with religion, whether in the medieval conception of *Christianity*, or that of the newly emerging religious movements oriented to a return to the original principles of the Bible.[12] Machiavelli, for instance, had nothing to say on *Christianitas*.[13] Certainly, one finds in Chabod's account a reference to a rupture

with Christianity, but there is also a celebration of progress, intellectual connections, and a new consciousness of Europe. For Chabod, this emerging construction of a secular cultural sphere came to fruition with Erasmus and, then again, with Voltaire's notion of the 'république littéraire.'

Thus for Chabod, the history of the idea of Europe was a secular construction that arose out of the European Discoveries (and from the European discovery of the world); but it was also a political construction embodied in the rise of the State. In Machiavelli, Montesquieu, Voltaire and Rousseau, Chabod found exactly what he identified as the European values – individuality, liberty, republicanism, the notion of a European balance of power, and above all the emergence of national sentiment. Originally conceived (in the writings of the humanists) as national pride, it was only in the second half of the eighteenth century, and especially with Rousseau, that nationalism assumed its fuller emotive appeal. This, in turn, in the period immediately following the French Revolution, led to a crisis of that same European consciousness and unity that had been so carefully nurtured by Montesquieu and Voltaire. The Romantic response to this moment of crisis privileged a return to the peaceful religious values of medieval Christianity destroyed by the Reformation and the Enlightenment.[14] The crude and instrumental reduction of the idea of Europe to a balance of power, by conservative advocates such as Heeren and Metternich, in its turn left little room for the articulation of the ideas of nation and Europe.[15] Only by the middle of the nineteenth century, with Mazzini and Guizot, did patriotism once more come to relate sentiments towards the nation with a notion of Europeanness in the tradition of the Enlightenment.[16]

The end of the *Storia dell'idea d'Europa* was probably intended as a clarion call to Chabod's contemporaries. If the Second World War could be explained as a clash between European nations and an authoritarian understanding of Europe associated with a clear expansionist and imperial political project, it was possible to learn from Guizot's lessons and once again recover the old ideals of civic values and liberty ascribed to Europe. If Guizot could establish an intellectual basis for articulating a sense of Europe in harmony with national identities, Chabod's generation could do the same. This was the message of the Italian historian, and it helps to put in perspective one of the earliest discussions on the role of national memories in Europe.[17]

Pirenne and Chabod sought to identify the Europeanness of European history by distinguishing an inside from an outside. For the Belgian historian, political systems that did not correspond to the values of liberty and citizenship were relegated to the margins of Europe. Thus, Charles V's empire in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, the German territories under Luther's influence and later the Prussian Empire – as well as the Ottomans – could be branded as un-European, precisely because they were militarized societies. In this view of empire as evil, Pirenne resorted to the paradigm of Oriental despotism: it works as a counter-image, representative of what Europe is not; or better still, of what Europe should not be. Moving from great systems to the history of ideas, Chabod's greater interest in European perceptions of

the world led him instead to historicize the same notion of Oriental despotism: he was able, however, to identify other discursive traditions within European perceptions of the Self and the Other – self-criticism, a step-by-step creation of an autonomous sphere of civility and the development of a comparative method in writing history.

The papers included in the first part of this book adopt a similar approach. They, too, analyze the relation between what was perceived as belonging to, and what was placed outside of Europe. However, our own context is very different from those of Pirenne and Chabod. Our past has been marked by totalitarianism, the Holocaust, and Europe's own post-colonial recognition of Empire and colonial wars, and our field transformed by the reflections of a number of powerful thinkers; one thinks, as examples, of Adorno, Arendt or Said. It is no longer possible to sustain with quite the same assurance certainties about the coherent nature of European values of liberty in opposition to those of an imagined despotic Orient. In place of simple contrasts we now have multiple, transversal complexities. The historiography of colonial societies and post-colonial literary criticism have bluntly exposed the contradictory features of European knowledge about other societies and the various forms of colonial knowledge. It is no longer possible to accept old dichotomies opposing home and abroad, metropole and colony, centre and periphery. Such thorough exposure not only poses a challenge to thinking about Europe and its colonies, but also proposes new methodological suggestions for the writing of Europe's own history.

The range of attitudes and perceptions suggested by Giulia Calvi, Stuart Clark, Giovanni Ricci, and André Stoll challenges any simple inventory. For some readers, the simple act of putting these articles together would have suggested a commitment to a fragmentary view – a deconstruction of older certainties concerning the relations between Europe and the rest of the world. This, however, is not our reading. All four articles are based on a careful and concrete analysis of primary sources: mostly texts, but also archival evidence related to people living on the margins of, or in the interstices of different European cultures. But what is clearly striking is how these authors have been able to raise a series of methodological questions based on exercises of contextualization. The particular role assigned to women and gender relations in sixteenth-century books of customs examined by Calvi, are compared, in respect to both text and image, to information contained in Giovanni Botero's *Descrizione universale* and in juridical treatises. Clark analyzes demonological treatises both by reference to their sources of inspiration, such as José de Acosta's *Historia natural y moral de las Indias,* as well as to images contained in books by Cesare Ripa or John Dee. Ricci's explicit aim of moving beyond the intellectual constructions embodied in galleries of noble texts, leads him to place ordinary people at the centre of his inquiry. He has focused on the traces of their behaviour, yet, he has also sought to compare their attitudes with those represented in prescriptions for ceremonies and other less well-known literary texts. Finally, though claiming expertise in literary analysis, Stoll is undaunted in approaching his subject through real people and their actions – including the itinerant story of Dona Beatriz de Luna,

alias Gracia Nassi Mendes, the Jewish widow who journeyed from Portugal to Antwerp, Ferrara and Istanbul – before, in the second part of his chapter, discussing a variety of Spanish texts from the time of *El Quijote*. These telegraphic summaries of how the four chapters are structured provide enough examples of how these authors have combined different texts to shape their arguments. This is a simple enough point, but one much overlooked in the practice of a textual analysis that only too often tends to concentrate exclusively on a single type of discourse, forgetting that behind (or surrounding) each text there is a variegated social context, where other texts and actions play an active role.

What then may we retain from this first part of our collective effort? The fact that the starting point for any perception of otherness tends to be established by a process of analogy with the familiar is not a new argument. It has been well rehearsed by historians of the age of reconnaissance as they often doubted the ability of fifteenth and sixteenth-century observers to perceive and identify real difference. This point was also borne out by the thesis emphasizing the continuity of traditional culture throughout the early modern period. This argument was made on the basis of early printed books, a medium that largely contributed to the reproduction of older forms of knowledge, or of arguments that suggested that incredulity remained beyond the range of mental possibilities in the sixteenth century. Although they are provocative, these theses fit within a well-organized conception of European history: the age of discoveries was simply an age of reconnaissance; the new technology of printed culture turns out to be an instrument for reinforcing tradition; and the beginning of laicism and atheism may be downgraded by reference to the persistence of ecclesiastical institutions and a religious life shaped by Christianity. In short, visions of continuity and stability replaced, or at least curbed, the more celebratory view of modernity as rupture.

The papers comprising this first part seek to move us beyond simplistic contrasts between visions of rupture and continuity. The case studies and texts analyzed by Calvi, Clark, and Stoll give particular emphasis to the last quarter of the sixteenth, and the first years of the following century. The decision to narrow the focus to a single period allows the authors to recreate the pertinent context for their Italian custom books, Spanish and French treatises on demonology, and Spanish Moorophilic literature. In each case, lines of continuity with the past have been traced in order to identify models for dealing with otherness: visions of Amazons and classical mythology, Biblical literature meshed with popular culture on witches and sabbats; fears and feelings of insecurity that emerged during the period shadowed by the Black Legend. However, in each case, it is the balance of these shifting lines of continuity and break that creates an interesting tension. By the same token, it is also possible to understand Ricci's analysis of ordinary people as challenging an intellectual and top-down conception of individualism. In short, older certainties about European perceptions of the other or simply about relations between Europe and the rest, here give way to more experimental and tentative approaches. Fixed identities are displaced by more flexible notions of the self. The grand frames of Europe facing the Orient or of a European genealogy of values elaborated by

intellectual history are substituted by an increasing reflexivity on case studies concerning the ways of conceiving the social fabric of meanings within what Jacques Revel has called 'le jeux des échelles'.[18]

The second part of this book, comprising seven articles, is concerned with the question of core European values, with the identification of competing discursive traditions associated with ways of conceiving – or imagining – communities. The old certainties summarized by Pirenne or Chabod recede much further before this polyphony. For those claiming that a static order existed before the great rupture created by the Enlightenment, these contrasting conceptions of communities and political societies suggest a rather different Europe. Pietro Costa places the pan-European tradition of *ius commune* (or the diverse readings of a patrimony of texts concerning Roman law, Canon law and the laws of different kingdoms) at the centre of his analysis. This was anything but a static juridical order that gave way to modern rationality. Since the twelfth century, the method or *habitus* of *ius commune* had formed a basis for interpreting social phenomena, it had provided academics an essential analytical tool, and had become an integral feature in the professional life of every magistrate. The traditional hegemony of *ius commune* was finally challenged only with the emergence in the seventeenth century of a body of natural law. The vitality of *ius commune,* however, persisted well into the nineteenth century, when constitutional regimes were established in new liberal societies.

Placing Costa's reading of Roman law aside, Janet Coleman's analysis of different conceptions of citizenship since St. Augustine, has the effect of bringing to the fore different ways of conceiving European community. In fact Coleman places at the centre of her analysis two different views of the self and the individual, his/her identification with a community, notably of believers, and his/her role *vis-à-vis* the state: in the thirteenth century, the neo-Augustinians came to believe that every individual was a potential sinner with a tendency to give in to passions; therefore, law – and above all, the law of God – needed to be imposed coercively. In contrast, since the neo-Aristotelians accepted that human beings were naturally oriented towards the common good, law in their view was a rational construct that corresponded to human expectations. The debate between these two differing views was part of Christian tradition, whose origins coincided with the end of the Roman Empire. Coleman argues that no other legacy, in the conceptual space of early modern Europe, not even the interpretations of Roman law, could compete with the impact of this theological and Christian debate. In light of this tradition, it also becomes possible to understand: (i) the dissemination of discourses on the virtues of princes, governors and citizens, which created a corpus on the basis of which the reputation of individuals was regulated according to their status; (ii) a first moment, from the thirteenth century onwards, when urban political cultures confidently modelled themselves as self-governing communities, in correspondence with the neo-Aristotelian attitude; and finally (iii) a shift towards the creation of a more coercive order, rooted in a neo-Augustinian position that, first, differentiated the elite from ordinary people in the Renaissance and led, later, to the Wars of Religion. This coercive order was expressed in civic humanism with its definition of people as an

irrational multitude; in the emergence of forms of individual control and exclusion of heretics by the Inquisition; and also in the Hobbesian conception of a *Leviathan*. In this light, can the Enlightenment be understood as a return to a neo-Aristotelian perspective? This paradox is not Coleman's point. On the contrary, for her it was much more important to stress the consequences of the politics of disciplining inspired by a neo-Augustinian understanding of politics that colours our own modernity.

Starting with these two contributions, all the chapters in this part of the book contribute to break the celebratory approach to specific periods of European history. Indeed, instead of taking the Renaissance, the Scientific Revolution, the Hobbesian moment or the Enlightenment for granted as foundational moments of European identity, all seven authors opt instead for a *longue durée* perspective. They go back to the fourth century, when the Theodosian code of Roman Law was prepared, or to the sixth century when Justinian codified the *Corpus Iuris Civilis* (Coleman). They emphasize the role of the twelfth century, when the *usus modernus Pandectarum* took shape (Pietro Costa) and the commercial revolution of northern Italy occurred (Francesca Trivellato). They also consider the emergence of new languages of court society from the thirteenth and the fourteenth century onwards defining the individual (Rita Costa Gomes), or the examples of resistance to public violence by local communities in the second half of the fourteenth and the first half of the fifteenth centuries (Angela De Benedictis). The study of a network of scholars interested in botany and natural history during the sixteenth century challenges the most common view of the break in European history created by the Scientific Revolution (Florike Egmond). Finally, Robert Wokler's analysis proposes that the elite – from Britain and elsewhere – travelling in Europe and especially in Italy, opposed first, Greek and Roman ideals to the legacy of Christian fanaticism; second, 'a comparative anthropology of modern Europe's inhabitants and curiosity in the relics of Europe's achievement before the advent of Christianity' to the academic models of Oxford, Cambridge and Paris, still dependent on the interpretation of scriptures and doctrines. Therefore, the Grand Tour represented an opposition to the values of Christianity in the name of a classical legacy discovered by the Italian Renaissance and associated with the cultivation of bonnes manières – an exercise in sociability. The point, however, it is worth emphasizing, is not to develop a strategy of anticipation, where a development commonly attributed to one period is traced to an earlier age; nor, for that matter, to claim medieval origins for what was once considered modern and European. A more serious strategy of dealing with long periods of time in a non-linear perspective emerges as a common way of following continuities and ruptures through European history, thus disrupting the usual expectations of linearity and moral resonances of good or bad times.

Other traditional views are similarly challenged in the process. If these diverse views of how society, groups and individuals worked, or were represented, in early modern Europe actually hold together, it is because they share a methodology. There is a common inclination to avoid, and even to challenge, the most problematic generalizations of sociology. The simple opposition between community and society,

to evoke Tönnies' celebrated juxtaposition, or between mechanic and organic solidarity, to use Durkheim's, gives way to the precision of historical analysis. Rita Costa Gomes, for instance, sets out to establish an explicit dialogue with social science models. Her reconstruction of the creation of court hierarchies stresses how the subordination of individuals to the rules and powers that controlled them did not necessarily entail the existence of a preceding community characterized by face-to-face relations and an anonymous power of the State. Francesca Trivellato challenges the same opposition between community and society, demonstrating that the creation of a cosmopolitan *republica mercatorum* did not correspond to the spread of an anonymous social rationality; on the contrary it implied the existence of often flawed, interpersonal relations. The same kind of argument is reinforced by Florike Egmond's analysis of the relation between humanists, scientists and enquiring men and women devoted to the study of botany: the creation of a really international society, she argues, is a consequence not only of personal interaction but also of gift exchanges usually associated with the tradition of small-scale communities. For her part, Angela De Benedictis explores the notion of political community, demonstrating how the values and practice of liberty shaped by forms of resistance should be ascribed to local dimensions, instead of being the result of an abstract state construction. Following her argument it would be possible to imagine a local tradition of liberalism – rooted in local communities well aware of their political interests, corresponding to a bottom-up conception of a moral economy (to use E.P. Thompson's famous notion) – and perhaps more able to influence the role of the State than to be influenced by it. In all these essays one notices a desire to challenge the sharp opposition between community and society, as well as the Weberian divisions between the modernity of the European, Protestant north, and the south characterized by an allegiance to Catholicism (Trivellato and Egmond).

The book's last section emphasizes the role of a limited number of images, predominantly visual images, in identifying European culture from the Middle Ages to the Enlightenment. The approach aims again to suggest future research and by no means intends to be exhaustive. Christiane Klapisch-Zuber analyses how the image of the tree was in constant use from the time of the Bible through the high Middle Ages, and then again from the Enlightenment to evolutionary theories of the nineteenth century. While the tree visibly embodies a way of thinking about the origins of Europe rooted in the language of the Bible, arboreal images have always been used to classify different forms of knowledge, many inspired by Cicero. Even more diffused but generic was the tree's use to make sense of family genealogies – an image of social integration equally applied to national dynasties or to state bureaucracies of the early modern period. The scope of this analysis is not only determined by the variety of fields or texts where it is possible to trace such images, but also by the careful analysis of the time dimension proposed by the author: behind the lines of continuity it is possible to identify moments of rupture such as a trend towards vegetalization of the tree around 1300, suggesting a bottom-up representation rooted in nature and breaking with ideas of a transcendent sphere. A second rupture comes with the intensification of the use of the tree in the age of

print, demonstrating how the early modern period instead of breaking with the past, actually carried forward an intense reutilization of traditional imagery. It is only with the *Encyclopédie*'s criticisms of genealogical representations that doubts about the tree's function began to be heard.

There is, however, another and perhaps more important reason for considering this chapter exemplary: the careful study of the tree does not intend to suggest that we are dealing necessarily with 'a dominant figure at the heart of the dreams of our traditional societies'. With this statement, Klapisch-Zuber not only challenges other historians who claim paramount status for their individual fields of inquiry, but also suggests an implicit need to think about other important and comparable images. Her suggestion deserves attention in order to recall and integrate comparable (and contemporary) studies on images of Europe centred on the body (from anthropomorphic representations of European maps to custom books), emblem books, memory palaces, or on analogies from classical mythology to the fable of the bees.[19]

How did antique sculpture, collected and displayed, create a pattern of visual representation paradigmatically European, the seeds of an exhibitionary complex organized around the praise of Greece and Rome, their ruins and vestiges? This is the question guiding Edouard Pommier. Pommier charts how a European sense of patrimony first emerges through patterns of collecting and museum organization developed first in sixteenth-century Italy, the competition for these 'spoils' between rival cities, and their diffusion to other parts of Europe, in particular in German territories. The growth of an international art market in the seventeenth century was a natural corollary to the notions of prestige associated with the ownership of such collections that court culture had actively encouraged. But it was again in Rome in the eighteenth century that the work of antiquarians like Winckelmann met the Church's growing interest in preserving art, and firstly, of antiquity. Classical sculpture and museums of art, Pommier argues, offered a common language to Europe, and therefore, an opportunity to go beyond religious fractures and to create a lively practice of cultural tolerance.

If sculptures, particular objects from antiquity, were diffused by Rome and accepted in many parts as signs of a shared language of Europe, two other instruments also signified similar value: Latin and the Grand Tour. Latin, Françoise Waquet reminds us, was used in Catholic schools, in particular in Jesuit colleges, but also in the Lutheran world. In fact, Latin retained its vitality until the eighteenth century, not only in elite education and church ritual, but in the republic of letters and in domains of governance and diplomacy. Its substitution by vernacular languages, in an international sphere particularly by French, cannot be considered a linear process. In the case of botany, also studied by Florike Egmond in this book, the use of the vernacular in the sixteenth century as a tool of communication contrasts with Linnaeus' refusal to use 'barbarous' terms in the eighteenth. By the same token, the Grand Tour appears as one of the common features of Enlightenment classicism.

If the analysis of images and shared languages of classicism relativizes our vision of Europe, it nevertheless cannot erase the presence of Christ and Christianity. Yet,

our collective approach to the various discursive traditions that create a history of Europe is in no sense an iteration of the currently popular discourse identifying Europe with Christianity. On the contrary, we have been explicitly searching for *loci* of religious relativism, exemplified by the presence of the so-called Moorophile literature of the Catholic Spain of Philip II (Stoll), the ambiguous forms used by Christians (dis)simulating their individuality as Turks (Ricci), or by the strong commercial activities of Jews linking Europe with the rest of the world (Trivellato). Even when the same languages are shaped by references to the Bible (as happens with the arboreal images studied by Klapisch-Zuber) or to Latin (used in ecclesiastical organizations and religious schools referred to by Waquet) this relativism is clearly evident. In his chapter, Denis Crouzet presents a series of case studies of S. Teresa de Avila, Inácio of Loyola, the French Catholic League, Martin Luther and Thomas Müntzer. His article, based on careful textual analysis, glosses the shift in models of sainthood in the sixteenth century: from heroic martyrdom resplendent with sacrificial blood and mutilation to the discovery of an inner space of sainthood by S. Teresa; from the image of Christ's sacrifice represented by a community of mystical body ready to perpetrate massacre in the Catholic League, to French catholic reform of the seventeenth century; or from the encouragement to violent sacrifices by Thomas Müntzer to a distance from the imagery of pain and achievement of everyday grace suggested by Luther. The shift proposed by Crouzet crosses the Protestant Reformation, the Counter-Reformation, and the different processes through which images of the Self were constructed and reconstructed in a Christian Europe. Violent fanaticism – inspired by Christ's sacrifice – appears only as a single aspect of a much more variegated reality of the Christian world.

Françoise Waquet evokes the wonderful image of Pedro, born in the Canaries, offered as a gift to the king of France, who ended up writing his autobiography in Latin. Yet, it is this image of integration, what may be considered a sign of savant culture, that in fact provides an angle of vision on a number of exclusions. A portrait of Pedro's daughter by Lavinia Fontana, for instance, shows her holding an Italian text: women were by and large excluded from the practice of Latin in early modern Europe, and therefore subordinated to a lower sphere *vis-à-vis* a hegemonic and more distinguished Latin culture. Class divisions such as this hindered the construction of the Self at every turn (see chapters by Ricci, Calvi, Coleman, Costa Gomes, and Trivellato). Yet, a sense of multiplicity of approaches and images of Europe could be once again evoked by the simple fact that though she represented Pedro's daughter as unlettered in Latin, Lavinia Fontana herself actively participated in the Bolognese circle of the Aldrovandi, whose collections of natural history remind us of other networks of scholars and another conception of museums and of displaying their objects.

This multiplication of images reinforces the claim to historical diversity and relativism for which we have been calling. This, we have proposed, is the best way of demonstrating a lively association between historical research and freedom of thought. Yet such freedom is not unfettered. In each chapter the focus on a limited variety of images or discursive traditions and the investment of a straightforward line of contextual inquiry reflect what we do believe is the strength of our profession: our

capacity to understand the past, avoiding the pitfalls of anachronism, creating distance towards the construction of our object, reflecting on the effects of time, and proceeding analytically. However, the simple fact of presenting so many perspectives creates a variety of possibilities, difficult to reduce to a single unity. In other words, if concrete historical analysis provided by each chapter reveals the limits associated with any exploration of the images of Europe,[20] when we multiply these exercises it seems that we are not only multiplying the range of possibilities, we run the risk of disintegrating any claim about what really defines the most representative images of Europe. Therefore, the risk of an endless multiplicity cannot be avoided, and the only way to control it remains concrete historical analysis. Nevertheless, if we are to proclaim our freedom to pursue a relativistic view of the images of Europe we must also recognize the possibility that criticism may at once be directed to this relativism, just as it can (and should) be levelled at those apparently definitive views of European history: the Europe of the nations, the Europe of Christianity, the Europe of liberal republicanism, the Europe that sprang out of the Enlightenment.

As we survey the contributions of our fifteen authors and the resulting kaleidoscope of images and discursive traditions, what can we suggest are the main points of a constructive critique on current discussions about the history of Europe? One way to answer this question is to recall the position already suggested in this volume's introduction, which distances ourselves both from the postmodern notion that identities are largely constructed, and from Enlightenment progressivism. Neither of these notions should be allowed to stand unquestioned. As far as the second of these, the essays in the volume clearly establish that there are strong grounds for scepticism with regard to considering the eighteenth century as the necessary point of departure for the history of the concept of Europe. With regard to the constructivist position, the cumulative effect of the following chapters is indeed to reject notions of European identity fashioned entirely (or even largely) on constructivist premises. What, then, are we left with? Is this volume's contribution a bouquet of competing images whose selection is never other than random (to which one could justifiably retort that, in any case, this is not necessarily a conceptual advance of our postmodern age)? From the very start, our aim was never to arrive at an integrated, single, and comprehensive interpretation. We knew that such comprehensiveness would set us off in an illusory and ultimately frustrating search. Rather, in the spirit of Lucien Febvre's rumination 'je ne serai pas complet. Je voudrais, une fois de plus comprendre, et faire comprendre', our aim was not unity, but understanding.[21]

In these terms, the lesson of the fifteen essays that comprise this book should be sought not in what they add up to in terms of substance, but as a method for trying to understand the history of the idea of Europe, even the history of Europe, *tout court*. All of them challenge the hedgehog approach to the history of Europe. Each of them projects a reflective engagement with the challenge of writing history, which, at once, is borne out of an awareness of the historian, and the history teacher's civic responsibilities and refracts this engagement through a carefully constructed critical distance. By the same token, the localized and erudite exercises presented in each

chapter, relying explicitly on concrete analysis of primary sources, also create a tension between images and discursive traditions, on the one hand, and specific and local social contexts, on the other. It is the force of this tension – reconstructing simultaneously the specificity of each image, language or discourse, and questioning its inscription in a concrete social structure, in a specific situation or in the performance of an actor – that suggests unity of method. At the risk of sliding into a more empirical and less theoretical approach, the chapters in this volume do, to borrow E.P. Thompson's ironic expression, demonstrate the 'poverty of theory'.[22] They also call into question the assumption that because structures of language presumably remain stable, social contexts themselves remain fixed and unchanged.

The book may be taken to task over its apparent lack of unity. Or for its bias for concrete analysis and its neglect of theory. Neither of these charges worries us particularly. Nor is it appropriate to impute to ourselves or our colleagues a sentiment of nostalgia for pre-Enlightenment or pre-modern times. All along, one of our overriding aims was to reject a celebratory attitude towards any period of European history. For this very reason, from the very start, we encouraged colleagues who participated in this enterprise to try out diverse scales of time, and to ponder new types of periodization. In our day, as Europe faces the grave challenges of an altogether uncharted future, we saw no need to indulge in any sort of nostalgia. But we do strongly believe that fragments of the past – in this instance comprising a set of images and discourses – may cast new and revealing light on the predicaments that we and our students – citizens and scholars that we all are – face today. It is for this reason that all seventeen authors represented in this volume collectively dedicate this book to their children, grand-children, and to our students. It is to them that Europe – past and future – belongs.

Notes

1. I thank Nicky Koniordos for assistance in the preparation of this text. Urmila Dé and Abdoolkarim Vakil helped me in formulating my ideas. The text was fully revised by Tony Molho.
2. Bloch (1946), p. 172.
3. Pirenne (1936).
4. Lyon (1974); Violante (1997).
5. Chabod (1995).
6. Fèbvre (1999).
7. Chabod (1995), p. 58.
8. Chabod (1995), p. 18.
9. Chabod (1995), p. 19.
10. Woolf (2002), p. 278.
11. Chabod (1995), p. 76.
12. Chabod (1995), p. 60.
13. Chabod (1995), p. 50.
14. Chabod (1995), pp. 127–130.
15. Chabod (1995), p. 132.

16. Chabod (1995), pp. 133, 137.
17. For a different interpretation of Chabod's work, see Verga (2004).
18. Revel (1996); Chartier (2005).
19. One of the best examples is offered by Adriano Prosperi (1993).
20. On the need to keep in mind a critical history of European images, see Pocock (1997), p. 311.
21. Fèbvre (1944).
22. Thompson (1978); Sarkar (1997), pp. 50–81.

References

Bloch, M. (1946), *L'Étrange Défaite. Témoignage écrit en 1940*, introduction by George Altman (Paris).

Chabod, F. (1995), *Storia dell'idea d'Europa* (Rome and Bari).

Chartier, R. (2005), *Inscrire et effacer. Culture écrite et littérature (XIe –XVIIIe siècle)* (Paris).

Fèbvre, L. (1944), *Autour de 'L'Heptaméron'. Amour sacré, amour profane* (Paris).

_____ . (1999), *L'Europe: Genèse d'une civilisation. Cours professé au Collège de France en 1944–1945* (Paris).

Lyon, B.D. (1974), *Henri Pirenne: a Biographical and Intellectual Study* (Ghent).

Pirenne, H. (1936), *Histoire de l'Europe des invasions au XVIe siècle* (Paris).

Pocock, J.G.A. (1997), 'Deconstructing Europe', in *The Question of Europe*, ed. by P. Gowan and P. Anderson (London, New York).

Prosperi, A. (1993), 'Europa "in forma virginia": aspetti della propaganda asburgica del '500', *Annali dell'Istituto storico italo-germanico in Trento*, vol. 19, pp. 243–75.

Revel, J. (ed.) (1996), *Jeux d'échelles. La micro-analyse à l'expérience* (Paris).

Sarkar, S. (1997), 'The Relevance of E. P. Thompson', in S. Sarkar, *Writing Social History* (New Delhi).

Thompson, E.P. (1978) *The Poverty of Theory and Other Essays* (New York).

Verga, M. (2004), *Storie d'Europa, Secoli XVIII–XXI* (Rome).

Violante, C. (1997), *Uno storico europeo tra guerra e dopoguerra, Henri Pirenne (1914–1923): per una rilettura della Histoire de l'Europe, la fine della 'grande illusione'* (Bologna).

Woolf, S. (2002), 'Reading Federico Chabod's *Storia dell'idea d'Europa* half a century later', *Journal of Modern Italian Studies*, vol. 7, no. 2.