Vous autres Europeéns – or Inventing Europe*

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Let me begin by presenting myself and the standpoint from which I am giving this lecture. I aim at looking critically at the concept of »Europe« from the standpoint of one outside that entity yet not belonging to another civilisation. I am not a European because I am an Antipodean; yet I speak the same language, I live by the same values, and I have at least some of the same historic memories as many of you. What then does it mean to learn that I am not »European«, and what is this »Europe« to which I do not belong? In »Deconstructing Europe« I set about enquiring into the meaning of the term and – as my title implied – seeking to deprive it of self-evidence and givenness; in other words, demystifying it.

This is not necessarily a hostile enterprise. People may be the better for it if they are obliged to operate their collective self-awareness critically and self-critically, and it should do you no harm if I ask you who you think you are and what you think you have been doing. But when I interrogate you about your identity, I do so in a spirit of self-defence and even retaliation, because you have been radically disturbing my identity as a by-product of what you have been doing. I am an Antipodean, a New Zealander; and I used to live in a British *ecumene* and common citizenship, with its own body of shared memories and so on – including the dead of several wars – which was terminated, to a large degree unilaterally, by the United Kingdom's decision to become European and lessen all ties with the rest of us. There are all sorts of ways of discussing and defending this decision, and all I want to point out is that it was done *to* me and many others, rather than *by* us or with our consent. The British,

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with whom we had been so much accustomed to converse about common concerns that we regarded ourselves as part of their body and even called ourselves by their name, abruptly left us to become members of another community and conversation, under the name of Europe, from which we were excluded. Were we, therefore, British any more; alternatively, were they? When, about the time all this was happening, an American colleague asked me if it was true that New Zealanders were more British than the British themselves, I felt able to reply that it was certainly true now. This may or may not be a time of the breaking of nations; it is certainly a time of their deconstruction.

This experience does things to one's sense of identity, of others' identity as well as of one's own. I shall not speak further about New Zealand's continuing search for identity; I intend rather to speak about how I see your own. I wish you well, you will understand, but I do not love you. I wish you well, because there is enormous potential good in what you are trying to do, and because I share a common historical ancestry and birthright with you; but I do not love you, because you deny me what I thought was my share in that birthright. I am one of the eggs you have broken in making European omelette; and I am not even going to be mixed into the substance of that omelette, but cast out in the fragments of my former shell, enjoined by you rather than by myself to grow a new shell, and not much helped to do so by the protectionism which is so conspicuous a feature of European policies. My feelings are exacerbated by my awareness that you and we do in fact share a common civilisation. It extends beyond »Europe« into other oceans, continents and islands; it is conventionally known as »Western« civilisation – a term itself none the worse of a little deconstruction – and among the things you have been doing is walling yourselves off from the rest of it, while claiming yourselves to embody its ecumenical traditions and values. I know what it is like to find myself excluded from »Europe«, while being told at the same time that I may not object because my culture is »European« anyway. This fills me with an anticolonialist anger, issuing in an impulse to scrutinise the concept itself with an attentiveness not altogether free from malice. I need to construct my own definition of »Europe«, from my own standpoint within our common civilisation, one necessarily not the same as yours. Hence the bilingual title of this lecture: »Vous autres Europeéns, or inventing Europe«. It is my attempt to continue deconstructing a concept which I see as at once universal and exclusionary – characteristics which may form a definition of empire.

What then is this »Europe« which you and I may join in discerning from our several standpoints, and how might it be defined and delimited? Since a certain lightness of tone is appropriate to the discussion I wish to initiate, I will start by showing you a picture (see the reproduction on page 143-44). Some months

EVROPA

PRIMA PARS
TERRAE IN FORMA
VIRGINIS

ago I was in a heartland of Europe, at the royal and republican city of Prague; and in the Strahov Monastery Museum there I bought a print first published four hundred years ago in 1592, by a Czech printer from the designs of an Innsbruck draughtsman. »Europe« is »the first division of the earth in the form of a virgin«, and yet it is hard to think of anything less virgin than Europe as revealed in her history. She is older than the rocks among which she sits; like the vampire she has been dead many times and knows the secrets of the grave. But one would rejoice to learn that her youth if not her virginity may be renewed as the eagle, and imperial symbolism indeed pervades the picture. Her crowned head is the monarchy of Spain including Portugal; the medal at her waist is the kingdom of Bohemia, depending as the text insists from the Black Forest and the Rhine; her right arm is the peninsula of Italy – or as the map calls it »Welshland« – and grasps the imperial orb, the island of Sicily; her left, which is the peninsula of Jutland, holds a sceptre with which she gestures, a shade ineffectually, through the Skagerrak and the Straits of Orkney. The Tyrolese draughtsman, living a generation before this print was made, had been a pious subject of the Empire of Charles V.

But to understand this figure properly, one must notice what the colour scheme excludes from her mystical body. Parts of Africa and Asia are set apart, as is Scandinavia north of the Baltic (or Mare Sarmaticum); and we cannot fail to observe those two large and shapeless islands, beyond her sceptre's reach, with which the cartographer was plainly ill acquainted – through by 1592 the Spanish *flota* had come to know their stern and rockbound coasts all too well. The use of the colour green excludes Hibernia, Scotia et Anglia from empire and even from Europe, while including Funen and Zealand in the north, Corsica, Sardinia and Malta in the south. We will see too that the Danube originates in the area of the lady's right breast and flows east, even to the skirts of her raiment, where its many mouths into the Black Sea are quite clearly marked. This is an exception to what is otherwise the rapid exhaustion of the cartographer's knowledge; for the rest, her skirts float free in a wind from the steppe, forming vast regions vaguely marked »Sarmatia«, »Russia«, »Lithuania«, »Transylvania«, »Walachia«, »Bulgaria« and »Graecia«, and I don't know whether the blackish discolourations on this part of the map represent the injuries of time or the ignorance of the geographer. The flounce or mini-train at the bottom of the picture is the Peloponnese, but the draughtsman knew less about the Aegean and the Hellespont than one would expect of a contemporary of Andrea Doria and Khaireddin Barbarossa; and the city of Constantinople is situated just within the hem of her garment in a way of which the less said the better.

What may one learn from this image concerning the invention of Europe, bearing in mind that *inventio* may mean discovery, construction or fiction? Let

me suggest, as one answer, a visible uncertainty of demarcation. It was easier for the artist to include the islands of the inner seas than those of the outer. Was the great archipelago beyond the German ocean part of the continent or not? Only when included in empire, perhaps; but whose empire? The crowned empress grasps the orb in security, because it is Sicily – safe within the inland sea, if not a very safe part of it to visit – but her sceptre points westward into the outer ocean, and she does not seem to know what she is doing with it. There is no sign of the great new dominions of Mexico, Peru and the Philippines, all established by 1592 when this map was printed; they were included within the Spanish monarchy but not within Europe, and yet it is the Spanish and German monarchy which provides this definition of Europe. This ambiguity, I suggest, informs us of a continuing uncertainty in the mind of »Europe« concerning the oceans which Europeans were about to conquer, and the new societies they were about to create through conquest, settlement and commerce. You made us, and now you don't want us; a good part of your European enterprise is directed at keeping us out.

Part of »the invention of Europe« in therefore delimitation, the denial and dismissal of discoveries you made, which are parts of the invention of your self. Let me return to that contrast between the inner and the outer seas which is inherent in the image still before you. It informs us that »Europe« is a peninsula, defined by its seacoasts on three sides. Therefore, »Europe« is not in fact a continent, but a sub-continent; thrust out like India from the Eurasian landmass, but lacking anything like the Himalaya to mark it off decisively on the landward side. Here, of course, we encounter a second major zone of indeterminacy or uncertain demarcation: that marked by the skirts of the imperial robe, which drift freely and indicate broad and undemarcated areas in what is equally Eastern Europe and Western Eurasia. It was in vain that the Innsbruck extended the Black Sea as far north as he dared, hoping that it might somehow make contact with the Baltic by way of the Pripet marshes. There is and has been no natural frontier of any kind, north of the Danube and its exit into the Black Sea, between what we call Europe and the general landmass of northern and central Eurasia. Looked at in one way, the vast level areas of that continent penetrate deeply into the mountains and river basins of »Europe« as the term is familiar to us; nomadic and Islamic power have on occasion made deep and more than momentary inroads by way of the Hungarian plain. Looked at in another, the same geography has laid Eurasia open to even deeper penetration by the forms of power and social organisation we recognise as »European«; and north of the Anatolian and Caucasian plateaux and mountains there are no natural features – other than distance itself – which have imposed limitations to this oscillation of history. When western statesmen, Charles de Gaulle and Mikhail Gorbachev, have spoken of a »Europe« extend-

ing »from the Atlantic to the Urals«, they have consciously or otherwise raised the question of what happens when we reach the Urals and whether there is any reason for stopping when we get there. Mr. Gorbachev was of course aware that the Russian Federal Republic continues to the east of that range; and if the forces of history do not sunder that state's cis-Uralic from its trans-Uralic components, and if we continue to regard »Russia« as part of »Europe« – these are two large but by no means impossible assumptions – there will be no reason against speaking of a »Europe« which extends to the northern Pacific Ocean and the Bering Straits. There is no way of avoiding decisions as to where »Europe« does or does not leave off, and these have to be taken in respect of very large areas in which there are no geographical, cultural or historical landmarks to protect you in making one determination or another. In the Eurasian landmass the frontiers of »Europe« are so far indeterminate that they can only be arbitrarily determined; and two relevant characteristics of an empire are, first, that it has the power to take such decision, second, that it has not the power to free itself from the need to take them. This is why the imperial aspect of »Europe« is a good deal more pronounced than the virginal.

The Spanish-Bohemian image, further, does not show the Mediterranean, the southern inland sea determining the shape of Europe, as an interconnected whole, and this is important for two sets of reasons. In the first place, the Greek, Latin, Jewish and Christian components of our civilisation were formed in various Mediterranean coastlands – some now in Europe and some not – and we have to consider their migration northwards, to the alps, rivers, ploughlands and highlands, coasts and oceans, which delineate the contours of the European peninsula. In the second place, the Mediterranean has been and remains a vital encounter zone between continents and civilisations; Europe, Asia and Africa meet there, we say, though it is just as true to say that these three names are themselves Mediterranean, names of littorals extended ever deeper into the hinterlands behind them until they reached the ends of the earth (which of course aren't ends at all) and became names of continents in the geographical and global sense. But the Mediterranean littorals, with that sea as their centre, once formed a cultural zone corresponding to none of these names, and what we call »Europe« is in many ways a consequence of its disruption. The Latin variant of ancient Mediterranean civilisation moved into alpine and riverine »Europe« with the Roman empire along the Rhine and the Danube; and »Europe« is the fruit of the survival and expansion of the western and Latin provinces of that empire, some of them continental and some Mediterranean. We can of course make no sense of these historical processes without taking account of that huge reversal of imperial Hellenism, the Arab and Muslim counter-occupation of Mesopotamia, Egypt and ancient Africa (today's Maghreb); or the much later Ottoman conquests in the Aegean and Balkan

regions. Since those events the Mediterranean basin has been the theatre of profound conflicts as well as a profound unity; we have to rewrite history rather drastically if we are to ignore the former, and one has not heard lately that Muslim North Africa is part of Europe, despite the immigrant patterns of its population. What we call Europe exits in confrontation and inter-penetration with Islam; we may say that Islam is part of the history of Europe and *vice versa*, but I do not expect to hear that the history of Islam is the history of Europe or *vice versa*. By the term Europe we normally mean something else; and the artist of the imperial Spanish virgin was unable to depict the Ottoman presence at all.

His map does however remind us that we are talking about the formation, expansion and uncertain demarcation of cultures in peninsular Europe between the seas, abutting on the Mediterranean basin but never occupying it as an undivided zone. I have seen it written that the Mediterranean components of our civilisation are the true, because the Catholic, Europe; but in Lombardy and Tuscany you may hear that Africa or Arabia begins somewhere just south of Rome, and the »Europe« meeting in Edinburgh has a Franco-Netherlandish-German consortium at its foundations. »Europe« is peninsular rather than wholly Mediterranean, and is therefore Eurasian as well. We have a Europe between the seas with an open and fluid frontier towards northern and central Eurasia, and a mountainous, military and still bitterly contested frontier zone towards the Hellespont. How, though, did this Europe acquire a cultural identity and what identity did it acquire?

What we call »Europe« is the product of the expansion – in many directions, but especially eastward into the open gate of Eurasia – of Latin Christian and post-Christian culture in its three principal forms: Catholic, Protestant and Enlightened. To say this uncritically is of course to give that culture hegemony; but when we say it critically we discover that establishing hegemony is precisely what that culture has been aiming to do and is still doing, and that this is a story it is important to know how to tell – especially as you haven't finished with doing it. We could begin, therefore, looking at this Latin dynamism by inspecting the origins of that Frankish and Christian eastward expansion into what we now call Germany and Central Europe, beginning somewhere in the eleventh century and having as its by-product the strange and partly maritime adventure of the Crusades. The great Belgian historian Henri Pirenne went back to the eighth century, and suggested a relationship between Mohammed and Charlemagne: that is, between Arab control of the African shore and the east and central Mediterranean, and the formation of that Latin and papal Frankish empire which was to undertake expansion into the peninsula between the seas. The relationship turned out so difficult to specify that

the attempt to do so is now abandoned; but Pirenne remains among the authors of the grand perception that the history of »Christendom« and of »Europe« is not to be understood without understanding its interactions with Islam. A later advance of Islamic power and culture – that of the Ottoman Turks, which in the sixteenth century had got so far as to threaten the middle Danube and the Adriatic shores of Italy, though our Innsbruck draughtsman made no attempt to show it – can be made to coincide with the two great explosions of trade, power and culture beyond the peninsula, which have made »Europe« a global entity. I mean of course the navigation of the Atlantic and the oceans in general, the irruption of European raiders and merchants into the Muslim-controlled Indian Ocean, the discovery of new continents as theatres of European settlement and empire; and about the same time, the expansion of Muscovite settlement into Siberia, creating a »Russia« within which the Urals are not a terminal phenomenon. But obviously, the second expansion tells against my rule, since it is not carried out by a Latin, feudal or post-feudal civilisation, but by one deeply Greek Orthodox and post-Byzantine in its culture, till recently a Mongol satellite, and more closely involved with Eurasian nomadism than Latin Europe ever came to be. We can therefore say at will that this »Russia« is or that it is not part of »Europe« – the Spanish lady doesn't know it is there – and we need not ask whether western Russians feel towards Siberians the same irritated and obsessive petulance that Europeans display towards Americans and other nations founded by their settlement. It is necessary to add, however, that half a century ago it was a commonplace among historians that the age of Europe had ended and been succeeded by a Russian-American bipolar world hegemony, as a result of which all the history books had to be rewritten then and are having to be rewritten again now.

Frankish and Latin culture makes its way eastward, as well as westward into the oceans, encountering a succession of Saxon, Polish, Baltic, Russian and Eurasian universes, with which it interacts in ways that prohibit our thinking of the latter as merely passive subjects of colonisation. Like others, they were colonised, but like others they responded vigorously to the process; but as we move eastward through this chain of Latin-non-Latin encounters, each becomes involved in the inherently non-soluble question of where »Europe« leaves off and what it encounters when it does so. An insoluble problem, I have called it, yet one to which, it would seem, you of the European Community are going to have to supply a series of arbitrary and provisional answers. With what do you want to concern yourselves, as you look eastwards? Will you have the power to keep yourselves from involvement in that in which you don't want to become involved? In the first half of the century now ending, problems of this kind helped produce huge and appalling wars between the great states of Europe; this pretty certainly won't happen again, but the problems are still

there. In a perfectly real sense, you cannot use the word »Europe« without arousing them, and this should be a warning against using the word as a magic incantation which causes all problems to disappear. The strength of »European« thought is, or should be, that it is anti-magical.

As Latin Christian culture moved deeper into the west Eurasian peninsula, constructing what we know as »Central Europe« and the problems of its relations with »Eastern Europe« and the »Middle East«, it underwent the major historical changes we all know about, or should. There was the division of Latin Christian civilisation into Protestant and Catholic, giving rise to the extremely destructive Wars of Religion which proved so hard to bring under control, especially when they were revived and continued in this archipelago just as they were winding down on the continent. There was the power rivalry between the Spanish, French and Austrian monarchies, complicated by the commercial ascendancy of the Dutch confederate republic. And in the last years of the seventeenth century, we may note the beginnings of what we call Enlightenment, which may be characterised as a determination to subject religious conflict to civil authority, even if this meant the destruction of the orthodox Christian theology on which the authority of the Church and its power to disturb the civil order were thought to rest. This programme was encouraged by an increase in the organisation of wealth and stability in many lands of western Europe, making it more possible for both states and societies to hold themselves together. During the eighteenth century, and extending deep into lands of German settlement, philosophers from Adam Smith's Glasgow to Immanuel Kant's Konigsberg found themselves taking as their principal theme the relations between the two entities of »state« and »civil society« and rewriting history around this perception. By the second quarter of that century, it was usual to characterise »Europe« as having emerged from a condition of »universal empire«, and consisting of a concert or confederation – even a »republic« – of equally sovereign states, held together by the ties of commerce and cultural exchange which had rendered obsolete wars of both conquest and religion. To a quite startling degree, it is the continued status of that Enlightened order which »Europe« finds itself debating in the closing years of the twentieth century; so much so that the two centuries of world revolutions and world wars, running from 1789 to 1989, are coming to present a major problem in historical understanding. It is still the question of how the state stands in relation to civil society, and both in relation to global commerce, which troubles your deliberations; and not yours alone.

The values of western or Latin Europe which spread eastward came to be those of Enlightenment. It was not to Catholic or Protestant religion, but to Swedish, Dutch and English methods of organising commerce, state and (up to a point)

civil society, that Peter the great turned in attempting the transformation of Russia; and from there to Japan, Enlightenment figured as an instrument of modernisation. But in saying that, I have raised the spectres of cultural imperialism and colonialism; and the first anticolonialist ideologies are both Enlightened and European. German romantic nationalism, originating about 1770, was in part a protest against French cultural hegemony, first in its absolutist and then in its revolutionary form; Russian Slavophilism, of which we hear perhaps half a century later, is a rebellion in the name of Orthodox, Muscovite and peasant values against all the »European« or »Western« hegemonies imported by the modernising Petrine and Catherinian regime – including those of Enlightenment in its French Encyclopedic, German bureaucratic, and British utilitarian forms. In both the German and Russian cases, we encounter that dynamic and dangerous concept of the *Volk*, in whom spirit reigns rather than intellect, and who claim an immediate and instinctive unity with the earth from which they are sprung and the history which is their communion with their ancestors. All around the globe this is now the received rhetoric of anticolonialism, and we cling to the image of the noble shaman who has replaced the noble savage; that is, to the belief that autochthonous or aboriginal peoples are at unity with the cosmos and less likely to devastate it than we who lie under the curse of Adam, or have invented it to justify our exploitation of the earth. There is plenty of truth in this rhetoric, yet since it was created early in Europe's global expansion and within the moving Eurasian borderlands of »Europe« itself, we have to ask, wherever in the world we encounter it, how far it has been generated by the *Volk* themselves, how far by some combination of Westernising and even Western intellectuals, allied in an anti-Westernism which may be the rebellion of Europe against itself as well as of the world against Europe. Self-repudiation is a characteristic, and sometimes a weapon, of a culture which bases itself on the myth of the Fall.

The German *Volk* and the Slavic *narod* appear where the expanding power of the Enlightened state approaches the vast and lightly populated spaces of northern Eurasia, but they can also be found in the zones of encounter between Hapsburg, Ottoman and Romanov – with Hohenzollern as an increasingly powerful fourth – which make east European history a history of empire and of encounter with Islam, in which the Enlightened parallel growth of state and civil society does not operate or operates differently. The Western Enlightened notion that the age of conquest and empire was ended functioned less well as the peninsula broadened out towards Eurasia. To the southeast, there prevailed a zone of military empires and their frontiers – rapidly collapsing in the Ottoman case – whose history may be worth remembering today. Should you decide – as I believe you are from time to time pressed to decide – that modern Turkey is part of your European Community, you will have to decide that

Ottoman as well as Anatolian history is part of the history of Europe; unless indeed, as is sometimes asserted, »Europe« is a conspiracy to do away with the relevance, and the memory, of history altogether. There are historians who urge us to focus less on the free and warlike republics of Mediterranean antiquity and more on the huge beneficent empires of Egypt, Mesopotamia and Macedon, of which Rome and Byzantium were the successors. I have read the work of Polyhymnia Athanassiadi, a modern Greek historian of late antiquity, who claims that she may be better equipped than Western and American scholars to understand a late Roman emperor like Julian the Apostate, because her historic memory is formed by the ecumenism and quasi-tolerance of the Ottoman empire. Now if, along these lines, you were to resolve that the Ottoman was the successor to the Byzantine ecumene, a zone or *dar-ul-Islam* of interacting hegemonies over Muslim, Orthodox and other populations, you might have the means of regarding its history as not generically unlike those of the other empires with which it interacted, and you might be able to ask how far the modern Turkish decision to break with the Ottoman past, and pursue identity as a secular national state, is like, and how far unlike, that of similar decisions taken by peoples more conventionally defined as »European«. You might discover a »Europe« shaped by a Muslim presence in it, not merely external pressure upon it; no bad thing, perhaps, when you must wonder whether angry Bosnians and Albanians will turn to some neo-*ghazi* militancy and »Europe« must interact with an Arab Maghreb all along the Mediterranean littoral to the Atlantic.

You might therefore supply Turkey with a history European enough to have played a major role in the shaping of »Europe«; come to that, I possess a book which offers a history of the Mongols as one of »the peoples of Europe«. Two considerations seem to me to arise from this still hypothetical case. One is that such ecumenisms are possible only because the delimitation of »Europe« is indeterminable; which does not mean that her frontiers are infinitely extensible, but that they interact with ever-increased complexity with people and cultures whose identity is not »European«. There is a history of Islam to which Turks will continue to belong, since you can belong to two histories at once; ant it is not a history of »Europe«. The fact that you cannot build a wall where one leaves off and the other begins means that they are interactive but not that they are indistinguishable. If modern Turkey has one foot in Europe, it has another on the Iranian plateau, and I do not think the Kurds believe that »Europe« has reached them yet. I do not even know whether they want it to. My second generalisation from the scenario of Turkish history would be that whenever you admit a new people into the community of »Europe« – be they Turkish or British or Swiss – you have to rewrite the history of »Europe«, not simply to »include« them – whatever »include« may mean – but in order to

make it intelligible how »Europe« looks when they are part of it, and what »Europe« is once it is admitted that they, whoever »they« may be, have been agents in shaping it and making it; so that »Europe« with »them« is a different place, and has a different history, from Europe without them. In saying this, I am affirming that »Europe« is a convergence of many histories within, as well as possessing open and indeterminable frontiers without; and I am affirming a conviction that »Europe« is a product of converging and colliding histories, not a device for abolishing those histories in a kind of postmodernist melting-pot. It is this conviction which may prove contestable.

The eighteenth century, in which my own work is concentrated, is as it happens a good period in which to look for some origins of what I have just termed postmodernism in the diverse structures of »Europe«. In the older lands of the Latin West, it was believed that empire was obsolete, commerce replacing conquest, and the ties of commerce – material and cultural exchange – linking sovereign states together in an informal confederation or *république des patries*, whose recurrent wars could be contained and need not become wars to the death like the wars of religion. The more fortunate of the Western states – of which Scotland was outstandingly determined to become, or to join, one – were held to be commercial societies, in which ties of the same kind held the citizens together in civil society or *bürgerliche Gesellschaft*, and this interacted with the sovereign structure of the state in ways that guaranteed liberty for both the state and the citizen. In Edinburgh and Glasgow there were written some classical expositions of this never unproblematic relation, and the interactions between political and civil society still form the central theme of liberal political thought. But as the historical eye travels eastward, into the heartlands of the European peninsula, it comes upon regions where conquest and empire were by no means at an end, and large agglomerations of power were being formed in that area of undetermined frontiers. The Hapsburg and Romanov empires were growing increasingly professionalised in their military and bureaucratic structures, as they pushed back the structure of the Ottoman system, and in the Russian case converted the last defensive wars of European settlers against nomad raiders from the Crimea, into offensive operations of conquest and agriculture. The Hohenzollern monarchy intervened in the relations between empires in ways that helped bring about the partitions of Poland – which Edmund Burke, who was a great theorist of Europe, considered a blow to the civilisation of states second only to the French Revolution. The question it seems fair to extract from this summary is whether, as these empires grew and modernised themselves, they instituted among the various ethnic groups they brought under government enough of the conditions conducive to what further west was called »civil society« to ensure that the state was liberalised, and that middle-class and popular politics did not develop predominantly in

the form of competing ethnic nationalisms. This I understand to be a dominant problem in central and eastern European history, where there may be found ethnic cultures in which the partnership between state and civil society has not yet developed to the point where the preconditions of liberalism can be met; more perhaps than in the west of the peninsula, though a comparable problem is to be found there too. Modern Italy, for example, can be said to include both northern provinces in which civil society is strong enough to make the state, never much respected, look almost superfluous, and southern provinces in which organised crime is as strong as the state and can make it fight to assert its authority. We don't know which has won yet, and on the American side of the Atlantic the story isn't over either.

I have heard it said while visiting Calabria that the peoples of southern Italy have been required to pass from a premodern to a postmodern state of life at one step, which no one could be expected to find easy. As far back as the eighteenth century it is possible to find some of the origins of this widespread problem and some interesting comments on its genesis. Here in Edinburgh it is proper to remember that farsighted dreamer Andrew Fletcher of Saltoun, who distrusted the formation of the multiple kingdoms of Britain into a single military monarchy to oppose the military monarchy of France. He proposed an utopia in which the great states of Europe would be dissolved into a loose federation of cantons, resembling the Swiss model, each with its own militia and its commerce linking it with its neighbours. The sovereignty of each would clearly be confined to its local affairs and the protection of its borders, and Fletcher was up against the contention that sovereignty should be used to organise larger states which would be larger market areas. That was the solution that attracted both David Hume and Adam Smith, but the former was a particularly pungent commentator on the practice great states had developed of financing themselves by contracting larger and larger national debts, mortgaged to associations of creditors in the present against a future in which they would probably never be paid off at all. In a famous essay »Of Public Credit« Hume asked what would happen to a state – and it might happen to all states – whose total national wealth was perpetually employed in paying off creditors who were not members of the state, but lived somewhere abroad, interested in the state solely as the source of their income. He concluded that the state would be stripped of all authority over itself derived from the social relations among its members, while the creditors would exercise their power with the »stupid and pampered lethargy« which arose from their being members of no political or civil society. Shall I say merely that we know what he was talking about? The postmodern condition is certainly one in which membership in separate and identifiable civil societies is losing its central importance; do we any longer control our own affairs?

In a study which I am constructing of the historical thought of Edward Gibbon, I am struck by the extent to which the Europe he knew was English, French, Dutch, Swiss and Italian, limited to that republic or confederation of states which had succeeded the universal monarchy of Charles V and the Innsbruck draughtsman, and held together by trade, treaties and the balance of power. Through he served in a war which changed the Anglo-French competition for hegemony in western Europe into a struggle for empire in North America, Gibbon was very little aware of the great struggle between Hapsburg, Hohenzollern and Romanov which was part of the same war. Though the history he wrote was set chiefly in the Pontic, Eurasian and east Mediterranean lands surrounding the Byzantine empire, he did not, on reaching the fall of Constantinople in 1453, go on to consider the Ottoman as successor to the Byzantine, or the empires of his own day as successors to the Ottoman and Mongol systems; instead, he returned to the west he lived in and wrote three chapters on the city of Rome in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance. When I began my work on Gibbon a few years ago, the European Community you are trying to construct was confined to the Europe he knew. It was a far western consortium, divided by an ironclad frontier from the latest of the bureaucratic and military empires which have succeeded one another in that central and eastern European, and at the same time western Eurasian zone, in which they were taking their modern shape in Gibbon's lifetime. In the last three years, however, that configuration of things has become the memory of another age in the world's history. What has collapsed is not merely that intolerable but unquestionable frontier we knew by such names as the Wall and the Curtain, and not merely the military empire which the Soviet Union exercised in Europe for only half a century; not merely the Soviet Union itself, but a very large part of the imperial state built up by the Romanov dynasty from the time at which our Innsbruck draughtsman was making his picture of the crowned Spanish virgin. There is now a zone of global proportions in which what we vaguely call »European Russia« may or may not extend beyond the Urals, from St. Petersburg to Vladivostok; there is another, not to be marked off from the first, in which that Russia may or may not interact stably with the tier of Turkic and Islamic peoples whom the Romanovs spent two centuries subjugating, and with the modernised Islamic states south of them. We don't know how far the disintegration of the Russian state and empire may be going to extend, and as a result the community of states, or ex-states, which takes to itself the name of »Europe«, is in contact with a zone extending from the centre of the European peninsula into the heartlands of Eurasia, in which what is taking shape may be a new system of states, a chaos of imperfectly stabilised states, or a recrudescence of empire in one form or another. In this scenario the boundaries of »Europe« cannot be fixed any more than they could in 1592,

although – or rather because – there is no successor to the Ottoman empire in the pride of its power. Those boundaries have not expanded, so much as exploded, into a geopolitical space without natural frontiers; and this affects, without determining, both the structure of »Europe« itself and its future interactions with Islamic culture from northern Africa to central Asia – with some significant Muslim presences in the peninsula, even the archipelago, which goes by the name of »Europe«. I am not trying to present Islam as any kind of threat, merely as part of a general pattern of entropy in which there are problems but not the imperial will or power to determine them.

Western Europe in Gibbon's time believed itself to be a post-imperial condition, in which the need of any kind of European empire had been superseded by the growth of a society of independent states, each sovereign in its political affairs – and therefore capable of war with its neighbours – but held together by ties of commerce which created a common culture and mitigated war without threatening sovereignty (though we have seen that David Hume could envisage conditions in which the fluidity of capital might render external and internal sovereignty equally meaningless). In what I have proposed calling the revolutionary period, from 1789 to 1989, a series of causes combined to make both the great states of western Europe and the great empires of western Eurasia capable of fighting hugely destructive wars which became contests for empire and involved other powers on a scale global as well as European. The invention of »Europe« – as a byword for the specific set of institutions called the »European Community« – was a device intended to put an end to the conduct of great wars within the European Peninsula; it resembled the Enlightenment creation of a society of states held together by a shared commerce, with the important difference that Enlightened »Europe« was built upon the sovereignty of the individual state, whereas postmodern »Europe« affects to regard that sovereignty as itself obsolete and dangerous and presents the global fluidities of the world economy as a means of dissolving it.. Not merely a means, indeed, but an end in itself. The word »Europe« is employed to promote a vision of culture and history in which the movements of the world market are more central, in determining human life and supplying it with meaning, than membership in any political community, local, national, regional, or continental. It is not clear to an observer like myself, and as far as I can observe it is not clear to you either, whether you are contemplating surrendering your sovereignty (in part if not in whole) to some new sovereign association larger that the state, or to some set of arrangements designed to ensure that no kind of political sovereignty has the capacity to interfere with the operations of the market. Are you or are you not engaged in putting an end to the contention, very ancient and central in our culture, that the human being is primarily a political animal, and that political societies are the means by

which selves govern themselves and endeavour to declare what they are to be? The advanced voices of our culture are busy decentering, deconstructing and otherwise rendering insecure the notion of the self, and the global consumer market seems the most likely beneficiary of their endeavours.

If all this were indeed the object of the exercise, »Europe« would be an odd name for it, since that word seems to denote a culture historically much concerned with sovereignty, politics and the government of the self by processes in which the self is active in both practice and knowledge. Indeed, the name »Europe« might itself be at risk, since there is nothing in it particularly sacrosanct to the world market, and you might discover, as others have, that global economic forces saw no reason to maintain you, or your history or your identity, in being any longer. Your objective is after all to ensure a dominant place for »Europe« in the global economy, and ensure that Americans or Asians do not dominate it to the point of dominating you. In using the language of global economy, therefore, you are invoking universal forces for particular ends. There is nothing new or unusual in that, though I confess I enjoy pointing it out to you.

But what makes »Europe« after 1989 so strange and fascinating a spectacle is that the denationalising and depoliticising triumph of the global market (the End of History, as it has been called) is for the moment a utopia – though many very real and enormously powerful forces are working to make it come true. If there was one thing which the great Scottish, French and German philosophers of Enlightened period and its revolutionary aftermath knew quite clearly, it was that state and society, an effective civil sovereign and an effective civil culture, went together; they needed one another, and neither could play its part in making civil existence tolerable without its counterpart. The history of the next two centuries – revolution, imperialism, world war, gulag and holocaust – is of course largely a history of the number of ways in which that perception could go wrong. Nevertheless, what makes the present moment in history, and in the invention of Europe, extraordinary and interesting is the spectacle of this understanding of politics confronted by a double challenge to ist perception of the state. In the wake of the disintegration of empires – colonial, I should add, as well as communist – we have, on the one hand, a constellation of societies so far rendered affluent by the global consumer economy that they believe, or affect with fluctuating self-doubt to believe, that they can dispense with the internal as well as the external sovereignty of the political structure and rely on the global economy unfettered to provide all the conditions necessary to civil society – which may or may not be what that economy aims at doing. On the other hand we have – divided from the affluent by a diversity of lines separating east from west, or south from north, or inner cities from outer suburbs – a

great variety of human subcultures in which neither state nor civil society is stabilised to the point where their alliance can be maintained without degenerating into disorder, despotism or both. It would be very easy indeed to depict a »Europe« neither virginal nor imperial, uneasily poised between one aspect (mainly western) on which the alliance of state and society has got so far that it is possible to imagine the state as growing superfluous, and another (sometimes southern and sometimes eastern) on which neither state nor civil society is secure, stabilised or even properly understood. It would be easy, with less assurance, to set up a parallelogram of forces and predict that between these extremes, the classical components of the liberal state – the civil sovereign and the community of citizens – will have to awake from their »stupid and pampered lethargy« without falling into any of that condition's more appalling opposites. But historians learn not to make predictions, at least without adding that what happens will almost certainly be other that what can be predicted; and predictive models are supposed to stimulate, not to constrain, our sense of what is possible. My aim has been to deconstruct a concept of »Europe« too easily used as a mind – deadening incantation, and demonstrate that it is a name for a number of forces which interact unstably, dynamically, creatively ad dangerously. We – which includes you, *vous autres Européens* – live, as always, in interesting times.