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# **Exchanging Ideas on Europe 2011**

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## **Europe and its problem with identity**

According to Ryszard Kapuściński, the main challenge of the XXI century is encounter with the Other<sup>1</sup>. It has its historical context, because during the second half of the XX century two thirds of the world population liberated itself from the colonial dependence and became the citizens of their independent states. Gradually, they have been discovering their own past, myths, roots and identity. They are becoming to feel themselves, to regain their dignity and to be the subjects of their own life and fate. They are against any domination, against any efforts to be treated as objects and victims.

Kapuściński argues that during the history there are three strategies of encounter with the Other: war, separation or dialogue. After years of wars and then separation, borders and exclusion, in the age of globalisation and rapid development of the means of transport and communication now there is a time for a dialogue with the Other.

The aim of the article is to address the question whether Europe and the European Union and its member states is ready to meet this challenge of encounter with the Other? Expression of doubts regarding this question is followed by the argument that the main reason of Europe's

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<sup>1</sup> R. Kapuściński, *Ten Inny*, Kraków, Wydawnictwo Znak, 2006, pp. 65-76.

inability to face this challenge is rooted within this part of its identity which is based on the exclusion and fear of the Other. Finally, some indication how to overcome this weakness is presented.

### **Europe in the second decade of the new century**

According to the survey made by Interdisciplinary Institute for Research of Conflicts and Violence of the Bielefeld University hatred towards groups defined as the others is very common in Europe. Xenophobia is not only characteristics of lower classes, but it is also present in higher and well educated sectors of the society<sup>2</sup>. A good example of this phenomenon might be a book published by Theo Sarazin in Germany last year. According to the German banker “Muslim immigrants have contributed nothing to German prosperity; the high fertility rates among the country's Muslim community have resulted in the reduction of Germany's collective IQ; Muslim immigrants would prefer to be on welfare than to work; Jews share a specific gene”<sup>3</sup>.

The research made in eight European countries (Germany, Great Britain, France, Italy, Portugal, Poland, Hungary, Holland) revealed that the success of populist parties are rooted in public opinion. These days media again say on “flood of immigrants” from North Africa. However, the negative attitude towards immigrants have nothing to do with their number. In Germany where they made of 12 per cent of the whole population, half of Germans think that there are too many of them. In Italy respectively the make of 4 per cent, but 62 per cent of Italians argue that immigrants are too great burden for the country.

There are many examples of racist declarations and almost half of population of the countries surveyed think that there is a “natural hierarchy between blacks and whites”. The Poles and Hungarians have the most negative attitude towards women and homosexuals. In many countries people think that the “locals” should have priority over foreigners on the labour market and that Islam by nature is intolerant. In 2011 an anti-Polish campaign is visible in the Dutch internet where slogans might be found: “all Poles are bastards” and “all Poles should go back home”. Similar hostility is being expressed against Jews, Muslims, immigrants, different football clubs, etc.

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<sup>2</sup> P. Buras, Europa szuka sobie winnych, “Gazeta Wyborcza”, 12-13 March 2011

<sup>3</sup> Ch. Hawley, *Searching for Germany's Right-Wing Populists*, “SpiegelOnline”, 9.03.2010.

Another example is deportation of Bulgarian Roma from France in 2010 which was a violation of free movement of people – a fundamental right of Union citizens. These examples are paralleled by a rising popularity of Freedom Party of Geert Wilders in Holland, „Real Finns Party” of Timo Soini, Jobbik Party in Hungary, etc. It is an opinion that Anders Breivik’s confused worldview, which he describes in a 1,500-word manifesto, was influenced by European right-wing populists.

### ***Annus horribilis - 2005***

It is being argued that the main reason for rejection of the constitution treaty in France and the Netherlands is associated with the Union’s eastern enlargement in 2004. The accession of the countries of Central and Eastern Europe was badly prepared by the old member states which failed to explain advantages of the enlargements to their citizens. Hence the predominant fear of the new members, of workers pouring in from the East (“Polish plumber”, “Hungarian nurse”, “Latvian builder”), of competitive cheap goods from abroad (“Polish cauliflower” ). According to the German writer Michael Krüger, at the time of the European Union enlargement eastwards “the West started looking for the new sources of fear. The French “non” to the EU constitution reflects that fear. It does not mean they want to leave the Community or do not feel a part of it anymore, but in this way they showed they were afraid of that new Europe. Their anxiety is that they are certainly not going to be the Europe’s centre anymore – as in the era of Louis XIV or the Great French Revolution. The fear of the new Europe is stronger than that of Islam, which they had managed to tame over the years”<sup>4</sup> .

Another reason for rejecting the constitution was the growing aversion towards foreigners, mainly immigrants from outside of Europe. It is predominantly the Dutch who feel endangered in their own country by the newcomers from Turkey and Morocco. A wave of xenophobia against Muslims, Roma and other minority groups is growing across Europe, which shows the end of myth of the European multi-cultural society. The fear of the external world is quite clear. In his comment on the results of the European referendum in his country, a French philosopher Andre Glucksman said that “the French crisis is neither economic nor social by nature – it is predominantly a mental one. All taboos keep falling down one after the other. The brakes constraining the hatred against another human being and particularly against foreigners are not so strong any more. The moral standards have evaporated. I heard socialist leaders during a

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<sup>4</sup> M. Krüger, *New sources of fear*, „Rzeczpospolita”, 09.06. 2005

campaign, saying oppressive words about workers from other European countries in a way so far reserved for the extreme rightists (...) I participated in meetings where demented peans were delivered in the honour of the French land, with echoes sounding much like from our worst history. (...) The success of the French “no” results from the mental and moral fall of the leaders. France which used to be called the homeland of human rights, today so unstable and frightened – is curling itself up. And the previous slogans: liberty, equality, fraternity, not much in use in France these days, only decorate entrances to the voting venues”<sup>5</sup>. The explosions and racial riots in the suburbs of large French cities in the fall of 2005 clearly showed how scarce the fraternity really was. Equality is practically non-existent, either, and anyone with an Arab name looking for a job can just as well give up trying. After the attacks of 11 September 2001 there is also less liberty, which can be evidenced by the frequent street checks of people displaying certain facial features.

Europe is facing the division into wealthy, ready to stand up for the *status quo*, and the newcomers who wish to make up for the age-long delays. According to Dominique Moisi, it is a division into a “Europe of fear and a Europe of hope”. “That is – into one that is afraid to stop being what it once used to be and one that hopes to become what it has not yet come to be”<sup>6</sup>. Indeed, fear characterises societies of the contemporary Europe. It is a fear of the Other, a fear which each time assumes a different shape – new members, an immigrant etc. In other words, the identity of today’s Europe is marked by fear of the Other.

### **Modern roots of exclusion in Europe**

Roots of this diseases are in the myth of Europe and then in ancient Greece. Greeks called foreigners barbarous – i.e. those who speak indistinctly and who should be kept at distance and in humiliation. The Romans on the other hand erected reinforced borderline walls – limes – against Others. However, in the social dimension of the modern times, the attitude towards the otherness (including insanity and madness) manifested in mass internment - that is (in the classical meaning) in applying a series of measures which enabled and imposed the duty of work on all those who were unable to earn their living. According to Foucault, internment - postulating closure of any otherness - derives from the imperative of work<sup>7</sup>. The aim was to solve the problem of "beggary and laziness as the sources of confusion". Therefore the establishment of shelters, asylum houses,

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<sup>5</sup> A. Glucksmann, *Euronihilism*, “Rzeczpospolita”, 01.06. 2005

<sup>6</sup> D. Moisi, *Europe of fear, Europe of hope*, “Newsweek”, 05.02.2006.

<sup>7</sup> M. Foucault, *Historia szaleństwa w dobie klasycyzmu*, tłum. H. Kęszycka, PIW, Warszawa, p.68.

hospitals or reformatories as means of elimination, exclusion of the "inconvenient" and the "non-conforming" was clearly backed by the economic rationale. This practice provided tools for controlling wages in the case of any demands for any rise thereof, and it additionally enabled liquidation of unemployment or concealing its negative consequences. "The economic and moral postulate of internment - writes Foucault - was formulated as a result of certain working experience. In the classical world, the demarcation line between work and idleness was running along the great exclusion of lepers. Instead of leper colonies shelters were built (...) Reference was made to the old rite of excommunication but in the field of production and trade"<sup>8</sup>. By means of segregation the modern world wanted to do away with, eliminate all those who turned out to be "asocial", in this way or another, in relation to the entire social order. The author of "Discipline and punish" notes that there is a similarity between the eighteenth-century internees and the today's mass of non-conforming individuals - for the former and the latter were created in the original act of segregation. Since the mid-seventeenth century any person banished from the society becomes a good candidate for a future dweller and inmate of all kinds of prisons, hospitals, shelters and asylums. He is the object of the same gesture of dismissal which was once used to get rid of lepers. Moreover, that gesture created the "asocial" and the non-conforming - it "produced the Stranger where he could hardly be sensed; tore the thread apart, broke the familiarity link (...) In one word, that gesture was the cause of alienation"<sup>9</sup>.

"The big closure" - as defined by Foucault - played not only a negative, excluding role, but first and foremost it had a profound impact on mobilisation and organisation. Thanks to the exclusion of others, the "unreasonable", the world was becoming more rational, orderly and uniform. The presence of the "asocial", the unuseful, allowed to organise the entire society as a whole in a more functional way. Just as for Descartes the presence of the unreasonable sphere of madness, dreams, delusions allowed to reinforce the clarity of the Truth itself, similarly the existence of the other, strangers in the social sphere constituted an excellent reservoir of sense. This truth was no stranger already to the nineteenth century capitalism, for which the armies of the unemployed - thrown outside the margin of the society - were one of the sources of coherence and efficiency of the production process. The presence of the unemployed was a perfect factor that mobilised to work all those who did not want to find themselves in a similar situation.

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<sup>8</sup> Ibidem, p. 76.

<sup>9</sup> Ibidem, p. 85.

The Foucault's philosophy attempts to unveil the history of reason - assuming in the modern times the shape of scientific knowledge, technology, production, political organisation<sup>10</sup>. The rationality, its logos, involves the unceasing act of self-confirmation through exclusion, self-limitation, drawing a borderline between oneself and the other. According to Bauman, at a certain point in history the Other meant Jews, whose exclusion was a part of the Christian identity. "The concept of a Jew- says the author of *Modernity and the Holocaust* - provided an important lesson that the alternative for the existing order was not another order but only chaos and destruction"<sup>11</sup>. At the end of the seventeenth century the segregation of Jews was a manifestation of fear of contaminating Europe; repressions against them and against other minorities became the major factor of the European modern times. In the opinion of Delanty, it is likely that the Reformation-driven split within the Christianity's bosom was planned in order to find scapegoats - with Jews and women constituting a perfect fit. The author of *Inventing Europe* claims that this could "explain the great exodus of Jews from the Central Europe and the growing witch-hunts" which accompanied the Reformation and Counter-Reformation. After the ultimate retreat of the Muslims from the Iberian Peninsula, Europe was liberated from its external enemy, therefore the role of the victim - the European "Other" - was assigned to an internal enemy -Jews"<sup>12</sup>.

The holocaust, bringing the ultimate solution to the Jewish issue, represents an extreme approach towards the Other, manifesting itself with various intensity during the late modernity. The division into "ours" and "others" is additionally reinforced and supported by the philosophy of a nation-state as the dominant political structure of the modern epoque. That is why the national socialist state placed Jews beyond its "own borders" leaving no room for a stateless nation. However, it is not only about placing "beyond" understood as the transportation to the East. It is more about the exclusion from fundamental human and civil rights, henceforth reserved as the privilege of the pure and thus "true" race. For Jews were perfectly in line with the philosophy of a state that saw in every foreigner a masked individual "tamed and gagged, as he was, but ready to break loose with the vigilance of the guard fading away"<sup>13</sup>.

By making the state the sole disposer of the means of violence, the modern times made them a morally sanctified coercion - when applied for that state's purposes, whereas if used by

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<sup>10</sup> M. Foucault, *Politics, Philosophy, Culture. Interviews and other writings 1977-1984*, L.D. Kritzman, (ed.), Routledge, 1988, p. 25.

<sup>11</sup> Z. Bauman, *Modernity and the Holocaust*, Biblioteka Kwartalnika Masada, Warsaw 1992, p. 69.

<sup>12</sup> G. Delanty, *Inventing Europe: Idea, Identity, Reality*, (translated by R. Wlodek), PWN, Warsaw, 1999, p. 60-61.

<sup>13</sup> Z. Bauman, *Ciało i przemoc w obliczu nowoczesności (Body and violence in the face of modernity)*, Nicolas Copernicus University, Toruń, 1995, p. 42.

"strangers" - they turned to be outrageous and required determined resistance. The modern nation-state manipulated the existing moral impulses, and by dividing the human community into "ours" and "others" it employed the altruistic inclination to serve the group egoism"<sup>14</sup>.

The East, brought to life by the Western reason, perceived as the borderline and baseline of the West, also became the "Other". Foucault writes that "the East constitutes one of the divisions within the universality of the Western ratio: The East thought to be the origin, the bewildering source of nostalgias and promises of return. The East, given away to the colonizing reason of the West and at the same time somehow forbidding -as it will always be the borderline, the night of beginnings that gave rise to the West - the West which drew a demarcation line within it. The East will be everything which the West is not, although it still has to search for its primary truth there"<sup>15</sup>.

According to Delanty, the historical awareness of the Western Europe was shaped under the influence of three types of threats: Muslims, Jews and Slavs. Similarly as in the case of Muslims and Jews, Slavs were considered to be Asians or semi-Asians. They formed an important bargaining counter in the trade with the Islamic world. Europe was selling Slavs as slaves, hence the origin of the name Slavs, as noted by Lewis<sup>16</sup>. At the outset of the modern times, the grain trade led to a split between the West and the East. In consequence Europe witnessed two independent stages of feudalism: in the Western Europe between the ninth and fourteenth century and in the East between the fifteenth and eighteenth century. With the development of the Western Europe its eastern part was becoming slavishly subjected to the West. Consequently, the concept of Europe was associated with the institution of West European nation-states, and adopted somewhat a normative character. It was not perceived as an alternative to a nation-state. Quite to the contrary: the Europe's concept was being subjected to the national interests. Contrary to the United States, in Europe the idea of statehood and often the national idea were ahead of and defining the international norms and institutions. During the Enlightenment era the term Europe, being the alternative to the nation-state, was present only among intellectual elites, bearing no meaning for the ordinary people, since the conflicts between the nation-states were too severe. According to de Rougement, the idea of Europe was essentially devised by France, which pleaded "superiority of the European religion, the white race and the French language"<sup>17</sup>. At the turn of the

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<sup>14</sup> Z. Bauman, *O nowoczesności Tej Zagłady raz jeszcze (About modernity of This Holocaust once again)*, "Kultura Współczesna", 1993, No2. p.123.

<sup>15</sup> M. Foucault, *Madness and unreason*, op.cit., p. 137.

<sup>16</sup> B. Lewis, *Europe and Islam*, Oxford University Press, 1993, p. 22-23.

<sup>17</sup> D. de Rougement, *The Idea of Europe*, Macmillan, New York, 1966, p. 157.

sixteenth and seventeenth century, one of the early concepts of the European political governance was "the great project of Henry IV, prepared by Prince Sully, for whom Europe was supposed to be in fact the extension of France. Establishing an alliance of the Western states against Turks was to be an essential element of that plan".

Since the beginning of the nineteenth century the European idea was clearly being subordinated to the rule of nationality, while the concept of the citizen of the world, rooted in the Enlightenment era, was forced out by national citizenship. Nationalism became an extremely strong and effective cultural factor that unified the European states against Muslims. In this sense - says Delanty - nationalism was not a negation of the European nature but an essential condition for its realisation<sup>18</sup>. Nationalism should be understood as a specific form of ethnocentrism, in which the collective "Us" of any group, tribe, culture or nation not only regards its way of life as different from any other but also as a more appropriate one. Anybody who is a stranger - notes Waldenfels - "is perceived as an economic competitor, political opponent and a threat for the global culture". (...) The human passions mentioned by Kant, dwelling in human beings, such as the striving for recognition, power and possession - make any stranger stigmatized as a potential foe as a result of the absolutization of ownership, own will and own importance"<sup>19</sup>. That is why, on the verge of the First World War, due to their nationalism, the nation-states sacrificed the European idea on the altar of their particular interests. Thus all the universal plans of building Europe free from national roots became impossible for a long time.

Thus the idea and identity of Europe were being constituted in opposition to and out of fear of what was different, with the Orient being of the fundamental importance. The Orient, being the "substitute of the otherness of others", played the role of a distorting mirror of the West. Europe needed the other in opposition to whom it could build its identity. Therefore the European nature was being established around the West - East antagonism. The previous opposition of Christianity against Islam was substituted by the opposition of the civilisation against barbarism. The nineteenth century carried a conviction that Europe represented the civilisation ideal and that its mission was to civilize the world. The non-European world was being perceived as the reflection of what Europe used to be and what should at the present time be referred to the Western values treated as universal principles. The Darwin's theory of evolution, applied to the reflections over the society, delivered scientific justification for the social and racial inequality, which were treated as a manifestation of natural selection. The "colonial" and "primitive" people were allocated to the

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<sup>18</sup> G. Delanty, op.cit, p. 106.

<sup>19</sup> B. Waldenfels, *Topografia obcego. Studia z fenomenologii obcego (Topography of the Other. Studies on the phenomenology of the Other)*, Oficyna Naukowa, Warsaw, 2002, p. 162.

category of biological inferiority. The category of race, rather than language or religion, became the uniting factor for the nineteenth-century Europe. It was a period of development of anthropology - the study on "primitive folks", which was supposed to provide the scientific explanation to the Europe's spiritual and intellectual superiority over extra - European communities<sup>20</sup>.

After the fall of the Ottoman Empire during the First World War, the role of Islam was taken over by the Communism. The October Revolution transformed the final stage of World War One into a battle between capitalist and communist countries.

### **The period of Cold War**

The Cold War was a continuation of that process, during which the Europe's identity would form in opposition to the Soviet block. In this sense the Berlin wall, erected in 1961, became a symbol of the Europe's internal division and an incarnation of the age-long conflict between the West and the East. Delanty notes that "this profound division was visible even in the attitude of Western Jews towards Jews from the East, whom they often disregarded and discriminated. (...) The mutual hostility between the East and the West would always focus on certain groups that were compelled to carry the historical burden. It should be strongly emphasised that the cultural representations of the reality crystallised in the form of regressive identities based on the category of race, xenophobic concepts of nationalism and on obscure irrationalism"<sup>21</sup>.

It should be pointed out that the term "cold war", rooted in the medieval conflict between Christianity and Islam - was rediscovered by Walter Lipmann just after the Second World War. It was to provide the ideological foundation for Europe's defence against the potential danger from the Soviet Union, and also against any potential rebirth of the Third Reich. For a long time were the Western mentality and the framework of political discussion shaped by the conflict between liberal democracy and the Communism. The European identity built during the Cold War was surmounted by the establishment of West Germany as the Federal Republic of Germany and of East Germany i.e. the German Democratic Republic - set up in the Soviet occupation zone.

In this sense, the Europe's integration was a continuation of the history of the Western rationality, and therefore the very incarnation of the logic of exclusion - bringing to life yet another Other - the mad, the sick, offender, woman, Jew, Slav or finally - the non-European, who,

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<sup>20</sup> G. Delanty, op.cit, p. 129.

<sup>21</sup> Ibidem.

where necessary, could give evidence of the Western rationality, fitness, righteousness, purity, superiority, etc. The continent's integration was somewhat a materialisation of the Europe's heritage to date, Europe which according to Waldenfels considered itself "the incarnation and warden of the real faith, the right reason, true advancement, civilised humanity, universal discussion... The name Europa allows to speak "in the name of..." , and the speaker becomes a self-declared spokesman. One does not judge some civilisation anymore, one makes judgements "in the name of the civilisation"<sup>22</sup>.

The Europe's post-war unification process was being materialised since its very origin as an integration against non-Europeans, who - being the Others - found themselves on the other side of the Iron Curtain. Yalta was the complementary element and concurrently a beginning of the history that - driven by its own logic - split Europe in two and established its own Other, against whom the West could successfully unite. The Cold War era and especially the fifties and the sixties are in principle the best years of the unification process, a round of the greatest successes. The fear of the Soviet threat - the Other - functioned perfectly as one of the driving forces of the integration machine.

The European idea growing after World War Two was largely "tailor-made" to the needs and in the interest of the nation-states, which was reflected in a de Gaulle's concept of "Europe of fatherlands". This idea was accompanied by a specific economic nationalism manifesting in the project of establishing a single internal market, which gave the post-war Europe a materialistic and consumer-like profile. For the Europe's integration was realised from its very beginning predominantly through the economic sphere. Although some "political dimension", aiming at ensuring peace and safety, did accompany the continent's unification, still, the major emphasis was put on building the foundations under the economic cooperation between the states about to accede to the community.

The European unification debate was largely deprived of any cultural aspect - generally understood as a certain system of values, norms and patterns adding the ultimate sanction and sense to the human life. Culture was perceived as a "foreign creation" illegitimately intruding on the realm reserved for rationality and objective truth. The scientific economy wished to do away with reflections representing no major meaning in the rational and objective understanding of economic processes. Purity of the scientific truth could be maintained at a price of rejecting the "untrue" culture. Both culture and morality were replaced by efficiency and rationality. The dominant techno-economic reason created a specific universe of a one-dimensional human being

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<sup>22</sup> Ibidem.

who was confined to the role of homo oeconomicus. In other words it can be said that the human became predominantly a consumption subject, his behaviour determined by demand, supply and competition. He became an object of the forces driving the single European market. At the same time, claims Eric Hobsbawm, author of the famous "Age of Extremes", the free market is not rooted in a legal, political or social base. First of all it exists for itself. According to Maria Janion, the free market, apart from its reference to political, national, cultural, social or ideological spheres, can lead to losing something that should be saved in democracy, i.e. the "soul". In a democracy that is identified with free market, the "soul" can be wasted away, devoured. Everything seems to indicate that such devouring or exclusion of the "soul" is well in line with the very logic of the capitalist development - with capitalism being the essential element of the entire machine supporting the Europe's unification. Those capitalist contradictions, excluding others from the benefits of the modern-day civilisation, have been complemented by the globalisation process, in which Europe has been engulfed for several years.

Thus the idea and identity of Europe were being shaped in opposition to and out of fear what was different, with the Orient being of fundamental importance. However, after the fall of the Ottoman Empire during the First World War, the role of Islam was taken over by the Communism. The October Revolution transformed the final stage of World War One into the battle between capitalist and communist countries.

The Cold War was a continuation of that process, during which the Europe's identity would form in opposition to the Soviet bloc. In this sense the Berlin wall became a symbol of the Europe's internal division and an incarnation of the age-long conflict between the West and the East. That is why the Europe's integration was a continuation of the history of the Western modernity and therefore the very embodiment of the logic of exclusion – bringing to life yet another Other: the mad, the sick, woman, Muslim, Jew, Slav and finally the non-European, who could give evidence of the Western rationality, fitness, superiority, etc. The Europe's post-war integration was unification against non-Europeans, who found themselves on the other side of the "iron curtain". Yalta was only a completion of the whole process that driven by its own logic split Europe in two and established its own Other, against whom the West could successfully unite. The fear of the Soviet threat – of the Other – perfectly functioned as a one of the driving forces of the integration machine.

The collapse of the Communism and the end of the Cold War in 1989 turned out to be a big "shock" for the West and a source of chaos and destabilisation. The world almost fell apart depriving Europe of its foundations that had been so vital for its development. On the other hand

the victory of “Solidarity” followed by the fall of the Berlin Wall roused hopes for permanent abolition of barriers that divided the Old Continent. After a short period of euphoria, the Western states started fencing off from their Eastern neighbours with a new, less visible wall – that of fear. The liberation of the Central and Eastern European countries entailed huge opportunities but also a danger for the Western part of the continent. Jerzy Łukaszewski notes that “one of the major integration catalysts i.e. the threat of the East disappeared”<sup>23</sup>. The striving of the countries, liberated after several dozen years of the Soviet dependence, to become the EU members, started to be treated as a dangerous “dilution” of the Communities. In this context the declaration of the former French president François Mitterrand of June 1991 was meaningful. He stated that “dozens and dozens of years will pass before the accession of those countries to the EU could be possible”<sup>24</sup>.

After 2005 referenda and present financial and institutional crisis, there still is a fear of the Central and Eastern Europe that draws a comprehensive picture of today’s Europe. It is an expression of still present the fear of the Other. In 2002 the former French minister for foreign affairs Dominique de Villepin expressed an opinion that vividly reflected the nature of the problem. He said that “there is a fear of the other in the heart of Europe, of the other culture, of the neighbouring state”<sup>25</sup>. In this sense Europe has always been sick from the Other, and the symptoms of that sickness keep exacerbating with the modern period of the European identity building and are visibly present even now.

The question arises how Europe can overcome its fear of the Other?

### **Towards a new European identity**

According to Theodora Kostakopoulou, an excessive emphasis put on the Greek, Roman or Christian heritage may become a kernel of European racism and xenophobia. Europe must overcome its previous limitations and start building its identity towards the Other rather than against the Other<sup>26</sup>.

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<sup>23</sup> J. Łukaszewski, *Francja a integracja europejska pół wieku ewolucji* /in:/ „Drogi do Europy”, ed. by J. Kranz, J. Reiter, Warsaw 1998, p. 91.

<sup>24</sup> Ibidem, p. 93.

<sup>25</sup> D. de Villepin, *Why Europe ?*, „Gazeta Wyborcza”, 15.10.2002.

<sup>26</sup> T. Kostakopoulou, *Citizenship, identity and immigration in the European Union. Between past and future*, Manchester University Press, 2001, p. 26.

The intellectual premises for a new approach to the problem of the "Other" have been expressed in the most comprehensive way in the thought of Emmanuel Levinas and the so-called philosophy of dialogue, having also such prominent representatives as Martin Buber, Franz Rosenzweig, Gabriel Marcel. According to Levinas, meeting the Other is a "fundamental event" in a contact of the human being with the world. The Other is the only one and unique being in the philosophy of dialogue and is considered to be the highest value, which concept was supposed to protect the individual against the danger posed to the human identity by masses and the great totalitarian systems of the twentieth century. The indifference towards the Other can, under specific circumstances, lead to Auschwitz.

In his philosophy, Levinas leads us to the pre-community sources of morality, seeing the meeting with the Other as the original experience. Such a meeting is the greatest experience and basis for all later relations between people, and also a way of approaching God. Keeping with Others, as the basic attribute of the human existence, means responsibility in the first place. According to Levinas, if the Other is looking at me, I am responsible for him. My responsibility for the Other is unconditional; it is not dependent on any previous knowledge about the Other but is rather ahead of that knowledge. The author of "Totality and Infinity" says: "I analyse human inner-relations which - in the nearness of the Other - apart from the impression which I myself make on another human - his face, expression of the Other, is decisive for me to serve him (...) The face is commanding and deciding. Its meaning involves command. Precisely speaking, if the face means command in my imagination, it is not the way an ordinary sign manifests its meaning; this command makes up the entire meaning of the face"<sup>27</sup>. In other words, in Levinas's opinion the responsibility for the Other is the original element of subjectivity. It is not stimulated by any primary force, ethical or legal code or fear of penalty. Only when I become responsible, do I become a subject. It would be sufficient to break through the curtain of everyday life to be able to arrive at the sources of our existence.

In this sense this is a postulating philosophy, and also ethical to the core - philosophy that requires certain heroism and going beyond our ordinary experience and habits in being in touch with other people. Yet today Europe also needs this heroism and going beyond the traditional approach to Otherness.

The "new thinking" about the European problem found its specific continuation in the thought of Jacques Derrida. In one of his books *The Other Heading* Derrida discloses a somewhat different, more political face of deconstructionism, of which he was the most well-known

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<sup>27</sup> cited after Z. Bauman, *Modernity and the Holocaust*, Biblioteka Kwartalnika Masada, Warsaw 1992, p.252.

representative. The ambiguous title of his book, which could be understood as "the other headland, direction, course", is an indication of a specific intellectual journey of its author. It is a manifestation of search for a new definition of the European identity, or rather a different thinking on the identity itself. According to Derrida, the traditional understanding of the Europe's identity is a closure in "our own", leaving out the "foreign", the "other" behind. However, "it is a culture's attribute not to be identical with itself. To think about Europe in a different way means to think about the European identity in terms of "otherness", "difference", "pluralism", "apory". Therefore, the other course (*the Other Heading*) is not so much a suggestion of a new "goal", "vision" but rather a transformation of thinking. Europe must begin to think of itself in terms of the "other". "We need to become guards of a certain idea of Europe, a certain otherness of Europe - yet Europe that is not closing the door of its own identity and which is exemplifying the striving for what it is not, towards the opposite side or towards the other. We need to devise and imagine the new style of thinking in which the identity comes from the otherness and not vice versa"<sup>28</sup>. It will be difficult to do without paradox here, with responsibility being its ethical and political dimension. If responsibility is to be free from Eurocentrism - in other words - from replacing the Europe's integration with West European integration - Europe must be reflected upon in a new way. This new way means that Europe will not only be responsible for the "other" but its own identity will be constituted by the "other". Moreover, that responsibility should be realised - according to the French philosopher - through respect for diversity, otherness, but at the same time for the common values. Thus rejecting the easy and luring solution of either a full unification or a total dispersion, Derrida speaks for the necessary action to be taken within the framework of the enlightenment values of liberal democracy, emphasising at the same time that those values are not sufficient themselves in order to ensure respect for the "other". What we need is such a definition of the European identity, or such kind of thinking about it, which would combine the universalism of values and the "diversity". For Europe "must not get dispersed into thousand provinces, separate views, idiosyncrasies or small nationalisms, but on the other hand it is must not submit to the tyranny of centralised power"<sup>29</sup>.

At the turning point of the integration process, when a more adequate "vision" of the unification seemed necessary, the reflection represented by Jacques Derrida may be the answer to the urging challenge of the contemporary times. For one thing is certain, Europe - facing qualitatively new problems and encounter with the Other - is in need of a thorough

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<sup>28</sup> J. Derrida, *The Other Heading, Reflections on Today's Europe*, Indiana University Press, 1992. Ibidem, p. 29.

<sup>29</sup> Ibidem.

revision (deconstruction) of the fundamental categories on which its identity is built. It should be instantly emphasised that Derrida does not offer ready solutions, plans or overall projects. He only indicates the direction (*the Other Heading*) where the answers and solutions should be sought to the ever new problems and challenges. The signs on that road include the new identity determined by the "other" and responsibility for the "other". What is common for them is the respect for diversity but at the same time also for the universal values.