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The Idea of Europe and Beyond: Husserl, Patočka, Derrida, Spivak

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Abstract: This essay aims to articulate a few answers to the question of what remains of the idea of Europe. After a brief outline of this idea in the work of Edmund Husserl, the thoughts on Europe by Jan Patočka and Jacques Derrida are discussed and then compared to the views of Gayatri Spivak. Finally, several insights into the idea of Europe emerge from comparing these different viewpoints.

Keywords: phenomenology; deconstruction; responsibility; postcolonialism; post-Europe.

Introduction

Within European philosophy, there is a long tradition of reflection upon its own European identity. This tradition bears the paradox of being at once about universality and particularity. On the one hand, freedom and rationality, usually seen as the main ideas that form European identity, are regarded as universal characteristics of humanity. On the other hand, the development of this insight has its specific regional origin in Europe, and more precisely, in Greece.

For a long time, and in many philosophical reflections, the Greek origin and European development of Western philosophy were not seen as in tension with its universal claims, but as a sign of European superiority. Within the framework of historical progress, Europe was considered the leading continent and culture, ahead in development by science and technology, and therefore entitled to rule the world, while bearing the responsibility to guide the other peoples and continents toward civilization. Yet this view eroded over the course of the

twentieth century due to, among other factors, contact with other continents and critical self-reflection. The alleged superiority of Europe, its special position in world history, as well as its violent colonial history, have been heavily criticized. Most critics, however, do not want to give up the ideas and values regarding freedom and rationality, which are the main elements of the idea of Europe, and that are also presupposed by those who criticize Europe.

Therefore, the question becomes what remains of this idea of Europe? Can it be liberated from its geographical origins and its colonial contamination? What is at issue is whether it is possible to open up the idea of Europe, holding on to its values and perhaps its universal pretensions, while leaving behind its problematic historical and geographical specifications.

In this essay, I sketch the beginnings of an answer to these questions by offering some reflections on Europe in the traditions of phenomenology and philosophies of difference. I shall start with a brief outline of Edmund Husserl's idea of Europe, then focus on reflections on the idea of Europe and its

tensions as presented by Jan Patočka and Jacques Derrida, and finally contrast their views with a non-European perspective that can be found in the work of Gayatri Spivak, leading me to draw some conclusions.

Edmund Husserl and the Spiritual Shape of Europe

Phenomenology is one of the currents of thought in which the idea of Europe is profoundly discussed. This started in the later work of phenomenology's founding father, Edmund Husserl. In his last book, Husserl discusses what he calls the crisis of the European sciences. This crisis actually comprises more than the sciences, it affects European culture and humanity in its entirety, as manifested in the title of Husserl's 1935 Vienna lecture, *Die Philosophie in der Krisis der europäischen Menschheit* (Philosophy in the Crisis of European Mankind). Husserl distinguishes Europe as a geographical area and its history from the idea of Europe, that is, its *geistige Gestalt* (spiritual shape),¹ which is not merely a thought or concept, rather it is an idea in the Hegelian sense, namely, a value-giving entity including its concrete societal embedding and implications. Husserl writes:

The title "Europe" clearly refers to the unity of a spiritual life, activity, creation, with all its ends, interests, cares, and endeavors, with its products of purposeful activity, institutions, organizations.²

In line with the Hegelian connotation, "Europe" is a teleological idea, an idea of progress by rational insight. The rational, spiritual shape of Europe is the immanent drive of European history, yet at the same time it has a universal value that extends beyond Europe. Husserl perceives it

from the standpoint of universal mankind as such, as the breakthrough and the developmental beginning of a new epoch—the epoch of mankind which now

seeks to live, and only can live, in the free shaping of its existence, its historical life, through ideas of reason, through infinite tasks. [C 274]

What is meant by the infinite task of living through ideas of reason? It is the attitude of justifying opinions and choices by rational argumentation. Humans are responsible for their views, for their behavior, even for their being. Living through ideas of reason means trying to give an account of oneself that is not based on tradition or authority but on the use of one's own reasoning. Rational life thus leads to a better self-understanding, to self-elucidation, it implies self-criticism and openness for the views and argumentations of others, and the ability to develop arguments that substantiate one's own views. Husserl describes this as an infinite task, as an infinite call for

the ultimate self-understanding of man as being responsible for his own human being: his *self-understanding as being in being called to a life of apodicticity*. [C 340]

This is not merely a European point of view; it is "the standpoint of universal mankind" (C 274), one that claims universal validity. For Husserl, the aim of rational argumentation is to reach the certainty of apodicticity. Although rational life is the constant movement of self-elucidation, only apodictic certainty can give views and ideas the status of universal validity. Hence, rational life is the universal idea of being responsible by supporting one's behavior with rational argumentation that is ultimately based upon indisputable certainty.

This idea is more than a thought or opinion; it includes its own cultural and societal institutionalization. In itself, this is no surprise: every general idea has its regional and historical embeddings and institutionalizations. However, there are different ways to establish the connection between what is universal and what is particular. Although one might expect that such a universal idea of rational life can manifest itself in several different cultures and societies, the idea of Europe ties it to one specific region and to one specific history. The teleological character of this history is what connects the specific and alleged unique origin of this idea to universal validity and to a universal history of mankind. This teleological view of the history of progress through reason, science, and technology affords the continent of Europe a privileged position relative to other regions of the world. Regardless of

¹ Edmund Husserl, "Die Krisis des europäischen Menschentums und die Philosophie," in *Die Krisis der europäischen Wissenschaften und die transzendente Phänomenologie*, *Husserliana Band VI*, ed. Walter Biemel, Haag, NL: Martinus Nijhoff 1976, pp. 314-48, here p. 319.

² Edmund Husserl, "Philosophy and the Crisis of European Humanity," in *The Crisis of European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology: An Introduction to Phenomenological Philosophy*, transl. David Carr, Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press 1970, pp. 269-99, here p. 273. [Henceforth cited as C]

whether one objects to the colonialism and racism that are connected to this teleological view of history, the privilege of Europe has nonetheless problematic consequences.

Even though Husserl explicitly makes a distinction between the universal idea of rational life and the geographical historical origin of this idea, the continent of Europe, and even though the universal idea is supposed to transcend the geographical continent of Europe, the idea of Europe remains a geographical reference. Problematic effects can be traced in the very passages in which Husserl not only explains the purport of the idea of Europe, but also describes who is included in this history and who is not:

In the spiritual sense the English Dominions, the United States, etc., clearly belong to Europe, whereas the Eskimos or Indians presented as curiosities at fairs, or the Gypsies, who constantly wander about Europe [*herumvagabundieren*], do not. Here the title "Europe" clearly refers to the unity of a spiritual life, activity, creation, with all its ends, interests, cares, and endeavors, with its products of purposeful activity, institutions, organizations. [C 273]

In this passage, the inevitable relation between universality and its appearance and development within specific traditions appears susceptible to the exclusion of specific groups of people. Husserl includes populations that actively contribute to the cultural accomplishments of this rationality-bound spiritual tradition (such as the North Americans of European descent), and he excludes Indigenous cultures that preserve and uphold their own traditions (such as the Inuit, Cherokee, or Roma). Is it possible to preserve the universal and positive notion of rationality and responsibility and avoid these exclusionary sides of the reference to Europe and teleological history? This is what several philosophers in the slipstream of Husserl's phenomenology have tried to figure out.

Jan Patočka and the Idea of Europe in the Era of Post-Europe

Jan Patočka is one of the phenomenologists who has given much attention to the idea of Europe. In his view, European culture is characterized by a rational and ethical view of life. This means that humans have a responsibility for their own being, for a rational justification of their ideas and moral choices, guided by an orientation toward what

is good, beyond personal interests. This rational attitude corresponds to what he calls spiritual life, living in truth, or, in Platonic terms, "care of the soul."³ It constitutes the core of philosophy, history, politics, and European culture.

In line with his teacher Husserl, Patočka underscores the Greek origins of European culture. In ancient Greece, he identified the unique source of history and philosophy, which is directly tied to the idea of Europe. Patočka writes:

This is that singular thing about Europe...only in Europe was philosophy born in this way, in the awakening of man out of tradition into the presence of the universe, only in Europe, or better said, in what was the embryo of Europe—Greece. [PE 88]

In his philosophical elaborations on this life in truth and on European culture, however, Patočka develops a variety of views of human life and European history. He distances himself from subjectivist and Cartesianist tendencies in Husserl's work, while staying close to Husserl's phenomenological method. For Husserl, the phenomenological reduction leads to (inter)subjective consciousness as a field of appearances: everything that appears to one appears to that specific person. Patočka stresses that all appearances manifest themselves in the world in contexts, and that the human subject participates in the world but cannot survey it in its entirety. This means that whereas Husserl reduces the world to subjectivity, Patočka insists on the primacy of the world over the subject. Admittedly, human subjectivity is an indispensable part of the field of appearing, but this field is more than subjectivity; it is a much larger world that includes subjectivity within it. Patočka calls this non-Cartesian alternative outcome of the phenomenological reduction an "asubjective phenomenology"⁴ or phenomenology of the appearing as such.

The human subject is embedded in worldly structures, rooted in natural and cultural bonds. Humans can transcend these contextual connections,

³ Jan Patočka, *Plato and Europe*, transl. Petr Lom, Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press 2002, p. 15. [Henceforth cited as PE]

⁴ Jan Patočka, "Husserl's Subjectivism and the Call for an Asubjective Phenomenology," transl. Ivan Chvatík, Matt Bower, and Kenneth Maly, in *Asubjective Phenomenology*, eds. L'ubica Učník, Ivan Chvatík, and Anita Williams, Nordhausen: Traugott Bautz 2015, p. 17–40.

but only to a certain extent. A God's eye point of view is unreachable. This position is asubjective in the sense that the subject cannot take an unprejudiced transcendent position to survey the world as a whole and to neutrally describe how phenomena appear. But it is possible for humans to take a critical distance from their own perspectives, from their societal ties, and personal interests, and to give a rational and ethical account of oneself. This is what makes them human, it is what Patočka calls the human soul, the relation to the field of appearing, the ability to truth. Humans are always related to their environment, to things, and to other humans. It is an essential element of human existence to reach beyond these connections and to relate to the world as a whole and to one's existence, yet without being able to survey them. Patočka means this when invoking the care for the soul, the spiritual life, which does not reach the apodicticity Husserl was looking for, but that results in an oscillatory movement of transcending and descending into immanence, of radical questioning and preliminary answers, of critical self-elucidation that always returns to practical worldly bonds. Once one has started this oscillatory movement, there is no way back to the alleged certainties of tradition. Consequently, the usual opinions are shaken forever and in need of a rational justification. Freedom, rationality, and responsibility are indispensable elements of this spiritual life. This attitude originated, according to Patočka, in ancient Greek culture and has been established since then as the core of European culture.

Patočka distinguishes three elements in the care of the soul: a cosmological, a political, and a personal ethical side: humans try to understand the natural world in which they live, to shape the cultural and political world in which they partake and to reflect on the sustainable meaning of their personal life. In these three domains, critical rational reflection gives shape to the care of the soul. In *Plato and Europe*, Patočka mainly focuses on how Plato developed his ideas on these topics.

In other studies, Patočka describes several historical developments in European culture and in the care for the soul. He does not postulate a teleology in this history, but a tendency to decline, against which the care of the soul must resist. Like his teacher Husserl, Patočka discerns in early modern Europe a fatal historical turn, away from the care of the soul, when he writes:

The great turning point in the life of western Europe appears to be the sixteenth century. From that time on another motif comes to the fore, opposing the motif of the care of the soul and coming to dominate one area after another, politics, economics, faith, and science, transforming them in a new style. Not a care *for the soul*, the care to *be*, but rather the care to *have*, care for the external world and its conquest, becomes the dominant concern.⁵

Modern rationality transforms into an instrumental and calculative reason. Scientific and technical domination of the world becomes a much stronger motif than the spiritual and ethical side of reason. Patočka discerns two contradictory tendencies in modern Europe: on the one hand, a technological domination that leads to individualism, resource depletion, and totalitarianism; on the other hand, Europe as institutionalized ethical insight, with a focus on pluralism, democracy, and human rights.⁶

In his *Heretical Essays*, Patočka describes the disastrous effects of this contradiction within European culture. Technological innovations have unleashed enormous powers that are no longer under the control of a rational ethical orientation. The exploration of calculative, economic, and instrumental rationality has led to a domination by gigantic, anonymous technological forces that have no meaning or goal in themselves. According to Patočka, these forces and energies have erupted in the violence of two world wars that have put an end to European world domination and have resulted in a decadent Western Europe and a totalitarian Eastern Europe. History has entered a new period, which Patočka labels as post-Europe, since the domination by science and technology has spread around the world, but the cultural and political dominance of Europe is "definitely at an end" (PE 9). Patočka substantiates his prediction as follows:

Europe truly was the master of the world...she after all was the one who developed capitalism, the network of world economy and markets into which was pulled

⁵ Jan Patočka, *Heretical Essays in the Philosophy of History*, transl. Erazim Kohák, Chicago, IL: Open Court 1996, p. 83. [Henceforth cited as HE]

⁶ Jan Patočka, "Europa und Nach-Europa. Die nacheuropäische Epoche und ihre geistigen Probleme," in *Ketzerische Essays zur Philosophie der Geschichte, und ergänzende Schriften*, Stuttgart, DE: Klett-Cotta 1988, p. 207-87, here p. 211. [Henceforth cited as ENE]

the entire planet. She controlled the world politically, on the basis of the monopoly of her power, and that power was of scientific-technological origin...this reality, this enormous power, definitely wrecked itself in the span of thirty years, in two wars, after which nothing remained, nothing of her power that had ruled the world. She destroyed herself, through her own powers...The result is...that here are its inheritors, and these inheritors will never allow Europe to be what it once was. [PE 9]

Nevertheless, the question remains whether it is possible to reawaken the idea of Europe and the care for the soul in a post-European era. According to Patočka, this must always be possible, since it constitutes the essence of being human. In this regard, it is remarkable that he seems to have extended the idea of the care of the soul beyond Europe. Whereas he takes a rather Eurocentric position concerning the origin of the care of the soul, in his observations of post-Europe, Patočka is clearly critical of any Eurocentric point of view. After Europe, the inheritors of European domination are not only the legitimate descendants in North America, but also pre-European cultures in Asia and Africa. Instead of a teleological world history in which Europe takes the lead, Patočka understands history as

nothing other than the shaken certitude of pre-given meaning. [HE 118]

This implies that re-inventions of the care for the soul may have non-European cultural sources. Patočka's main concern in this new post-European era in history is that the forces of technological domination and unequal economic relations are countered by an ethical and rational spirit. For Patočka, this remains an open question: Would it be possible to open up the idea of Europe, the idea of an ethical and spiritual life, to a new post-European phase?

Jacques Derrida and the Deconstruction of the Idea of Europe

Whereas Husserl and Patočka were both born in the heart of Europe, Derrida has non-European roots, as he was born in Algeria, a French colony, in 1930. One can also say that Derrida, after beginning his studies in Paris at age nineteen and building his career there, has become a European philosopher. This tension in his biography, of being European and non-European, can be found in his work as well: between belonging and not belonging, being included and excluded,

being situated inside and outside. Derrida traces throughout his work how seemingly clear conceptual boundaries are in deconstruction.

He finds comparable tensions in the idea of Europe. European philosophy has inherited the idea of Europe and needs to engage with this heritage responsibly. Responsibility is a key concept in European culture. Rational self-elucidation and justification involve giving an account of oneself. Critical rational self-understanding thus implies responsibility. For Husserl, this urge to rationally justify one's beliefs resulted in a plea for apodictic certainty. Patočka transformed this search for certainty into the oscillatory movement of transcending and descending, of radical questions and temporary practical answers. Derrida now seems to radicalize this transformation by stressing that every responsibility always gets stuck in aporias. Since apodictic certainty cannot be found, since it certainly cannot be articulated into a universal truth without becoming multi-interpretable, all efforts to give an account of oneself are thus inevitably confronted with aporias.

Derrida lists a whole set of aporetic responsibilities of the European heritage at several levels of reflection.⁷ They are all related to the aporia between universality and singularity. There cannot be a universal truth or principle without a singular appearance and articulation that renders it contextual, thereby contaminating its universality. Moreover, aporias are constitutive of responsibility. If there had been a universal foundation for all justifications, if there had been such an apodicticity beyond discussion, then, according to Derrida, the right choices and decisions would automatically flow from it, comparable to a machine's calculation, and there would be no moment of free decision left. The aporetic structure of rational justification, therefore, makes responsibility possible.⁸

One of the consequences of these unavoidable aporias is that every conceptual distinction can be

⁷ Jacques Derrida, *The Other Heading: Reflections on Today's Europe*, transl. Pascale-Anne Brault and Michael B. Naas, Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press 1992, pp. 76-80. [Henceforth cited as *OH*]

⁸ Jacques Derrida, "Force of Law: The 'Mystical Foundations of Authority'," transl. Mary Quaintance, in *Acts of Religion*, ed. Gil Anidjar, New York, NY: Routledge 2002, pp. 228-298, here pp. 251-8.

problematized, for the distinguished poles happen to be contaminated by each other. Consequently, Derrida is suspicious of the easy distinction between Eurocentrism and anti-Eurocentrism. The question of the idea of Europe needs to be taken beyond such an apparently clear opposition.

In contrast to Husserl and Patočka, for whom the beginning of modernity is a crucial moment in the history of Europe, Derrida gives much more attention to the Enlightenment. In the Enlightenment, he finds many aspects of the tensions within modern European rationality. On the one hand, there is the scientific and technological instrumental reason that manifests itself in technical and economic calculation and manipulation, culminating in globalized capitalism that leaves many colonial relations intact. On the other hand, there is the codification of human rights and the self-critical development of the idea of responsibility, of which Derrida's own reflections are an exponent. In this problematic tension between different sides of the European heritage, one can find, albeit in a somewhat different way, the same conflict as in Patočka's approach to Europe: technological and economic calculation and domination versus ethical insight and argumentation.

These frictions between calculation and open argumentation, between capitalism and human rights, evidence how the history of Europe, despite its teleological pretensions, is divided into several orientations. Derrida discusses this in terms of the headings used for representing European history. The heading (*cap*) of universal progress is not as evident as it is often suggested, and it needs to be navigated in different ways. In his book *L'autre cap* (*The Other Heading*) Derrida plays with the French word *cap*, by showing the dissemination of its meanings, namely head, direction, route, capital letter, money (*le capital*), capital city (*la capitale*). Europe should be open and receptive to other headings (*l'autre cap*), but also to headings that others might choose (*le cap de l'autre*), and even to the possibility that a direction or heading itself might be questioned and replaced by something other than a heading (*l'autre du cap*) (OH 14-7).

Derrida thus radicalizes the inheritance of the idea of Europe by pursuing open-ended reflections on rationality, seeking argumentative justification for views and decisions, and turning toward the fostering of a radical and paradoxical openness of Europe. On the one hand, Europe needs to be opened up to what it has excluded in its long history. On the

other hand, in Derrida's view, Europe is openness; Europe is also responsibility, for the rationality that characterizes Europe is in itself necessarily open and receptive. He deliberates:

And what if Europe were this: the opening unto a history for which the changing of the heading, the relation to the other heading or to the other of the heading, is experienced as always possible? An opening and a non-exclusion for which Europe would in some way be responsible? For which Europe *would be*, in a constitutive way, the very responsibility? As if the very concept of responsibility were responsible, right up to its emancipation, for a European birth certificate? [OH 17]

The paradoxical result of this idea of Europe as openness is that Europe must change by internalizing what it is not, while remaining the same by remaining open to otherness. It appears to be a daunting task to realize, in Europe's actual history, this radical and paradoxical openness, which is articulated in a highly abstract manner. The challenge consists in making the voice of the other be heard.

Gayatri Spivak and the Foreclosure of the Non-European Native Informant

In other words, it is prudent to examine the openness of these approaches to Europe, which Patočka and Derrida conceived by confronting them with perspectives from outside of Europe. By providing an example of a non-European perspective, this essay concludes with a few observations on the work of Gayatri Spivak, a philosopher born in India who has developed an immense and impressive oeuvre spanning philosophy, literary theory, and other disciplines. Spivak works in line with Derrida's thought, offering deconstructive readings of European philosophical and literary texts, often questioning Eurocentric biases from within. She is one of the founding mothers of gender and postcolonial studies, yet in her later work, she also criticizes postcolonial studies.

One of her impressive readings is a deconstruction of Kant's third critique, the *Critique of Judgment*.⁹ Here, I can only offer a brief summary of her very precise

⁹ Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, *A Critique of Postcolonial Reason. Toward a History of the Vanishing Present*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press 1999, pp. 1-37. [Henceforth cited as CPR]

reading. The goal of Kant's *Critique of Judgment* is to bridge the gap between his first two critiques, between the realm of nature and knowledge and the realm of freedom and ethics. This task includes combining the transcendental and the empirical ego. The transcendental ego corresponds to a universal position, independent of historical and cultural situations in which humans find themselves. Rational insight into the destination of nature, as well as into man's destiny as part of this teleology, is founded in this universal human nature, yet it also requires culture. The sublimity of the rational will can only be experienced through the cultural development of taste and moral feeling.

How does this work? According to Kant, the feeling of the sublime is a feeling of displeasure, due to the inadequacy of imagination, but simultaneously it is a feeling of pleasure, since this inadequacy of our faculty of sense is in accord with ideas of reason. For it is, as Kant writes,

a law (of reason) for us, and part of our vocation, to estimate any sense object in nature that is large for us as being small when compared with ideas of reason; and whatever arouses in us the feeling of this supersensible vocation is in harmony with that law.¹⁰

In fact, the feeling of the sublime in nature concerns having respect for humans' own vocation, although they attribute this respect, according to Kant, by a certain subreption to an object of nature. Spivak takes this subreption as a sign of an aporia, in the sense that the divide between the transcendental and the empirical cannot be adequately bridged. Exactly at the point of this aporia, the empirical side of it shows, as Spivak's deconstructive reading of Kant argues, signs of Eurocentrism. Since, in Kant's view, the feeling of the sublime requires a susceptibility for ideas, that needs to be prepared by culture, not everyone is yet able to experience the sublime and thus to experience respect for reason or to develop moral ideas. While referring to J. H. Bernard's translation of Kant, Spivak cites Kant in her own translation as advancing the thesis that:

without *development* of moral ideas, that which we, prepared by culture, call sublime presents itself to man in the raw [*dem rohen Menschen*] merely as terrible (... emphasis mine). [CPR 12-3]

¹⁰ Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Judgment*, transl. Werner S. Pluhar, Indianapolis, IN: Hackett Publishing 1987, p. 115, § 27. [Henceforth cited as *CJP*]

Spivak gives a literal translation of *dem rohen Menschen*, where Bernard translates it with "uneducated"¹¹ and James Meredith with "untutored."¹² Emphasizing her translation, Spivak acknowledges that

the adjective *roh* is suggestive. It is generally translated "uneducated." In fact in Kant, the "uneducated" are specifically the child and the poor, the "naturally uneducable" is woman. By contrast, *der rohe Mensch*, man in the raw, can, in its signifying reach, accommodate the savage and the primitive. [CPR 13]

In short, uneducated or, what Kant might call "primitive" humans, have not yet access to the moral sublimity of man.

Spivak relates "man in the raw" to another passage, where Kant mentions, as examples, the *Neuholländer* and the *Feuerländer*, that is, the Aborigines in Australia and the inhabitants of Tierra del Fuego (*CJP* 258 §67). He adduces these cultures in the context of investigating the principle by which nature can be judged teleologically as a system of purposes. Kant makes a distinction between natural purposes, that is, purposes within nature, and the final purpose of nature as such. This final purpose is supersensible and lies beyond an approach of the world in physio-teleological terms. If one regards natural objects only in terms of their usefulness or purpose in relation to other objects, and, hence, not on the basis of their inner form but rather in virtue of external purposes, then it would not be clear why humans exist. Therefore, the final purpose of nature as such, in contrast to this, can only be found in the faculty of human reason. In this passage, Kant adds as a side remark, between brackets, that the question regarding the existence of the *Neuholländer* and the *Feuerländer* is not so easy to answer. This suggests that humans who use the faculty of reason have access to the moral rationality of humans as such, while for allegedly more primitive and uneducated creatures, this seems less obvious.

In her deconstructive reading of Kant, Spivak reads this exclusion of several non-European peoples as a hidden condition of possibility of the human moral and rational destination. Kant must presuppose

¹¹ Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Judgment*, transl. J. H. Bernard, New York, NY: Hafner Publishing 1966, p. 105.

¹² Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Judgment*, transl. James Creed Meredith, New York, NY: Oxford University Press 2007, p. 95.

the possibility of the existence of humans who are not sufficiently educated to be moral and rational. The moral subject as such, which is supposed to be universal, appears to be, in this deconstructive reading, empirically conditioned. Primitive or uneducated people need to be educated and thus, in some cases, need to be Europeanized, before obtaining access to the rational realm of modern ideas. This constitutes a hidden empirical inscription into the transcendental and free moral ego. In Spivak's own words:

The point is, however, that the New Hollander or the man from Tierra del Fuego *cannot* be the subject of speech or judgment in the world of the *Critique*. The subject as such in Kant is geopolitically differentiated. [CPR 26-7]

Spivak calls the figure of the non-European human, or perhaps even quasi-human, who is mentioned only in a casual rhetorical gesture, the "native informant" (CPR 6). She borrows this concept from ethnography. In her reading, the native informant is an inhabitant of a culture that is studied in ethnographic research, providing the cultural anthropologist with crucial information about the culture under study, yet afterward, the native informant is often forgotten and excluded from research reports and books. Similarly, she claims that the native inhabitants of Australia and Tierra del Fuego have a necessary but aporetic and neglected role in the Kantian system.

With reference to psychoanalysis and cultural anthropology, Spivak recognizes in these passages on non-Europeans a foreclosure of the native informant, that is, a complete denial of both an incompatible idea and the conjoined affective state in which it announces itself (CPR 4-5). In Lacanian terms—as she quotes from Jean Laplanche's and J. B. Pontalis' presentation of Jacques Lacan's psychoanalysis,

what has been foreclosed from the Symbolic reappears in the Real. [CPR 5]

The native informant cannot be represented well, yet he is a mark of repulsion from the name of Man. As Spivak's deconstructive reading of Kant shows, although the native informant is foreclosed, the mark of this foreclosure can be read into Kant's text.

The question then becomes: can the native informant be represented, or given a voice, after all, in the realm that is sought to be opened by the movements of thought of Patočka and Derrida?

Without doubt, one needs to consider the opening gestures of Patočka and Derrida, yet this opening should not be filled too hastily with a representation of excluded non-European humans or with a voice given to the unheard.

Spivak warns about the dangers and pitfalls of such efforts. She often refers to the overdetermination and intersectionality of exclusions and differences. In becoming a human subject, several social and cultural features can be at play. Gender, ethnicity, poverty, age, sexual orientation, culture, education, social rank, and so forth can all be part of a series of exclusions or inclusions in several, and perhaps competing, ways simultaneously. In Spivak's own words:

Clearly, if you are poor, black and female, you get it in three ways.¹³

Yet, surprisingly, she does not mention the Indian caste system, which clearly is a source of profound and very problematic inequality.

Spivak not only criticizes Western or European ways of expulsion, but also non-European elites, who may have an eye for ethnicity but not always for gender. For instance, she mentions the colonial misrepresentation of inhabitants of India by the English oppressors but also criticizes the South Asian historians of the Subaltern Studies Group—whom she often supports and even joined—for their too masculine perspective on rural populations that are protesting against colonial oppression.

Spivak has become critical of Postcolonial studies, too, because they often try to represent those excluded by Eurocentric discourses and practices, yet do not always truly listen to their own voices. In historical research, it is not always possible to give a voice to those who were oppressed and whose voices were not heard, yet who left only a mark of foreclosure in police reports and colonial bureaucracy archives. A comparable criticism is raised by Spivak against well-intended initiatives to ban, for example, child labor in sweatshops in Bangladesh, without creating alternative incomes for the children who may lose their jobs, which, I surmise, does not mean that she would support child labor. In all these cases,

¹³ Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, "Can the Subaltern Speak?," in *Colonial Discourse and Post-Colonial Theory. A Reader*, eds. Patrick Williams and Laura Chrisman, New York, NY: Columbia University Press 1994, pp. 66-111, here p. 90.

people are being represented without being heard, without an ear being lent to their own voices, which renders the representation problematic after all.

In Spivak's deconstruction of philosophical and literary texts from the European canon and in her critique of postcolonial alternative representations, as well as in her critique of well-intended political initiatives trying to represent women or children in Africa or South Asia, in all these three sorts of critical interventions, one can recognize the figure of the native informant, who is foreclosed and hard to represent. Through this figure of the native informant, Spivak warns of the pitfalls of efforts to open up the idea of Europe for non-European voices and perspectives. She asks European and Western philosophers and authors to become more sensitive to their geopolitical positioning, including its many prejudices, and she pleads for giving people in subaltern situations as much space as possible for their own voices.

Conclusions

What is left of the idea of Europe in a Post-European era? To start with, all philosophers who are discussed

in this essay endorse the philosophical principle of rational argumentation guided by reason and responsibility. There exists a long-standing and strong European tradition in which this philosophical principle has been elaborated. The claim to the combination of universality and unicity, however, might be challenged when the European or Western philosophical tradition is compared with other traditions of thought on other continents. In addition, the European tradition is many-sided and open to robust self-criticism of several of its historical deeds. An important element that needs to be paid attention to by all philosophers in the Western tradition is to be aware of their geographical and geopolitical positioning, especially when they seek insights that claim universal validity. And, last but not least, the representation of specific groups of people, inside and outside of Europe, need to be guided by the effort to give these groups and individuals the space, time, and opportunity to raise their own voices. When all these conditions are met, it appears to be clear that the care of the soul, spiritual life, and rational responsibility may live on very well, without being in need of resorting to an idea of Europe.