

THE SPIRITUAL EUROPE OF ITALIAN LIBERALISM

Márton KAPOSÍ

The ideas of Italian liberal theoreticians and politicians link up with the idea of the unification of Europe at two significant and antagonistic points. Some of the ideas are negative: Europe *cannot be* organized into a closely unified system of states because it is only in accordance with their possibilities and on the basis of their own decisions that the countries of Europe, different in terms of their development and variously homogeneous or heterogeneous with regard to their internal conditions, participate in the various organizations, cooperations of the continent and, therefore, all other efforts concerning that should be received with great caution. The other group of ideas, on the other hand, is positive/affirmative: Europe, especially its Western half, has been displaying a *fairly high degree of unity* in the field of culture and spiritual/intellectual life despite the obvious diversity, which does not restrict the cultural autonomy and the possibility for development of individual nations or units of other kind, and, at the same time, promotes their positive interactions; therefore, this dynamic state of things, never without problems and sometimes burdened with extreme contrasts, *should be maintained*, indeed, it *should be advanced*, with the autonomy of the parts respected and new circumstances taken into consideration. Politics and culture contain different possibilities for integration; those of culture are less violent and more comprehensive, and it is far enough from becoming a catalyst of significant homogenization and uniformization.

Italian liberalism, particularly with regard to its theoretical foundations, is a *finely elaborated system of ideas*. Its most important spiritual origins, hardly differently from English, French or German liberalism, include the humanism of the Renaissance, the Calvinist version of Reformation, the rationalism of Cartesianism and the Enlightenment, modern natural law, the Kantian idea of morality, the liberty and equality of the French revolution, the dialectics of Hegel, that is to say, all that have been formulated in any form concerning the autonomous individual, liberty, progress and the initiative of the new from the most progressive ideas of five

hundred years.¹ Its founders and explicators have been active in various fields of intellectual life, their sensitivity to different problems favourably contributing to the enrichment of the system of ideas; their work, put together, eventually embraced the whole of social life, and they were able to approach the most specific problems with adequate sensibility and expertise. The doctrines of liberalism were elaborated by writers (Vittorio Alfieri, Ugo Foscolo, Alessandro Manzoni, Giacomo Leopardi), journalists and political theorists (Pietro Verri, Vincenzo Cuoco, Annibale Santore di Santarosa, Giuseppe Mazzini), lawyers (Gian Domenico Romagnosi, Cesare Beccaria), economists (Melchiorre Gioia, Vilfredo Pareto), and philosophers (Antonio Rosmini, Vincenzo Gioberti, Bertrando Spaventa). This is how the comprehensiveness and efficiency of the conception and the great impact it had made in the nineteenth century was commented on by Benedetto Croce, the great later theoretician of the movement: Even if it had weaknesses, these "were inseparable from the very value of the demands that were being made and the institutions for which they asked, and they did not lessen the substantial nobility of the liberal movement, its potent moral efficacy. This was irradiated by poetry, armed by logic and by science; it turned early to action and prepared for conquest and dominion. Poets, theorists, orators, publicists, propagandists, apostles and martyrs bore witness to the profound seriousness of that ideal..."² Eminent politicians (Camillo de Cavour, Silvio Spaventa, Giovanni Giolitti) achieved excellent practical results following the basic principles of liberalism, and indeed, until the collapse after World War I, the colourful system of ideas of liberalism proved to be the best principled guideline for efforts to advance Italian development. In many respects, this was the case during subsequent periods: it was able to emerge from crises during the fascist era and after World War II and, having renewed, offered theoretical basis for further social progress.

Italian liberalism has always formulated its main principles and defined its basic values using *the best of European culture* as a starting point, and it has practically never changed this orientation. The idea of *progress*, always high in its *system of values*, helped the ideation of two of the greatest problems of the Italian peninsula, namely the difficulties of the separate status of its parts and the increasing failure to keep up with those ahead in progress. First during the Renaissance, Italy was after a time lagging long behind the most developed countries of Western Europe, and the awareness of this backwardness, this experience of lagging behind inspired the liberals to advocate both *social progress* within the regions and the *unification of Italy*. (The importance of social progress was realized and supported even by the federalists, who opposed unification.) Its followers regarded unification as the most important condition of progress and pointed to the leading countries of Europe when outlining the vision of a future Italy, lead by a state built in accordance with liberal ideas. Although Italians did not want to see their country, unified through hardships, and with the process not yet complete, as a more or less restricted member of a larger integration,

the idea that *their high level culture should not be isolated* from cultures of other countries, even from those greater and stronger than their own, was not alien to them.

Elaborated in detail during the *Risorgimento* and developed further later, the theory of Italian liberalism, both with respect to its *orientation* basis and with respect to *the contents of its principles*, regarded itself as *part of a culturally virtual Europe*. In addition to a number of its significant representatives (Giovanni Amendola, Adolfo Omodeo), its two greatest twentieth-century theoreticians (Benedetto Croce and Guido De Ruggiero) directly and emphatically expressed this in their various basic works, not to mention their innumerable shorter writings. In one of his chief works, *The History of European Liberalism*, published in 1925, during the first great crisis of liberalism, which coincided with the strengthening of Italian fascism, De Ruggiero has a chapter on the development of Italian liberalism. In 1932, Croce published his *History of Europe in the Nineteenth Century*, which he dedicated to Thomas Mann, and in which, apart from presenting the events, he also raises a monument to the golden age of liberalism. The other great work of De Ruggiero, *The History of Philosophy* (from 1918, in fifteen volumes), very consciously traces the history of European thought. As a literary historian, Croce set out to defend Goethe's notion of *Weltliteratur* at the time of World War I, and went on in 1927 to chiefly interpret it theoretically as the organic unity of what is best in national literatures. He documented it in his two volumes of essays, *Poetry and Not Poetry* (1923) and *Antique and Modern Poetry* (1941), bringing together in them great authors of different ages and different nations from Homer to Carducci, including the Greeks, Romans, and modern Europeans, not omitting even the representatives of smaller nations like the Norwegian Ibsen. He firmly believed that "the literature of the nineteenth century is to a great extent unified, not only in terms of criticism and taste, but also with regard to states of mind and modes of expression, whether the writers are French, German, English or Italian."³ It was not without reason that Piero Gobetti, whom Croce never liked, said the following, "Croce is the most perfect European type brought to surface by our culture after the disastrous attempts of the *Risorgimento*."⁴ All the *maestro* could do in his old age was reformulate the programme of the Partito Liberale, and lead the party for years as its president. The younger De Ruggiero followed with avid attention the idea of the unification of Europe emerging in various ways after World War II; in 1946 he became the theoretical adviser of the journal *La Nuova Europa*.

The *system of ideas* and the precisely formulated *system of values* of Italian liberalism on the whole have been from the beginning *consistent with the ideal of a Europe, loosely united on a cultural basis*. Itself struggling with the restrictions of the old order, liberalism in its earlier stages, urging bourgeoisie-type progress and wishing to unite anti-feudal forces, did not want to discourage individuals or groups ready to cooperate for progress; later other, historically developed impeding factors (relative backwardness, crisis of liberalism, fascism, strong political left) obliged it to opt for looser cooperation instead of tight integration, partly lest it should frighten off its potential

allies, partly – and more probably – as an attempt to evade the powers that wished to restrict it. It was only with the left that liberalism refused to cooperate; between the two world wars it turned down both the approach of the “liberal revolution” (*rivoluzione liberale*) (Piero Gobetti) and the alliance with “liberal socialism” (*socialismo liberale*) (Carlo Rosselli, Guido Calogero, Aldo Capitini), and after World War II it tried to keep its distance from social-liberalism (*socialliberalismo*) (Norberto Bobbio, Piero Calamandrei) the transformed version of the latter; it never had any connections with the communists.⁵

Its system of values, despite minor occasional modifications, has always been quite obviously expressive of the idea and requirement of relatively great autonomy. The scope and order of its values have hardly changed, rather the circle of their effectiveness has been enlarged or diminished by history. The repertoire of its values has always included individuality, freedom, historicity, initiative, progress and differentiated unity, indeed, these have always occupied the topmost places in the hierarchy of values, and other important values like authority, criticism, etc. have been allocated other levels in relation to them, and/or have been attached to them as new ones.

In the period of the *unfolding* of liberal ideas – from the beginnings to the relative consolidation of Italian unity – the top of the hierarchy of values was occupied by freedom and individuality, followed somewhat lower but inseparably from them by authority, morality; then initiative, autonomy, voluntary cooperation and progress. All this is excellently summed up by Bertrando Spaventa in his *Principii di Etica*. Guido De Ruggiero wrote about it during the first great crisis of liberalism in a somewhat nostalgic retrospect in the following way: “For us, the men of to-day, any confidence in the vitality of the forms and institutions created by Liberalism in the course of its development depends upon the conviction that represents an imperishable value, because identical with the value of that spiritual activity which develops out of itself and draws from itself its laws, its standards, and its destiny. Even if the historical and contingent manifestations of Liberalism must pass away, this fundamental conviction gives us full assurance that freedom can never lose the power of creating for itself new paths, new forms, and new institutions. We see by experience that in every branch of human activity freedom is an essential condition of development and progress. Without freedom, religious faith degenerates into a paralyzing and servile submission; science congeals into dogma; art shrivels into imitation; the production of economic wealth declines; and the life of human society sinks to the level of animal society. Freedom is an expansive force, differentiating itself and propagating itself in its effects, to each of which it gives a tone of novelty and originality, which is the tone of the spirit, the distinctive mark of the individual.”⁶ The autonomous individual is controlled by his own moral conviction, indeed, the latter causes him to understand and accept the public interest represented by the state and effected by politics.

In the *second* major period, during the crises between the two world wars, this system of values was modified a *little* only. Freedom continued to take first place; nor did individuality, activity, progress, and agreement based on interaction slide lower; the change was manifest rather in that, with the repertoire of values slightly increasing, new values were included and given characteristic places, each set next to an older one, as if for its *corrective complement*, to limit in a way its negative content interpretability. Thus critique was paired off with freedom and individuality, balancing with activity, preserving traditions with historicity, the refusal of antagonisms and extremes with differentiated unity. Moral value received greater emphasis, but authority, previously so highly thought of, was so devalued that it nearly became a negative value. This view is expressed in a concentrated form by Croce's book of essays *Etica e politica* [Ethics and politics]. This liberalism, taking a better account of challenges, is really aptly described by his statement that "this doctrine goes beyond formal theory of politics and, in a certain sense, even beyond the formal theory of ethics; it coincides with a complete idea of the world and of reality."⁷ The liberals of this age took special care to separate their position both from narrowly pragmatic politics and from ideas of freedom proclaimed by fascism or by the socialist left.

The liberal view of values in the *third* great era, during a few years following World War II *was changed perceptibly* but not fundamentally. In these years, unlike during the twenties and thirties, not only the destructions of a similar war and the dictatorship of fascism had to be responded to, but the consequences of an even more destructive war, the aftereffects of fascism, and the drastic division of the world in general and Europe in particular were there to cope with. That is why humanity was formulated as a primary value requirement, differentiated unity was given a greater emphasis, freedom, progress, individuality and so on following only after them. This rearrangement of values was importantly complemented by a change which meant that emphases shifted within compound values. In connection with freedom, it was stressed that it is born through hardships, at the cost of many contradictions, but still it will eventually win. Individuality began to have its intrinsic values and its immense possibilities highlighted. An even greater emphasis was placed on the progressive effects of antagonism, and on the fact that opposition, through the challenge within it, plays an important role in bringing the good, the positive to the surface. This is clearly set forth by De Ruggiero in his book of essays entitled *Il ritorno alla ragione*. In 1947, he summarized this same system of values in direct relation to Europe when commenting on the excellent international conference in Geneva on the spirituality of Europe. To the question "What is left of the European spirit?" asked by the Italian speaker, the literary historian and aesthete Francesco Flora, he gave the following belated answer: "Flora's lecture reminds us of his name: this is the Humanist spirit. This is the name whose meaning has not narrowed to literalness, but has retained its universal meaning as in Herder's work. Indeed, Europe is the part of the world that has realized man in the fullness of his capabilities, with his great intrinsic tensions,

with the perennial effort to surpass himself. Man, who unites more souls in his soul: that of Odysseus, ruled by an unquenchable thirst for the new, the unknown, and also that of the farmer who is firmly tied to his land; man, who creates and destroys empires in the name of the freedom and unrestrictability of individuality; man, who is the creator of science and the martyr of faith; the merciless critic of appearances and a dreamer who realizes his dreams; an atom that makes a crowd by mixing with the other atoms, and a thought that sets him apart and distinguishes him within the crowd of atoms; a creature, capable of sinking into the deepest misery and ignominy, and of rising by its own self because the secret of his innermost is the ideal of goodness, greatness and dignity, which he never denies. This and many other things can be said; man is the unity of all these antagonisms because, not allowing himself to be defeated by them, he rules them, transforming them into the elements of power, development and human progress."⁸ Despite all his antagonisms and questionability, man, still capable of the best, was expected to re-humanize the European spirit, to preserve the spirituality of Europe unified in its variety.

Philosophical tradition played a significant role in outlining the intellectual horizon and elaborating the basic principles of Italian liberalism, and a number of *dialectical* thinkers cooperated actively in its reformulations, thus as a system of ideas, it has always been characterized by a considerable susceptibility to *antagonism, diversity, openness, and progress*. This is what Croce had to say about it: "In reality, in it is reflected all the philosophy and religion of modern times, centred in the idea of dialectics, that is, of development which, by means of the variety and conflict of the spiritual forces, continuously enriches and ennobles life and imprints upon it its unique and complete meaning. This is the theoretical basis for the attitude of trust and favour which the liberal doctrine shows in practice toward all manner of tendencies. Rather than set limits and checks on these tendencies and rather than subject them to restrictions and repression, the liberal doctrine offers an open field so that they may complete among themselves and co-operate in harmonious discord."⁹ On the other hand, liberalism clearly and openly distanced itself from fascism and socialism *politically*, from fanatic religiosity and Marxism *ideologically*, from positivism, pragmatism, and actualism *philosophically*, from classicism that rigidly follows traditional forms and from avant garde that breaks up existing forms *artistically*; in general, from formalistic following of traditions, from future cult of the futuristic variety, and from all kinds of eclecticism. It was able to clearly distinguish *organic co-development, a fruitful system of challenges and interactions* from eclectic co-existence. The liberals saw the spiritual greatness and humanizing influence of Europe precisely in the mutual development based on interaction. "Clearly", Croce wrote in 1930, "the sense of history and the European feeling are one; since the richest and noblest history of mankind has been condensed into what we call historical Europe. Europe has created the liberal ideal and undertaken the calling to create and spread culture; it is impossible to see the history of any nation or state in Europe except as understood

and meaningful within the framework of the great European life-organism. Even the world war itself, rather than accentuating the differences, fundamentally revealed this common European humanity: the common virtues, deficiencies, crimes and problems. If we deny history, we shall have to deny Europe, too, if we want to be consistent – but that is a consistence we can admire in the peculiar logic and reasoning of an insane mind.”¹⁰ The humanizing and assimilating effect of Europe was made possible, besides the universal content of its well-developed values, by its diversity, variety, its culture capable of representing universal values in a number of ways because in this way, on the one hand, it offered various kinds of possible links to those wishing to join and innovate, and, on the other, it allowed the surplus it received from the new member to retain its relative autonomy and this, incidentally, prevented it from becoming one-dimensional. That is how Europe has become, despite the damaging effects of dictatorships attempting to make it homogeneous, a continent of great varieties and sharp contradictions.

The way the liberals saw it, even the greatest crises were unable to break this unity of Europe, manifest in its diversity and especially in its spirituality. In 1932, Croce called attention to the misleading nature of the difference between the political image and the cultural image. Whoever compares the political maps of Europe before and after World War I, will at first see two different Europes. “But he who instead passes from what is external and secondary to what is intrinsic, and seeks for the passions and acts of the European soul, at once mentally sets up the continuity and homogeneity between the two Europes so diverse in appearance, and if he looks closely, without letting himself be put off by these superficial impressions, he finds in the two aspects the same features, even if after the war and what has followed it they are somewhat sharpened.”¹¹ Nevertheless, the spiritual unity of Europe can be preserved, although with difficulties.

After World War II, although it was impossible to conceive Europe as united or to hope for a development based on a more profound and hidden continuity, Italian liberals continued being optimists for a while. De Ruggiero did not accept the view of Jean M. De Salis, who said in 1946 that, as predicted by Alexis de Tocqueville, Russians and Americans, these two great peoples were developing on opposing bases and in different directions, and that indirectly jeopardized the unity of Europe; the Russians were especially dangerous because they were pulling away from European values with an increasing speed.¹² The Italian philosopher, however, was confident that a break could be avoided and hoped that Europe would not go through with this process of being divided into two, which had, to some extent, started in the world between the two wars, and began in earnest in Europe after World War II. “The thesis of De Salis”, he argued, “wants to alienate the East, one of its components, from Europe. However, viewed in this way, the West further loosens connections because it is also alien and has already broken the ties. However, the East is to some extent contained in the West: the issues concerning the masses, the state, sociability

[*Geselligkeit*], and justice are raised within the very bosom of individualism and liberalism. And the East also contains the West in a sense: the breaking up of the crust of age-old customs, the incipient industrialization and the rise of nations all mean that the East is also beginning to feel the stimulating effects of criticism and freedom. It was the European spirit that created the historical situation where it boldly undertook to draw these opposing elements into its own sphere of operation, and this will survive permanently only as long as, transcending the temporary lunar eclipse of the present, it regains its viable role as synthesizer."¹³ This would still seem reasonable soon after the war, although later even liberalism itself did not have such a great role in keeping the idea of European unity on the agenda. Rapprochement and partial unification, according to liberals, could be attempted in the field of intellectual life only, claimed Francesco Flora in his lecture at Geneva. "What it actually is about is not that we should create a gigantic nation, a Europe, which will be similar to a giant Switzerland, with all its various languages and traditions united in a new national consciousness, as against the communities of other peoples. What we rather have here actually is that in the present historical circumstances we should create a federation, which would strive, with all its spiritual and practical strength, to realize the principles of humanism that form the roots of the European spirit, and this can only be the principle of the universality of the spirit."¹⁴ European culture then could go on and radiate its unifying influence to other parts of the world as well.

When, however, during the years after the Cold War, political *détente* brought at least some kind of unification of Europe within a possible distance, Italian liberal politics played a significantly smaller role in shaping the life of the country than earlier, indeed, the ideas of liberalism exerted their influence rather more indirectly and less powerfully. It was then that *social liberalism* gained a somewhat more important role, although even now without collaborating with the liberals; struggling for democracy, social liberalism emphasized values that liberals had always held in great esteem, such as progress, openness, diversity, tolerance, as well as democracy, which provided these with a basis and an adequate framework (Norberto Bobbio, Piero Calamandrei, Giovanni Sartori). Neither was liberalism, objectively speaking, so far from social liberalism since with the historical conclusions drawn and the new situation assessed, it may have become more rational and perhaps more skeptical, but it never abandoned the idea of the necessity to develop culture to an extent never before proposed.¹⁵ With regard to the latter, liberalism was already linked only indirectly to the idea of strengthening the spiritual unity of Europe, but fortunately, its intention met the recent tendency of international *détente* that supported the "free flow of ideas" (the third "basket" of the Helsinki Agreement). Indeed, as if history wanted retrospectively to justify them and at the same time teach them a lesson, the liberals were not alone even with their program of refusing economic and political unification because some of the forces on the left held the same views. Emanuele Severino, for example, who was inclined to anarchism, insisted that although Europe might per-

haps be unified *economically*, unification seemed quite impossible politically.¹⁶ The politics of Italy, however, were never significantly disturbed by these objections. She became the member of every economic and political association that united certain countries of Europe in closer union on whatever grounds, such as the European Movement (1948), the *Communauté Européenne du Charbon et de l'Acier* (1951), the European Economic Community (1957), the European Community (1967), and, finally, the European Union (1983).

The representatives of *social liberalism*, who learnt from the liberals to respect individuality and autonomy, and from the socialists the importance of taking circumstances into consideration¹⁷, were not disinclined to the unification of Europe, which had started *on a number of levels*. In 1989, that is, six years after the birth of the European Union, Norberto Bobbio regarded the first steps of political unification, indeed, participation in the worldwide integration as *not completely without problems* but nevertheless *positive* in a number of respects because he thought that various practical problems could be best solved on various levels of close international cooperation. "Europe has taken a step forward," he said in an interview, "so now we are both Italian citizens and European citizens, although not completely so because we elect a [European] parliament of very limited powers. If we are indeed convinced that the great issues of justice are international, we should have the citizens of the world elect the representatives of the United Nations," but he added that the problem is far from being solved at that level. "I mean what lawyers have so far called citizens' rights is limited to national citizenship since international citizenship does not exist as yet."¹⁸ It is indeed not with respect to the universal rights of citizens that the European Union has been most successful.

The order of importance in the scale of values of social liberalism, gaining increasing importance since the sixties, is different from that of liberalism. Democracy comes first, followed by justice, then by issues of publicity, and culture also has an important place next to these. The proportion of national autonomy and international integration depends on the conditions. They regard the economic and political integration of Western Europe necessary to a certain degree, but insist on caution and circumspection with regard to the extent of its realization. As regards to spiritual and/or intellectual unification, they think in terms of the "spirit of Helsinki". All this is clearly summed up in some of Bobbio's works (*Le ideologie e il potere in crisi, Liberalismo e democrazia*).

Our time is primarily characterized, says Severino, by the increasingly perfect organization of technological processes and by a gradual reduction of traditional ideologies. This tendency met with strong resistance in Italy, but it has not stopped.¹⁹ Social liberalism has also spoken up against the great extent of technicization and economization. Norberto Bobbio, for instance, did not approve that liberalism during its transformation should give in to the pressure of economization instead of widening democratization. "While the marriage of socialism and liberalism has so far been

as noble as it has been ephemeral, the increasing identification of socialism and liberalism is an undeniable fact."²⁰ It is at this point that both liberals and socialists could link up to the tradition, last emphasized during World War II particularly by the liberals, that demands the development of democracy as well as, in connection with that, the cultural and ideological education of the masses, the development of their sense of reality, and of their openness to diversity.²¹ This can be one important guarantee that national cultures will not close down on themselves, and European spirituality will be able to exist and work, and not only on the level of the elite.

Thus the idea of the spiritual unity of Europe was not forgotten even after liberalism had been pushed to the background; it was merely less frequently mentioned, and *more direct and practical forms* were employed, not without the influence of liberalist ideas, which were present as subterranean streams, to realize it as best as possible. Its new advocates were attempting to make the best use of the possibilities offered by national frameworks to bring the cultures of European nations closer to one another. A number of new tendencies were favourable for this effort: ideological critique was becoming less pointed, militant philosophies were losing ground, tolerance was gaining space, interest in international achievements was increasing, etc.²² From the two-hundred-year-old tradition of liberalism the deeply rooted ambition started to be more effective, supported by social liberalism, too, to be *open to everything that is new and different* and to accept all the important achievements the world can offer (and for us it is easiest to accept *European achievements*).

The openness and susceptibility to the new of liberalism has been exerting its advantageous influence since the turn of the century, and in addition to the spontaneity of development, its inspiration also greatly contributed to the fact that Italian culture has become so colourful that in its own individual way it *reflects the intellectual panorama of the whole continent*. This kind of inspiration, although hidden, has been even more intensively effective since World War II. Italian intellectual life soon saw the appearance of new aspirations that expressed the wish to belong, and the fact of belonging, to what is the best in the world. The ability to adapt and create, and the effective operation of the intention to achieve fullness and organic unification is well indicated besides, naturally, a lot of other things, by the speed with which two *complex* intellectual movements, capable of providing the whole history of culture with a unified perspective, gained importance. These two movements were *hermeneutics*, connecting past and present, and the *postmodern* perspective, comprehending a concretely interpreted present together with an up-to-date future. Gianni Vattimo is an outstanding representative of both. It is not necessary to appreciate the achievements of contemporary Italian art in this respect.

In addition, colourful *practical everyday work* is also in progress, which will reveal the *past* of Europe in detail as well as analyze and assess with the necessary concreteness *the possibilities of the future*. The research of the past is well exemplified, on the one hand, by the huge documentary and translated literature and, on the other, by a

number of series, such as “Europa delle corti”, that present scholarly works specializing in the past of the continent. The exploration of the future is exemplified by research institutes studying the future of Europe, such as the Institut International d’Études Européennes “Antonio Rosmini” in Bolzano. Of course, the paradigm of cultural heritage in itself does not guarantee a short cut to up-to-date European spirituality, but it will point to the general direction.

Two score years ago a group of European countries set out on the way of increasingly close and wide economic and political integration. Europe did not lose its complicated spiritual unity it had taken centuries to develop even during the decades of its division. Its *high culture* has been shaping even recently according to the natural dialectics of autonomy and interaction, of the local and the universal, of preserving traditions and modernizing. On the other hand, modern practical life, the narrow-minded pragmatization of everyday existence has resulted in the rapid development of a *subculture* that can make all Europeans, indeed, anyone in the world who allows this to happen, identical on a very low spiritual and intellectual level. There is the quite real danger of this subculture becoming so popular and powerful that it will substitute the European spirituality defended by the liberals. One may treat the spiritual Europe of Italian liberals as a memory to be recalled with nostalgia; it may be interpreted as a virtual entity difficult to conceptually grasp; it may be regarded as an impossible and distant aim; and it can also be seen as a *memento* reminding us of the need to save the high culture of Europe and its inherent, millenium-old spirituality, and of the importance of developing it further in many possible ways; at the same time, it also alerts us refute in an adequate form and to the proper extent the overunified subculture because if European spirituality is united in terms of that, it will be a rare occasion that we can welcome on our continent, quoting the Hungarian poet Attila József saluting Thomas Mann, “one European among the whites.”²³

Notes

¹ G. De Ruggiero: *The History of European Liberalism*. Translated by R. G. Collingwood (Oxford University Press, London: Humphrey Milford, 1927), pp. 13–32.

² B. Croce: *History of Europe in the Nineteenth Century*. Translated from the Italian by Henry Furst (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd, 1934), p. 17.

³ B. Croce: *Letterature mondiale*. In: *I Quaderni di Gaia*. [Vol.] 9. (1995). p. 116.

⁴ P. Gobetti: Croce oppositore. In: *Opere di Piero Gobetti edite ed inedite*. [Vol.] 3. *Opere critiche. Parte I. Arte, religione, filosofia*. [Torino], Baretta, 1927. p. 173.

- ⁵ E. Garin: Prefazione [al volume di G. De Ruggiero: *Storia del liberalismo europeo*]. Milano, Feltrinelli, [1962]. pp. XVIII–XXVI. – P. Anderson: The Affinities of Norberto Bobbio. In: *New Left Review*, 170. (July/August 1988.) pp. 14–17.
- ⁶ G. De Ruggiero: *The History of European Liberalism*. pp. 434–435.
- ⁷ B. Croce: Liberalism as a Concept of Life. In: *Politics and Morals*. Translated from the Italian by Salvator J. Castiglione. London, George Allan and Umwin Ltd., [1946]. p. 78.
- ⁸ G. De Ruggiero: L'unità dello spirito europeo. In: *Janus Panmonius*, 1947/4. pp. 561–562.
- ⁹ B. Croce: Liberalism as a Concept of Life. p. 79.
- ¹⁰ B. Croce: Antistoricismo. [Antihistoricism.] In: *Ultimisaggi*. Bari, Laterza, 1935. p. 256.
- ¹¹ B. Croce: *History of Europe in the Nineteenth Century*. p. 352.
- ¹² Lecture by J. M. de Salis in Geneva on September 5, 1946. In: *L'esprit européen*. Neuchatel, Ed. de la Baconniere, 1947. pp. 98–101.
- ¹³ G. De Ruggiero: *L'unità dello spirito europeo*. p. 559.
- ¹⁴ Lecture by F. Flora in Geneva on September 3, 1946. In: *L'esprit européen*. pp. 57–58.
- ¹⁵ U. Cerroni: Verso un nuovo pensiero politico. In: *Socialismo liberale*. (A cura di G. Bosetti.) [Milano], l'Unità, [1989]. pp. 128–130.
- ¹⁶ E. Severino: Che cos' è l'Europa? In: Severino: *La tendenza fondamentale del nostro tempo*. [Milano], Adelphi, [1988]. pp. 114–116.
- ¹⁷ U. Cerroni: Verso un nuovo pensiero politico. pp. 128–129.
- ¹⁸ Intervista a Bobbio "Adesso la democrazia è sola". In: *Socialismo liberale*. pp. 101, 102.
- ¹⁹ E. Severino: La tendenza fondamentale del nostro tempo e il senso del futuro. In: Severino: *La tendenza fondamentale del nostro tempo*. pp. 52–53.
- ²⁰ N. Bobbio: *Liberalismo e democrazia*. Milano, Angeli, 1985. p. 62.
- ²¹ P. Anderson: *The Affinities of Norberto Bobbio*. pp. 18–20.
- ²² N. Bobbio: *Profilo ideologico del Novocento*. [Milano], Garzanti, [1990]. pp. 239–244.
- ²³ Anton N. Nyerges: *Poems of Attila József*. Buffalo, NY, Hungarian Cultural Foundation, 1973. p. 170.