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The European frontier in our global village

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THE EUROPEAN FRONTIER IN OUR GLOBAL VILLAGE

Mariateresa Gammone

ABSTRACT

As F. J. Turner emphasized on the frontier in shaping American character, we can say that the frontier shaped the European mindset. In the past, the European frontiers have seen war and carnage. However, many cross-border regions have seen dialogue, communication, commerce, change, travel, and

reciprocal fertilization. In the global village, the best perception of the values of Europe is along its borders. The light shines strongest in the point of its source, but it is more appreciated to the point of its limit, where darkness and brightness compete for space – and even for life.

KEYWORDS

Frontiers, enlightenment, Europe

THE FRONTIER IN EUROPEAN HISTORY

In terms of military mapping, a frontier is also a front. Historic borders such as the Great Wall of China have defined *territory* as a *defended* area. The carnage over frontiers was a commonplace in Europe, because it was well-known that it was on the borders that the possibility of *depriving others of their own border*¹ occurred first. In an overpopulated Europe, terms like *Hackordnung* or *Lebensraum* were familiar to zoologists and politicians.

It has been said that in some way Europe was as an immense Far West². As F. J. Turner emphasized on the importance of the frontier in shaping American character³, we can say that the importance of the frontier shaped the European mindset. Undeniably, the frontier has been a

recurring landmark of American exceptionalism, from the heyday of Kennedy's *New Frontier* to the *electronic frontier* of the Wikipedia editors, which have been

explicitly compared to the pioneers of Turner's American frontier for their boldness and rejection of limitations⁴. But while frontiersmen, in the Wild West, settled their disputes with shoot-outs and lynch mobs, the European mapmakers were producing their most horrendous massacres just for boundary-naming.

Boundaries have seen not only war: many cross-border regions have seen dialogue, communication, commerce, change, travel, and reciprocal fertilization. Today the electro-magnetic discoveries and communication devices have created a new environment so that mankind now exists under conditions of a global village. It is a flat world, with fewer barriers between countries and individuals — but that is now also becoming crowded (as the old Europe), thanks to rising expectations, consumerism, and population.

¹ M. Heidegger, *Hölderlins Hymnen "Germanien" und "Der Rhein"*, Gesamtausgabe, Klostermann 1999.

² L. Febvre, *L'Europe. Genèse d'une civilisation*, Librairie Académique Perrin, Paris 1999.

³ Cfr. F. J. Turner, *The Frontier in American History*, Holt, New York 1920, where, right from the first pages it is said that "the American frontier is sharply distinguished from the European frontier—a fortified boundary line running through dense populations".

⁴ R. Jensen, *Military History on the Electronic Frontier: Wikipedia Fights the War of 1812*, in "The Journal of Military History", 76, 2012: 523-556. As a new kind of Far West, "the world's largest ungoverned space", the Internet is represented in E. Schmidt, J. Cohen, *The New Digital Age. Reshaping the Future of People, Nations and Business*, Knopf, New York 2013.

In the global village many people have ceased to be linked to a specific environment and become the content of several environments, with multiple identities, including fractures within minds and souls. In the past, the map engendered the territory. Today, while classical frontiers are being eroded, there is a chicken-and-egg problem. Did global policies create the new frontiers or vice versa? At least one can say that each furthered the other.

THE FRONTIERS IN CLASSICAL EUROPE

The first European identity was strengthened and defined on the frontier. The best perception of the values of Europe is in its periphery and along its borders. The light shines strongest in the point of its source, but it is more appreciated to the point of its limit, where darkness and brightness compete for space - and even for life.

The project of the European Union was born to avoid a reiteration of huge massacres that cost the life of millions of human beings⁵. Two world wars left an apocalyptic toll of millions of dead, maimed, wounded, widows and orphans, and tons and tons of rubble, genocide and nuclear bombs. From many point of views, the Founding Fathers of the EU were at the fringes of the old Europe. In the post World War II years, they reached the peak levels of the European power, but previously they were politically peripheral, marginal, borderline. Robert Schuman, Alcide De Gasperi, Konrad Adenauer, Jean Monnet had humility and a sense of shame. They had nothing to do with the old European history, characterized by eurocentrism and racism, militarism and colonialism. The Founding Fathers of the EU are linked to another European heritage. They were immigrants in the New World of a *European Dream*. It was a dream come true and special, after everything they went through.

What people mean as *classical civilization* was born along the frontiers⁶ of the Mediterranean, in

a multitude of shores and islands. In that classical Europe, the discoverers (for the first time in history) of freedom and self-government were immigrants, comparable to those of the *Mayflower*. Coming from the primordial boiling pot of the Bronze Age, they flew from the autocratic regimes located in a pre-historical Balkans and irrupted on to the stage of human life. As free immigrants in almost uninhabited Mediterranean domains, rich in land and poor in population, they invented rules for conducting a new associative existence, unchained from the overwhelming dominance of an archaic noble birthright. Without the slavery demanded by kings and landlords, in the Mediterranean colonies they constructed the first complete human alphabet; they discovered the meaning and the rules of an open society. The so-called *European miracle* was born in remote regions of the Ionian and Aegean, in distant sides of Anatolia and Southern Italy, in the shady line where Asia, Africa, Europe are now so different, while they were so alike. Those primordial travelers, fugitives, renegades, migrants, returned to mainland Greece, where they re-proposed the institutional organization experienced in the colonies. Watching closely, Babylonian mathematicians and Egyptian theologians, Sumerian ideograms and Phoenician consonants, came to be immersed in the same melting pot. The *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* were written in the Ionian language and Ionian were the first political, mathematical, medical, sculptural, architectural, and philosophical Mediterranean discoveries. From the frontiers, civilization shifted to the West⁷.

The contribution of Presocratics is a case in point. The so-called "Presocratics" were 6th and 5th century BCE thinkers, in the Mediterranean colonies, from the eastern or western fringes of the ancient world. The first volume in which we find the expression "pre-Socratic age" is the

⁵ Cfr. M. Mazower, *Dark Continent. Europe's Twentieth Century*, Penguin, London 1998; T. D. Snyder, *Bloodlands: Europe Between Hitler and Stalin*, Basic Books, New York 2010.

⁶ I'm referring to lines which are in the famous paper read by Turner at the meeting of the American Historical Association in Chicago, July 12, 1893: "What the Mediterranean Sea was to the Greeks, breaking the bond of custom, offering

new experiences, calling out new institutions and activities, that, and more, the ever retreating frontier has been to the United States directly, and to the nations of Europe more remotely". Cf. K. Lee Klein, *Frontiers of Historical Imagination: Narrating the European Conquest of Native America, 1890-1990*, University of California Press, Berkeley 1997.

⁷ S. Mazzarino, *Tra Oriente e Occidente*, Bollati Boringhieri, Torino 2007; G. Pugliese Carratelli (a cura di), *Megale Hellas. Storia e civiltà della Magna Grecia*, Garzanti, Milano 1993.

Allgemeine Geschichte der Philosophie, written by the German scholar Johann Augustus Eberhard in 1788. In the twentieth century, the expression was popularized by Hermann Diels in *Die Fragmente der Vorsokratiker*, 1903, and was meant to mark a chronological and ideal difference: the Presocratics were thought to be inferior to Socrates, Plato and Aristotle. They were interesting only in terms of being predecessors. The suggestion of archaism implied the idea of a Canon and of a Classical Period (represented by Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle). On the contrary, from Marx to Nietzsche, all the Western unquiet outsiders were more interested in people living on the fringes of classical and canonical ages. However, only Karl Popper gave the greatest importance on their relevance. His observations are in the context of his own epistemological theory: science originate in some kind of imaginative explanatory narrative. What distinguishes science is the regulative idea of truth, that is the correspondence to the facts. Hypothesis, not episteme, was at the center of the primordial Mediterranean approach; wonder, not dogma, was at the center of the presocratic approach in the shores and islands, towns and villages of ancient Mediterranean settlements.

Popper says: "The history from Thales to Plato, is a splendid story. It is almost too good to be true." This was the main theme in his *Presidential Address*, delivered to the Aristotelian Society in October 1958: "Back to the Pre-Socratics"⁸. In this famous conference, Popper makes a bid for a specific theory of knowledge, which is always an attempt to understand the world we live in. In his view, the great achievement of the ancient Mediterranean thought was critical discussion, which is the only way to

expand our knowledge. A new tradition arose in Ionia and was rediscovered in the Renaissance, especially by Galileo (who understood the meaning of rational knowledge). The Ionian school is incorporated in modern science. According to Popper, tradition of criticism had its main source in Ionia, marking a crucial innovation in human history.

European civilization gained new strength each time it touched a new frontier. Culture necessarily means selection, inclusion by consent and denial. Every time we reach and cross a new frontier, we explore, discover, and select.

THE FRONTIER IN THE EUROPEAN UNION

"In Westphalian Europe, conflicts were primarily about borders and jurisdiction over them", while EU politics now has "empowered neighbors rather than colonizing them"⁹. By signing the Treaty of Rome in 1957, a process began in Europe, which has influenced a political renewal in many directions: Spain and Greece both helped in the transition to democracy, Portugal and Poland both helped in the transition to a fully developed market economy. There is no doubt that Europe, a *European Dream* (in many ways parallel to the *American Dream*) has raised hopes and offered opportunities of democratic and peaceful development: to the south of the Mediterranean, from Morocco to Turkey; on the eastern border of Europe, in Serbia and Albania; in the far north, from Gdansk to Kiev (obviously, in different ways and for different reasons).

For years, what has been defined by many as the *European Dream* was at its full peak¹⁰. After, various unexpected European troubles raised concerns. From Turkey to Hungary, from Greece

⁸ The conference was firstly included in K. Popper, *Conjectures & Refutations. The Growth of Scientific Knowledge*, Routledge, London 1963. At that time, Popper was known as a defender of democratic systems of government and author of two books: *The Open Society and its Enemies* and *The Poverty of Historicism*. Later, a unique book collected together, for the first time, Karl Popper's engagement with Pre-Socratic thinking: K. Popper, *The World of Parmenides: Essays on the Presocratic Enlightenment*, Routledge, London 1998. In this pages, Popper described himself as an amateur student of the Presocratics "completely out of my depth when an expert begins to argue which words or phrases Heraclitus might, and which he could not possibly, have used" (p. 24).

⁹ J. Zielonka, *Why the World Should Worry about Europe's Disarray*, in "Current History. A Journal of Contemporary World Affairs", 111, 750, January 2013, pp. 7-12.

¹⁰ L. van Middelaar, *Le passage à l'Europe: Histoire d'un commencement*, Flammarion, Paris 2012; J. Rifkin, *The European Dream: How Europe's Vision of the Future is Quietly Eclipsing the American Dream*, Tarcher, New York 2005; A. Giddens, *Europe in the Global Age*, Polity, London 2006. Rifkin acknowledged that Europe has relied heavily upon American military assistance for its security; see R. Kagan, *Of Paradise and Power. America and Europe in the New World Order*, Random House, New York 2004. About historical dreams, R. Kagan, *The Return of History and the End of Dreams*, Knopf, New York 2008.

to Norway, afterthoughts and suspicions create a gloomier description about the stalemate the eurozone found itself trapped in. While politicians and technocrats were highly involved in attempts to find remedies and solutions, intellectuals have been the most pessimistic ones.

In short, for various reasons, the euro and the EU appeared in a new light¹¹. In the eurozone, all countries seem tied in a web of interconnections between banks, debt, overproduction, and cross-border lending. In the event of major insolvencies, mutually assured destruction seems possible. While not every big problem ends in disaster, large-scale bank failure inside and outside Europe could cause a chain of defaults. For some pitiless observers, the crash has to happen in order to rebuild brain, heart and borders, duties and rights.

In a nutshell, the central thesis about the European nightmare is explained by two motivations. On the one hand, Germany and her allies have forced countries on the euro zone periphery to bear the full cost of the region's debt crisis, causing an economic recession and social misery that threaten to destroy the *European Dream*, rather than offer the solidarity and burden-sharing needed to allow the EU to exit the crisis. On the other hand, the eurozone peripheries face a future of economic stagnation, with mass youth employment and political turmoil. Clearly, these two motivations depict a kind of nightmare.

Generating turmoil, in July 26, 2012, the former Editor in Chief of *The Economist*, Bill Emmott, claimed in an article that Europe was threatening the world¹². His words were astounding. He wrote that the global economy between 2002 and 2007 had the fastest five years of growth it had enjoyed in more than 40 years.

Even though a war had started in Afghanistan in 2001 and another war had started in Iraq in 2003, the attitudes of financial markets and corporate managements were optimistic. In 2012, on the contrary, attitudes were pessimistic and driven by uncertainty¹³.

From the Arab Uprising to the civil war underway in Syria, from the tension over Iran's nuclear program to that over the price of energy, many factors were widening the range of fear and unpredictability. But, Bill Emmott wrote, "the biggest source of worry is much closer to home. It is Europe. The problem is not simply the fact that government debts are huge, that growth is non-existent and that there is a basic disagreement between the debtor and creditor countries about how the euro should be run. Those things are important, of course. But the real problem is that the range of possible outcomes looks so wide".

In order to explain these dire concerns, he quoted the possibility of Greek withdrawal from the euro and Italian elections, the chance that some countries might leave the euro, defaulting on its debts, or that the currency might collapse. He quoted the possibility of the euro splitting into two, with different currencies for northern and southern Europe. These possibilities, in his view, were non-existent and virtually inconceivable, but they were real for corporate boards, financial institutions, and ordinary people. So the situation was becoming self-fulfilling. We have not only a *European Nightmare*, but *Europe is threatening the world*.

EUROCENTRISM AND FRONTIERS

Herodotus' description is unequalled by a peculiar sensibility to borders and frontiers. Born in Halicarnassus (modern Bodrum in Turkey), Herodotus was at the border of the Greek speaking world. He was the first great traveler who left us his diaries. Moved by doubts and curiosity, open-minded and respectful of human

¹¹ R. Aron, *Plaidoyer pour l'Europe décadente*, Paris, Laffont 1977.

¹² B. Emmott, *Europe is Threatening the World*, <http://muslimmedianetwork.com/mmn/?p=11586>; retrieved on 2014-02-02. In his vision for 2021, Bill Emmott declared a weak future for the EU and the euro, "a temporary phenomenon": B. Emmott, *20:21 Vision: Twentieth-Century Lessons for the Twenty-first Century*, Penguin, London 2003. See also V. D. Hanson, *Europe's Dream Becomes Its Nightmare*, in "National Review on line", January 24, 2013: "The EU may be worried that Obama's United States is becoming more like the EU ... In short, Europe got the European Union of its dreams and the changed America of its fantasies — but both are rapidly becoming its worst nightmares".

¹³ J. Habermas, *Zur Verfassung Europas. Ein Essay*, Suhrkamp, Berlin 2011; W. Laqueur, *After the Fall: The End of the European Dream and the Decline of a Continent*, Thomas Dunne Books, New York 2012; H. M. Enzensberger, *Sanftes Monster Brüssel oder Die Entmündigung Europas*, Suhrkamp Verlag, Berlino 2012; F. Heisbourg, *La fin du rêve européen*, Stock, Paris 2013.

diversities, he is the archetypical reporter (according to Ryszard Kapuściński¹⁴ and to his wonderful *Podróżez Herodote*). Herodotus was not a fanatical sponsor of Greek superiority; for that motivation he was severely disapproved of (for instance, by Plutarch). Toward the people of Asian borders, in Persia, Egypt, and Lydia, Herodotus showed empathy: he intended a common *Menschlichkeit* in the barbarian "otherness"¹⁵.

For many reasons, Herodotus' vision of borders, in the Persian wars, is the classic must-read. Xerxes and Darius thought that independent Greek cities were the only obstacle to the conquest of the known world. In the spring of 480 BCE, Xerxes crossed the narrow Hellespont straits, just to wipe out the frontiers of his power, already immense. By defeating the Greeks, and reducing Athens to slavery, he would arrive to absolute power: "Once let us subdue this people, and those neighbors of theirs who hold the land of Pelops the Phrygian, and we shall extend the Persian territory as far as God's heaven reaches. The sun will then shine on no land beyond our borders; for I will pass from one end to the other, and with your aid make of all the land which it contains one country" (*The Histories*, 7, 282).

With these quotes, we stress one qualifying point for us. The European identity was strengthened and defined in ancient reasoning concerning frontiers. A book¹⁶ in its title said that the first identity of Europe was born in a border place, at a periphery and at a frontier, at the margins of the Hellenic world: in Troy. Around Troy, in Homer, we found seminal definition and insights about the European heritage; there, according to one interpretation, the first identity of Europe was born, with Homer and Virgil, which then became canonical in Shakespeare and Milton.

The peripheries of Europe can be seen as a problem, but they are the bastions of Europe.

Today, like yesterday, they have prevented the institutional collapse of the center of Europe. Frequently, institutional breakdown begins at the peripheries and then, like in an avalanche, sweeps the center away. In this idea of Europe, borders count a lot.

Often scholars talk about liberty and democracy, comparing the fascist or communist experiences, which allow us to grasp the merits of freedom. It's all water under the bridge. It is history which does not return, while cases such as Turkey and Morocco, Tunisia and Jordan, Albania and Hungary, Kosovo and Serbia, although very different, are opening up a completely new dossier: very controversial, very instructive, and very urgent.

Contemporary Europe is very different from a Europe which produced the killing of over 60 million people in World War II¹⁷. Current Europe is characterized by the convergence of science and the rule of law, more than by external conquest and by internal wars. The central theme of every religion is not a form of national self-worship, but subordination of territorial identity to ethical beliefs. True Europeans have rejected the principle "My country right or wrong" and its substitute "My party right or wrong".

Poland is a case in point. From King Casimir to Napoleon, from Danzig to Vilnius, in its history many times Poland was forced to struggle to define national borders. In same period it was shrunk drastically or ceased to exist. After 1989, the rebirth of Poland is a symbol of the rebirth of classical Europe. It is in many ways a miraculous rebirth (in T.G. Ash words: "it is remarkable to see how the frontiers of long-dead empires re-emerge on the election maps of post-communist democracies, including Poland's most recent one. But neither geography nor economy nor culture make inevitable fate. ... Good politics, good constitutions and good courts can, given time and luck, change the course of rivers"¹⁸).

¹⁴ Cfr. B. Nowacka, Z. Ziatek, *Ryszard Kapuscinski. Biografia Pisarza*, Zak, Kraków 2008; as explication of Sigmund Freud's dictum about the non-existence of biographical truth, see A. Domoslawski, *Kapuscinski non-fiction*, Świat Książki, Warszawa 2010.

¹⁵ E. S. Gruen, *Rethinking the Other in Antiquity*, Princeton U. P., Princeton 2010.

¹⁶ S. Price, P. Thonemann, *The Birth of Classical Europe. A History from Troy to Augustine*, Allen Lane, London 2010.

¹⁷ G. Marks, *Europe and Its Empires: From Rome to the European Union*, „Journal of Common Market Studies”, 50, 1, 2012, pp. 1-20.

¹⁸ T. G. Ash, *As Poland shines, Ukraine sinks. Yet both their trajectories can be changed*, „The Guardian”, 19 October 2011; T. G. Ash, *History of the Present: Essays, Sketches, and Dispatches from Europe in the 1990s*, Vintage, New York 2009; S. Bielanski, *La Polonia tra Europa e Russia*, „ISPI, Quaderni di relazioni internazionali”, n. 13, novembre

EUROPE AND COSMOPOLITAN SELF-CONSCIOUSNESS

There is vitality, but, at the same time, uncertainty, in the values of peace, social consensus, international cooperation, certainly not absent across the Atlantic and in many other national histories and cultures, but which have been themed, discussed, deepened in Europe in a special way.

The financial crisis has produced a high level of insecurity both social and in terms of ideals, but the values of Europe may continue to be the basis of a compact between rights and growth, capitalism and democracy.

A common currency, a common history, a common culture, a common foreign policy, a common social model, despite contradictions and afterthoughts, have, in the past, been a hope of civil development and cannot today be obstructed by the euro crisis, but relaunched, as a concrete proposal of coexistence¹⁹.

This target is reachable through institutional intervention which should be aware of the great specific European legacy, and condensed into a European patriotism which could be much more assertive than it is today. A widespread self-consciousness about the significance of the European legacy is necessary for the Europeans, and for those who look to Europe while ignoring the shadows that surround an experience that is sparkling in other ways.

In Europe, prejudice, chauvinism, and intolerance, are not only addressed to Muslims or immigrants. Educational intervention is an approach that seeks to implant mutual understanding and to remove routine stereotypes²⁰. The promotion and maintenance of civil society requires a permanent background for

republican virtues. Educational intervention is an attempt to make sense of the deep social transformation which is going on²¹. Above all, the best weapon against intolerance remains education, which can create solid foundations for an open society, respectful of pluralism and diversity. Promoting republican and democratic values is particularly important from the crucial formative years, when children are in primary school. Frequently educators are able only to speak generically about freedom, tolerance, multiculturalism. The profound meaning of the best European identity is ignored.

The common future of Europe is within the school system, especially concerning the themes of citizenship. There is today a nationalistic rhetoric, still alive, mistakenly supposed as dissolved in the civilization of the well-intentioned global village. The old nationalism was often racist, xenophobic, chauvinist. It seemed to have gone away. On the contrary it is strong, even if disguised. It seems less strong than once, because it is expressed in a different manner from the past.

Many European citizens do not have a clear idea about European identity. Above all, they love their own country; this love is not a constitutional patriotism and they have not a cosmopolitan outlook²². European classrooms give a sweet pick-and-mix fashion about liberty, tolerance, multiculturalism, and so on, but, under the sweet external surface, the internal feelings remain of mistrust. It is hard to be a good citizen; it is hard to grow good citizens²³. Our classical Europe is insufficiently appreciated even by the people who must teach the best of it. In Europe and America, in the Middle East and in the world, in the schools and in the media, in universities and at home, for the young and the old, for women and men,

2010; S. Bielanski, *Poland in NATO (1999–2009): between Historical Memory and Challenges of the Future, Challenges and Strategic Divergences from National Perspectives*, [in] *NATO in the 60th Anniversary of the Atlantic Treaty. Challenges and Strategic Divergences from National Perspectives*, A. Carati, C. Frappi (eds), FrancoAngeli, Milano 2009.

¹⁹ J. Habermas, *Der gesplittene Westen. Kleine politische Schriften*, Suhrkamp, Frankfurt am Main 2004.

²⁰ F. Sidoti, M. Gammone, *The Sociological Intervention*, in R. Kincal (ed.), *International Symposium on Democracy and Democracy Education in Europe*, Nobel Yayn, Ankara 2009, pp. 216–228.

²¹ D. Vrancken, O. Kutty (éds.), *La sociologie et l'intervention. Enjeux et perspectives*, De Boeck Université, Bruxelles 2001; M. Burawoy, *Public Sociology in the Age of Obama*, in "Innovation. The European Journal of Social Science Research", 22, 2, 2009, pp. 189–99.

²² Ul. Beck, Ed. Grande, *Das kosmopolitische Europa: Gesellschaft und Politik in der Zweiten Moderne*, Suhrkamp, Frankfurt am Main 2005.

²³ R. N. Bellah, *The Good Society*, Knopf, New York 1991.

dissatisfied people have a right to be properly informed about their roots and their dreams²⁴.

THE FRONTIER IN THE GLOBAL VILLAGE

In 1962, long before the *World Wide Web*, McLuhan described how the globe has been contracted into a village by electric technology. He came up with the expression "the global village" as a way to describe the effect of radio in the 1920s.

McLuhan never assumed that uniformity and tranquility were the properties of the new global village, where he noted disagreement on all points because it produces more diversity and division under the pressure of discontinuous social conditions.

The new media have not created an unified global cultural community, but have bring humans in more intimate contact with each other than ever before in history. We have seen the flattening of the world through lower transportation costs and faster communications. This doesn't mean that the nations disappear off the map. Far from it. Nations remain a prospect and we will all continue to be fascinated by tradition, languages, differences.

There is not a final frontier "on the point of finally being achieved". Every supposed "final" frontier has been displaced by some other and more potent one. The frontier is ceasing to be environmental and every frontier becomes the content of another environment. In the flood of information, knowledge and values are at risk²⁵.

In promoting democratic identity (in the direction of the Copenhagen criteria), Europe's education systems are not very successful. Many reports show that clearly²⁶. Here, we are speaking

about an international problem, known and discussed in many ways. Perhaps Daniel Bell's book²⁷, was the first in a long series of highly controversial books defending the idea that universities and academic culture are failing to serve the needs of contemporary citizens. From that perspective, the current state of higher education in American universities was very bleak. In his first big speech on education, President Obama (a clear beneficiary of an aristocratic education) made clear that changes were desperately needed in the USA. Education statistics indicated some 5.1 million students in the United States as English language learners, a 60 percent increase from 1995 to 2005. As old concerns vanish, new concerns arise: many quote the waves of immigration. Some observers note that a nation which once prided itself of being a melting pot, now is searching an arrangement of the means to teach immigrant students. It is hard to assimilate the newcomers and their children. In a souring economy, school's financing challenges have intensified resentment over foreigners and immigrants. Education is a general human endeavor. Even nutrition education is essential to health and well-being. Kids gravitate toward unhealthy items such as cookies or chips even when more nutritious items are available.

In a parallel way, education concern is compelling in many European classrooms and in many European minds. There is always a kind of European dream in the classrooms. All the pupils are immigrants in the New World of the educational system. Within classrooms of primary schools, alien immigrants and native born immigrants have not in the right measure the kind of intense educational training they deserve. In our data and discussions on education, it was easy to detect latent and uncivilized fixtures in a sort of *McCulture*²⁸, even if apparently good to taste, ready and cheap for everyone. "Tell me what you eat," said the French gastronomist

²⁴ M. Zehfuss, *Constructivism in International Relations*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 2002.

²⁵ Cfr. D. Weinberger, *Too Big to Know: Rethinking Knowledge Now That the Facts Aren't the Facts, Experts Are Everywhere, and the Smartest Person in the Room is the Room*, Basic Books, New York 2011; J. Gleick, *The Information: A History, a Theory, a Flood*, Fourth Estate, New York 2011.

²⁶ M. Gammone, F. Sidoti, *Che cosa significa essere europeo? Una ricerca al cuore e ai confini dell'Europa*, FrancoAngeli, Milano 2013; M. Y. Eryaman, S. Z. Genc, E. Aktan, *Perceptions of the EU and Democratic Values*, in J. A. Spithourakis, J. Lalor, W. Berg (eds), *Cultural diversity in classrooms*, Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften, Berlin 2011, pp. 180-196.

²⁷ D. Bell, *The Cultural Contradictions of Capitalism*, Basic Books, New York 1976, listed by the *Times Literary Supplement* as among the 100 most important books in the second half of the twentieth century.

²⁸ G. Ritzer, *The McDonaldization of society* 5, 7th Edition, Sage, Thousand Oaks 2012; B. Barber, *Jihad vs McWorld: How Globalism and Tribalism Are Reshaping the World*, Ballantine, New York 1995.

Anthelme Brillat-Savarin, "and I will tell you what you are".

In Europe, an indispensable perception of critical heritage is at the periphery and along its borders. Can there may be a Europe of knowledge without a Europe conscious of its classical points about frontiers? Or will it turn out that, having globalized the frontiers, the Europeans had forgotten to globalize their popular cultures?

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