
Origin of Europe and its Changes

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Summary: The studies aimed to figure out the basics parts of the mosaic which makes up the historical-spatial formation called Europe and, this way, partially answer the question of its identity. The central motive of the study winds around the determining spiritual line that accompanies the whole history of Europe. The question is whether in the future the European Union can lean on economism and its unified bureaucratic administration only, from which only the tradition of nationalistic Europe can profit.

Keywords: Ancient Egypt – Celts – Christianity in Ancient Rome – Christianity in the Middle Ages – Etrusks – Greek myths and philosophy – Judaism – Renaissance and Modern Times – Roots of Europa, Teutons

1. The myth and Greeks

Europa, the daughter of the Phoenician king Agenor and his wife Telephassa. She was kidnapped from the Phoenician coast (today's Lebanon) by a bull to Crete. In fact, the bull was a temporarily reincarnated Zeus, enchanted by her beauty. Ovidius in *Metamorphosis* noted her kidnapping as follows:

*The royal maid,
unwitting what she did, at length sat down
upon the bull's broad back. Then by degrees
the god moved from the land and from the shore,
and placed his feet, that seemed but shining hoofs,
in shallow water by the sandy merge;
and not a moment resting bore her thence,
across the surface of the Middle Sea,
while she affrighted gazed upon the shore—
so fast receding. And she held his horn
with her right hand, and, steadied by the left,
held on his ample back—and in the breeze*

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*her waving garments fluttered as they went.*¹

Back in Crete he resumed his human appearance to conceive three sons with Europa, i.e. Minos, Rhadamantys and Sarpedon. He never married Europa and came back to his jealous wife, Hera. Europa married Asterion who looked after her three sons. Sarpedon returned to Asia, whereas Minos and his brother Rhadamantys chose to rule and fight for justice. Having left this world, they continued as judges of the dead in the underworld.

Meanwhile, in Phoenicia Agenor, Europa's father, sent all his sons, i.e. the kidnapped princess's brothers: Cilix, Phineas, Thasus, Phoenix and Cadmus, towards the setting sun. They were not allowed to come back home without their sister and their pilgrimage to the West most probably continued in the darkness of the underworld. After the martyrdom of an unsuccessful quest, only Cadmus goes for advice into the Oracle of Delphi, where he is recommended to stop his quest for his disappeared sister. Then, Cadmus beats a dragon and founds an independent city of Thebes.

Petr Placák in his text "Views of Europe" recalls yet another alternative interpretation of the incriminated kidnapping of the Phoenician Princess named Europa: "*However, the historian Herodotus of Halicarnas (484–420) describes the story of the kidnapping of Europe as a real historical event. According to him, it was a retaliation for the previous kidnapping of royal daughter Io of Argo Phoenicians. Only then did the Greeks go to Tire to kidnap Europe in Crete.*

Whatever the case, the myth of Europe's kidnapping gives a literary account of the origins of Western civilization from the culture of the Orient – a place where the cultural influences of ancient Egypt clashed with the cultures of Western Asia. The Crete of the Phoenician Princess Europa, which mediated these influences of the West, became the foundation of Greek culture and education."²

2. Europe as the Occident has its roots in the Orient

Europe as a continent can be interpreted etymologically: Hebrew 'ereb' designates the west, Assyrian 'ereb shamshi' and Aramean 'erab' designate the sunset and the Greek 'erebos' designates evening, darkness or the underworld and the empire of the dead. Therefore, Europe is the West.³

¹ OVIDIUS. *Metamorphoses*. Brookes More. Boston. Cornhill Publishing Co. 1922. Cited by <http://data.perseus.org/citations/urn:cts:latinLit:phi0959.phi006.perseus-eng1:2.833/> Ov. Met. 2.833.

² PLACÁK, P. Views of Europe. In: www.Euroskop.cz

³ See HORYNA, B. *Idea Evropy*. Praha: Argo, 2001, pp.14–15.

Europe did not get its name from Europeans themselves, but its origin is oriental. The Orient, i.e. Asia, is the home of this designation. Because Europe is defined as the West, it cannot be the centre, but only a periphery. From the geographical point of view, it is a peninsula belonging to Asia.

The identity based on non-Asian character was attributed to Greeks by the Persians. They saw Europe as a very attractive area for their military-political expansions.⁴ For Persians, Greece was a part of Europe as a whole. We also read at Herodotus about King Xerxes, a Dareius's successor, says: "*Europe was an extremely beautiful land, one that bore all kinds of orchard trees, a land of highest excellence, worthy of no mortal master but the king.*"⁵

King Xerxes adds to this: *It is my intent to bridge the Hellespont and lead my army through Europe to Hellas, so I may punish the Athenians for what they have done to the Persians and to my father. (...) For these reasons I am resolved to send an army against them; and I reckon that we will find the following benefits among them: if we subdue those men, and their neighbors who dwell in the land of Pelops the Phrygian, we will make the borders of Persian territory and of the firmament of heaven be the same. No land that the sun beholds will border ours, but I will make all into one country, when I have passed over the whole of Europe.*⁶ However, Herodotus, who wrote about Greco-Persian wars, could not accept such an interpretation of the origin of Europe. In his presentation, the Greeks (Hellenikón) are the most original carriers of the European identity and, thus, of the history of Europe. For a long time, Greeks specified themselves based on their superiority: *We, cultural Hellenics, and other uncultured barbarians, including other European nations.*

3. Ancient Egypt and Judaism

The second significant cultural-historical line which follows the spiritual roots of Europe is the monotheistic, Egyptian-Jewish tradition. Worshipping a single God has its roots in the Egyptian Pharaoh of the New Empire (1552-1070 BC) Amenhotep IV. (1364-1347), who changes his name to Akhenaten (the Living Spirit of Aton) after his mystical experience in the Thebes palace in the sixth year of rule and founds his new royal seat called Akhetaton (today's Amarna).

Praying to one of the highest Egyptian gods, Amon-Ra, he repeated a mantra *khkau*. First, a red flame appeared on the right of the alter and then a purple

⁴ See HORYNA, B. *Idea Evropy*. Praha: Argo, 2001, pp.16–19.

⁵ HERODOTUS. *History*, with an English translation by A. D. Godley. Cambridge. Harvard University Press. 1920. Cited from: Hdt. 7.5.3 In: <https://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/>.

⁶ HERODOTUS. *History*. Cited from: Hdt. 7.8B.1. Hdt. 7.8C.1. Hdt. 7.8C.2.

flame appeared on the left. Later, an old priest explained the manifestation as he had also seen it. Apparently, they were materialized figures of archangels of Michael Order (Maha-Els) and Rafael Order (Ra-Pha- Els). The clerical aristocracy of Egypt then lost their jobs as Akhenaten cancelled the old gods. Let us now look at a short snippet of Akhenaten's Poem Of Praise To The Sun:

You arise beauteous in the horizon of the heavens.

Oh living Aten who creates life.

When you shine forth in the Eastern horizon you fill every land with your beauty.

You are so beautiful: you are great; gleaming and high over every land.

Your rays embrace the lands and all you have created;

You are Re and reach out to all your creations, and hold them for your beloved Son.

You are afar, but your rays touch the earth;

Men see you, but know not your ways.⁷

Akhenaten was allegedly poisoned, his capital destroyed and everything continued as before. However, some clerics did not forget monotheism. Neither did a floater and adopted Egyptian prince, later on, the high priest, Shakh kniu-Mu Moses, or the Old-Testament Moses.⁸

Moses changed Ankh (a key of life) into the Tree of Life (Etz Ha Chayim-described in kabbalah), where he substituted the names of old-Egyptian gods by Hebrew names. Thus, the Jewish Old Testament can be perceived as a part of the story, which had an important link onto the teaching of monotheistic pharaoh Akhenaten.

This begs following of this line in the New Testament and perceive Islam as one branch of this spiritual river. Judaism, Christianity and Islam are sister religions in this respect. Islam belongs in the family of monotheistic religions, which are related in their tradition to the name of old Jewish patriarch Abraham.

Abraham's eldest son Ishmael, whose mother was Hagar, a slave of Abraham's wife Sarah, was Isaac's brother. Today, Abraham is considered the father of Arabic nations. In the Koran, Muhammad, the founder of Islam in the 7th century, speaks highly of both Jesus and Moses. Not surprisingly, it was Archangel Gabriel who dictated the text. Apart others, he was the guardian angel of the Jews and the foreshadower of the birth of divine children to Virgin Marry, or to Zacharias, John the Baptist's mother's husband.

⁷ Available at: <http://www.palmyria.co.uk/superstition/akhenaten.htm>

⁸ Compare eg the egyptological study that tries to give a picture of Akhenaten without mysticizing characteristics: JACQ, Ch. *Néfertiti et Akhénoton. Le couple solaire*. Paris: Librairie Académique Perrin, 2005. Egyptologist Arthur Weigall in *The Life and the Times of Akhnaton, Pharaoh of Egypt*. (General Books LLC, 2010), however, is of the opinion more inclined to my idea.

4. Celts, Teutons and Etrusks

4.1. Celts

Between the 5th and 3rd centuries BC, Celtic settlements occupied a vast area, today referred to as the European continent. Let's imagine an area stretching from Scotland and Ireland, via France all the way to Spain and Portugal, and from the southern part of Germany via Switzerland, Austria, Bohemia, Moravia, Slovakia, Hungary, a part of Serbia, Romania and even Asia Minor and Galicia.

Safe for exceptions, in this period Europe was clearly Celtic and at least till the 5th century AD the dominant part preserved their traditions and the citizens lived the traditions actively. Therefore, it is the case of a thousand-year-lasting influence of Celtic culture and religion, which is a period corresponding to the length of the influence of Christianity in certain parts of Europe.

The religious identity of Europe could thus also be constituted with the contribution of reconstructed Celtic spirituality. However, we only have a mediated information about it from records of Romans and Christian monks from the 6th to 11th centuries and from descendants of old Druid and Bard families who recorded the spiritual heritage of their ancestors. It is possible to deduce from the records that the old Europe was religiously heterogeneous, non-nationalistic and decentralized, polymytic and polytheistic in today's sense. The three most known Celtic gods are:

- Taranis (thunder god), symbolized by the sun circle with lightening and eagle. He was the god of war, the dead and rebirth. As we learn from the Romans, enemies were given to him as burning sacrifices in wicker baskets.
- Teutates, the god of the underworld (chthonic), portrayed as a snake with a ram's head. He was associated with the protection of personal fate. Therefore, he was also called Adsmerius (supervising the direction of fate). Sacrifices were drowned in big vessels.
- The third god, most famous today, is Cernunnos (*Horned God*), with stag's horns and mistletoe. His influence is related to the harmonic circle of natural cycles and cycle of reincarnation. Cernunnos is usually associated with the Celtic Tree of Life. Sacrifices given to him were hung on trees.

Among female goddesses, the most important is Mother Goddess of Earth, Epona – horse goddess, and the goddess Brigid – Irish goddess of fire, poets and wisdom. However, frightening sacrificing rituals were not the only or major focus of the spiritual attention of Celtic nations. The most inspiring can be their natural connection of everyday life and astrological-natural cycles. This is documented by impressive celebrations of both solstices and the equinox.

Other important Celtic holidays were: Samhein (today's Halloween), Celtic New Year, 1 November – the beginning of winter. The pope Boniface IV. transformed it into the All Saints' Day. The night from 1 to 2 February was celebrated as Imbolc, (today's Candlemas) and the night from 30 April to 1 May called Beltine (the night of St Walburga). 1 August – Lughnasad, the celebration of harvest, sun and marriage, (today's harvest home).⁹

4.2. Teutons

Between the 3rd century BC and the 3rd century AD, the land of Teutons spread from Scandinavia, via central Europe to the Danube River and further to the Don River and the Black Sea.

In Germanic religion they typically refused to confine the divine, spiritual and omnipresent principle within the temple walls. The temple was the nature itself, forests, rivers, lakes, hills, whose natural vault was the sky. All gods together formed the family of gods, whose home was Asgard (Garden of Eden). Similarly to Celts, who worshipped a sacred oak, in Teutons the principal part of the image of the world is a still-green tree Yggdrasil, ash tree, as the axis of the world. In oriental religions of Hinduism and Buddhism, this axis is the mystical mountain Meru, materialized in the form of a mountain Kailash in western Tibet. The highest Germanic god was the one-eyed god, endowed by mystical sight and spiritual wisdom, called Wodan (Wuotan, Odin). One of his characteristics was tremendous warrior's rage. Another Germanic god was Thor (Donar), a strong giant with a red beard.

During Christianisation of the Saxons, the king Charlesmagne (772-804) wanted the christened people repeat the following text: "*Do you forsake the Devil? I do. I do forsake all diabolic works and words, Donar and Wotan and Saxnot and all those demons that are their companions.*"¹⁰

Unfortunately not only the symbolism, such as the Celtic Cross of the neo-Nazis, but also the chosen Celtic or Germanic myths of the neo-Nazi political parties are highlighted, for example, in the text of František Štěch about Workers' Party (Dělnická strana) in the Czech republic as a pseudo-religious phenomenon¹¹:

"A nationalist socialist with a hammer, whose spiritual model is the ancient Germanic god of thunder, a righteous warrior, and an evil protector – this should probably be an ideal member of the Workers' Party who proclaims

⁹ See WEISSMANN, K. *Druiden, Goden, weise Frauen: Zurück zu Europas alten Göttern*. Herder Spektrum, Freiburg: 1991.

¹⁰ BEMMANN, K. *Der Glaube der Ahnen. Die Religion der Deutschen bevor sie Christen wurden*. Published by Phaidon, Essen: (1990) p. 75.

¹¹ Cited by: www.cdk.cz/ Dělnická strana jako pseudonáboženský fenomén.

aboard a Viking warship. Such symbolism is not accidental, considering the emphasis the Workers' Party puts on the sharp polarity between good and evil. RI Page compares in his book on Nordic mythology Thor and Odin: Taking into account the treachery, the intricacy and complexity of Odin's character and the straightforwardness and simplicity of Thor's thinking, it means some relief. Thor is a warrior – the enemies of the gods are also his enemies: giants, monsters, and primordial powers. Spacilova and Wolf have similar characteristics:

“Tor is characterized by physical superiority, but not mental abilities, deceit and lie, hypocrisy and alien deceit.” Thus, not a cunning god, but a simple god-strong man, a good worker, a supporter of good and an irreconcilable warrior against evil, is the model of the Workers' Party. Moreover, the party also presents itself as a “handful of the righteous” fighting tirelessly against all the “evils” in the world (communism, Americanism, pornography, alcohol and drugs). Other pictures of ancient warriors, heroes and knights also appear in the Anthem of the Workers' Party, usually in a situation of “victory over an opponent.”¹²

4.3. Etrusks

Etrusks inhabited the Apennine Peninsula and the Corsica between the 8th century BC to the 1st century BC, when they were fully romanised. Due to the systematic decimation of their spiritual concept of the world by Christian apologists, we only have small fragments which, however, imply considerable knowledge of the fated interconnections of a man's individual life and predestined events of cosmic dimensions. This teaching made part of the Etruscan revealed religion.

A part of the teaching is a rule that each person and even each nation is set their length of life on Earth. This way, Etrusks, Proto-Europeans, were paradoxically reconciled with the end of their civilisation, which is rather oriental fatalism. Their timing was managed by the eternal and cyclic recurrence to the embryonic morning and further rebirth. Therefore, they were not aware of the historic time, which along with the spread of Christianity has become typical for Europe and its sense for the creation of history.

Thus, Etrusks did not direct their actions towards any shining target in the future. They focused on the power of the moment, which they understood through the mythically mediated law of the eternal recurrence, but not rational-philosophically recognized, as in the case of the Greek Anaximandre.

What is missing in the intuitively lived present is the principle of pragmatics, by which later historic, theological West sanctified various forms of religious

¹² SPÁČILOVÁ, L., WOLFOVÁ, M. *Germánská mytologie*. Votobia, Praha: 1996, s. 59–6.

and political oppression necessary for “better tomorrows“. This is what is alien to the old Etruscan Europe as well as to Celts and Teutons.

It can be said that they were typically apolitical and a political abuse of an individual was completely foreign to them. On the other hand, a man as a free and responsible individual is a product of the western Modern Times.:

*“The invoked element of the religious thought of this old Europe is its intrinsic and self-evident pluralism, polytheism and feminist view, an element of femininity in being portrayed not only by the female goddess as a fundamental aspect of life-giving and motherhood as the principle of life. An admired and often desired feature of old Europe is its apparent apoliticalism. In Europe, unlike all other Europe, politics is not a life coordinator worth mentioning.”*¹³

5. Christian Europe

5.1. Christianisation of Europe begins in the Ancient Rome

The dawn of Roman history is connected with the arrival of Italic-Celtic tribes (circa 1200 BC) and the cult of an amorphous, unimaginable and omnipresent divine principle called Numen. For many centuries, this tradition had been deeply tucked in Roman nation's subconscious due to the reception of Etruscan, Greek and oriental spirituality. According to certain authors (e.g. Pijoan – *History of Art I.*), this much later permitted the acceptance of a monotheistic religion.

There was the Crisis of the 3rd century AD in the Roman Empire, also called the Military Anarchy, when between 235 and 284 there were gradually 29 emperors on the throne. It was a period of immense social-economic pressures. This internal pressure tended to release through people's more intense interest in new and varied forms of spirituality. Popular became ancient Greek mysterious cults: Eleusin, Sabazius cult or the cult of the Goddess Kybele, whose temple in the Vatican was visited abundantly even in the next century. Mithra's cult, the god of the Sun, was also very widespread.

Next, there was the religion of Baal of Emesa which worshipped the Unde-feated Sun (Sol Invictus) and popular was also originally Egyptian cult of Goddess Isis, or Apollo, the God of the Sun, Roman in origin. At that time (up to the 3rd century AD), Rome offered a picture of religious miscellany and eccentricity.

Christianity was one of numerous professed Asian mysterious cults, perceived as a new Jewish sect by many.

¹³ HORYNA, B. *Idea Evropy*. Praha: Argo, 2001, p. 81.

The monumental turning point came with the conversion of Emperor Constantine. Since the 20s of the 4th century, Christianity begins to have a clear political primacy among the so far existing old cults. This is gradually used and, for sure, to monopolize Christianity and to systematically dispose of everything that was pagan.

St. Augustine Aurelius (354–430) was awarded the honorary title “Teacher of the West” at the end of this period of European development. His extensive work is an impressive twist of patristicism and thus creates one of the cornerstones of medieval Christian philosophy and theology. History, not just European ones, is a struggle for Augustine of light and darkness, good and evil, in the end, good and light prevail. In the file about *The City of God* gives the following breakdown of the history of the world.

In the paradise state of the creation of the world, man is part of the community of God as the perfect community of created beings with their creator. This is followed by the fall of man into sin, which gives rise to an earthly city (a state such as the Roman Empire). However, it is doomed for its imperfection, even corruption, to extinction (or, in any case, to transformation) and opens the space for the creation of the community of God. On Earth, this divine community (church) is also only an imperfect image of eternal communion with God’s being, however, as Augustine says, it is the true communion of Christ and there is no salvation outside of it. And for more than a thousand years of further development in Europe, it has proved quite fatal in both the faithful man versus the Church and the secular state versus the Church.¹⁴

¹⁴ “*This heavenly city, then, while it sojourns on earth, calls citizens out of all nations, and gathers together a society of pilgrims of all languages, not scrupling about diversities in the manners, laws, and institutions whereby earthly peace is secured and maintained, but recognizing that, however various these are, they all tend to one and the same end of earthly peace. It therefore is so far from rescinding and abolishing these diversities, that it even preserves and adopts them, so long only as no hindrance to the worship of the one supreme and true God is thus introduced. Even the heavenly city, therefore, while in its state of pilgrimage, avails itself of the peace of earth, and, so far as it can without injuring faith and godliness, desires and maintains a common agreement among men regarding the acquisition of the necessities of life, and makes this earthly peace bear upon the peace of heaven; for this alone can be truly called and esteemed the peace of the reasonable creatures, consisting as it does in the perfectly ordered and harmonious enjoyment of God and of one another in God. When we shall have reached that peace, this mortal life shall give place to one that is eternal, and our body shall be no more this animal body which by its corruption weighs down the soul, but a spiritual body feeling no want, and in all its members subjected to the will. In its pilgrim state the heavenly city possesses this peace by faith; and by this faith it lives righteously when it refers to the attainment of that peace every good action towards God and man; for the life of the city is a social life.*” – AUGUSTINUS Aurelius. *De Civitate dei*, XIX, 17. English translation: *The City of God (Book XIX) Chapter 17. – What Produces Peace, and What Discord, Between the Heavenly and Earthly Cities.*

5.2. Christianisation of Europe continues in the Middle Ages

During the Middle Ages the whole Europe is being christianised. As for Christian Roman Catholicism, certain authors consider its original borders as such places in Eastern Europe, where it is possible to find traces of Roman architecture. For example, an abbatial church in a Hungarian village Jak near Szombhately (close to today's border with Austria), originally a monumental Roman Benedictine basilica sacred to St George, St Stephen's Basilica in Budapest and Church of St Andrew (*Kościół świętego Andrzeja*) in Polish Cracow.

The European history from the 4th/5th to the 16th/ 17th century became the history of salvation. Eschatologically, i.e. the end of the world, the passing of time creates the idea of Christian Universalism which is a promise of time passing to the end of all times.

The christianised medieval Europe has universal ambitions and, no doubt, is spiritised by the idea of *translatio imperii*.¹⁵ This is supposed to be a translation of the Roman model of execution of power and control of space. Specifically, it was building on the tradition of Imperium Romanum by means of Otto's church politics of the 10th century and gradual constitution of the Holy Roman Empire.

However, the church had to provide content for their power, which could not be simply deduced from Paul's tradition: "*Greeks search for wisdom. But we preach Christ crucified.*" (1.K 1,22-23) Thus, they found a solution in the translation of ancient knowledge and culture, which is called *translatio studiorum* in a book called *Time, Work, and Culture in the Middle Ages* by J. Le Goff.¹⁶

This programmed transfer of Greek-Roman knowledge into a rather undeveloped, early medieval Europe takes place from the 9th to 12th century. Their share on the transfer also had:

- The roots of programmed acceptance and translation of ancient culture can be traced back to educational programs of St. Augustine, Martianus Capella (5th c.) and Boethiah (6th c.).
- The climax of Carolingian Renaissance is the year 778, when Charlemagne, "the first European" according to many, declares the famous *Capitulare* on organization of schools.
- The process of *translatio studiorum* started by the church takes an unexpected direction. Instead of mere content fulfillment of imperial administration of Christian Europe, whose catholicly unified picture is presented by Dante

Translated by Marcus Dods. From Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, First Series, Vol. 2. Edited by Philip Schaff (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1887). Revised and edited for New Advent by Kevin Knight. Available at: <http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/1201.htm>

¹⁵ HORYNA, B. *Idea Evropy*. Praha: Argo, 2001, p. 104–105.

¹⁶ LE GOFF, J. *Kultura středověké Evropy*. Praha: Odeon, 1991, p. 179.

- Alighieri and Thomas Aquinas in the 13th century, during the 14th and 15th centuries there is a real rebirth and renaissance of Europe towards Renaissance.
- Islamic and Jewish scholars who, apart others, were responsible for the mediation of Plato and Aristotle's work, Arabic or Persian alchemy, medicine and natural sciences, mainly arithmetic, algebra, astronomy and biology.

Philosophy in the islamic cultural environment of the european continent dates back to the 9th century and its beginnings are directly linked to the translation of the writings of Greek philosophy into islamic scholars. But the attitude of Arab and Persian philosophers to Islam was much looser than the comparable relationship of Christian thinkers to the Christian religion. This was due, among other things, to the fact that Islam does not know dogmatic theology. Arab and Persian thinkers were mostly doctors or natural scientists. In contemporary Islam, the influence of the tradition of medieval arabic philosophy is virtually negligible. Arab and Persian scholars have all the more influenced and inspired medieval Christian thought.¹⁷

Medieval Jewish philosophical ethics finds its origins in Islamic philosophical-spiritual stream in the 10th century and flourishing in the 11th and 12th centuries in Andalusia, in Cordoba, Granada, Malaga or Sevilla, but also in other parts of the Iberian Peninsula. It may be inspiring for us, in contemporary Europe, that Christians, Muslims and Jews were able to live peacefully next to each other. In particular, Avicbron¹⁸ (hebr. Shlomo ben Jehuda ibn Gvirol) and

¹⁷ HLAVINKA, P. *Dějiny filosofie jasně a stručně*. Triton: Praha, 2008, p. 109.

¹⁸ See HLAVINKA, P. *Dobro a ctnost pohledem etických a náboženských koncepcí*. Triton, Praha: 2014, pp. 107–108:

“Shlomo ben Yehuda ibn Gvirol (Avicbron) came from Andalusian Malaga, spent most of his short life in Zaragoza and stored his body in Valencia. Like Philon, in the Hellenistic era, he mediated the classical Greek philosophy, Avicbron showed medieval Oriental and European scholars again the pearls of Neo-Platonism. According to Avicbron, who presents his doctrine through conversation between the teacher and the disciple, God does not create the world by means of the logo, but by His Will. Everything created consists of a very fine spiritual substance and form.

The spiritual substance contains the germs of everything that can arise and therefore materialize to the coarser level. The basic idea of his main work, then, is the spiritual vision that the whole world is a manifestation of one single material called *materia universalis*, which is further away from its divine source, the source of life in its materialization, the less and less spiritual.

God did not create us according to Avicbron out of necessity, but by grace.

Even so, it was naturally incompatible with the act of creation, as understood by ordinary Judaism. There is not even a single mention of the Bible or rabbinic tradition in the whole book named *Source of Life*. Therefore, the doctrine of this Jewish philosopher, for eight centuries mistakenly considered a Christian or Muslim thinker, could easily have been spread among the tolerant scholars of these religions. Especially Johannes Duns Scotus and Giordano Bruno were enthusiastic about it.”

Maimonides, also known as Moshe ben Maimon, have also become respected authorities for Christian thinkers.

5.3. Europe in ideological changes from the Middle Ages and Renaissance into modern times with constant attention to gnosis

New Renaissance Europe, which is the start of Modern Times, is the second attempt to overcome gnosis.¹⁹ Gnosis is a philosophical-spiritual movement of an oriental origin which aimed for direct, mystic, i.e. institutionally unmediated knowledge of the divine.

However, such knowledge was undesirable as it did not require church authority and related control of the believers. The first attempt in the 2nd and 3rd century was not completely successful as the mystic tradition survived further in the medieval “underground“ in various forms of heresy of a Manicheism type, e.g. the movement of Bogomils or Cathars.

We can read about Cathars for example in the book *Montaillou, Occitan village in the years 1294-1324* of the French historian Emmanuel Le Roy Ladurie. With extraordinary authenticity, attention to detail and sometimes funny by bringing closer the lives of the inhabitants of the high mountain village of Cathar of the French Pyrenees on the basis of the Inquisition Protocols of the investigator Bishop Jacques Fournier, later Pope Benedict of AvignonXII:

“Catharism in Montaillou, this is also, and above all, a mythical interpretation past. In the evening village vigil, people tell her over and over all their variations. In the beginning there is a fall. The devil once managed to seduce part of the spirits that surrounded the good God in paradise.

*They were therefore expected to fall from heaven. Their evil seducer imprisoned them on the earth in their bodies of earth or of meat modeled from the matter of oblivion. From one bodily death to death following these fallen souls have since run like runaway from one tunic to second. Such a soul can gradually incarnate in the body of animals and humans. [...] Metempsychosis it is therefore the focal point of Cathar (in general) and of the Montreal myths (above all) and the equivalent of Catholic purgatory for the fallen and suffering souls for the whole their long stay on the ground.”*²⁰

In my opinion, given the absence a unified theological system that can only be retrospectively and of course that rather artificially reconstructed is a quirky

¹⁹ See BLUMENBERG, H. *Legitimacy of the Modern Age*. Frankfurt: 1966.

²⁰ LADURIE, E. Le R. *Montaillou, okcitánská vesnice v letech 1294–1324*. Argo, Praha: 2002, p. 510.

interpretation of Fournier's Inquisition Record this famous historian, one of the books he should take a pilgrim who discovers the magical atmosphere of Cathar castles in the Pyrenees. Then it will no longer be difficult to read along with Paul Coelho's novel *Brida* evoke at least an approximate idea of Cathar's ethical practice.

According to Brenon²¹, however, there are also faithful descriptions of the Cathar liturgy written in Occitan, by the representatives of this "alternative" Christianity. They mention, for example, the typical baptismal baptism of hands under the name *consolamentum* or collective penance *aparelhament*. Unload namely the Cathar doctrine on the basis of diverse inventories of their heresies it is common among religionists and historians, but it is methodologically a last resort. Moreover, this creates a peculiar type of anti-heretic discourse, as David Zbiral²² ingeniously points out The Latin text of the Fournier register on parchment is recorded as manuscript no Vatican Library.

I recall this despite the fact that I have resorted in part to this brief overview style. To my apology, my intention was not, of course from the antiquarian focus. Pursuit and systematic liquidation lived and sincere Christianity in the 12th to 13th centuries in Western Europe. On the contrary, it reminded me of the same persecution at that time still Christian religious sects among dozens of other sects by the state power of Rome in the 1st to 4th century 3rd century. After all, man's belonging to any Christian church, Catholic or "Cathar", has not yet guaranteed the true leadership of life in the footsteps Jesus' teachings. Its succession should have the most venerable form of the Cathari Perfect, as the most ascetic of them called themselves. Most others, with a few minor exceptions, she took a ride and was carried away by the predominant clergy or the intellectual currents of the time she happened to be, she was building her career and they found them somewhat unsuitable, even striking, that someone sees the same thing differently or that they even see something that a person does well embedded in the establishment can not see... How lucky in history, but of course there is an inner one for every human being a space of free spirit that is in principle beyond the reach of any ecclesiastical or political power.²³

The second attempt to suppress the seeds of gnosis, according to Blumenberg and Horyna, comes with the development of Modern European Rationalism based on a mathematically almighty sovereign subject.

²¹ In the cited book, the author refers to p.41 for the collective edition of the following ceremonial texts: NELLI, R. *Ecritures cathares. L'ememble des toxtes cathares traditions et commentés*. Paris: 1959. Updated and extended edition of Le Rocher, 1995.

²² ZBÍRAL, D. *Největší hereze*. Praha: 2007, pp. 72–77.

²³ See HLAVINKA, P. *Dobro a ctnost pohledem etických a náboženských koncepcí*. Triton, Praha: 2014, pp. 60–62.

*“The overcoming of the gnosis in early times of the Church was carried by trying to prevent human curiosity and the desire for knowledge to interfere with doctrinally secure sentences. Interestingly it is not that it sounded empty, but rather why the modern age, which is generally regarded as an epoch of awakened individual consciousness, free thought, scientific curiosity, political and religious emancipation, modern human philosophy and philosophy of history, has the same characteristics: overcoming the gnosis again, we do not know how well.”*²⁴

In the 15th century classical documents on gnosis, Corpus Hermeticum, were found, supporting treatises for alternative Christianity, whose roots get all the way to the knowledge of Ancient Egypt, and which were faithful guides for Renaissance occultists, magicians and alchemists. These protagonists of gnosis were either interdicted by inquisition, e.g. Giordano Bruno, or swept away by the knowledge of scientists of Cartesian-Hume type.

Since then, of a value is what is institutionally approved, can be weighed, measured or calculated, and thus sold. The fresh spirit of Renaissance emphasizing the rebirth of an individual mind and unrestricted research gradually finishes the idea of Europe enclosed in a religiously doctrinal grip. However, at the same time, the Modern Times, emphasizing erudition, carry the seed of vague and manipulative learning. The Modern European erudition is based on the idea of proxy to lead the whole world towards progress. It is Faustian Europe which pleasantly succumbs to the Mephisto's temptation, Europe practically making use of the change of technical knowledge into the technological control of the rest of the world.²⁵

The Modern Europe gradually runs into dreamy revolutionary illusionism and violent utopian visions that were supposed to replace the medieval respect of the forthcoming salvation and the end of the world. This devotional respect dictated by the church's power is replaced by the respect of exact science and uncontrollability of progress of enlightened intellect.

Even in the 20th century Europe again searches for its identity, e.g. asks the question what in reality the spiritual foundations of the European Union are. All this happens long after Europe had lost its power status in the New World

²⁴ HORYNA, B. *Idea Evropy*. Praha: Argo, 2001, p. 109.

²⁵ See HORYNA, B. *Idea Evropy*. Praha: Argo, 2001, p. 120–21: “Overseas discoveries and a new image of the world brought a special effect. The European seafarer, who set out to the furthest corners of the Earth, quickly became convinced that he was sailing upstream and returning to the past. The people he met were living witnesses to him for the beginnings of human civilization, the most advanced stage of which he himself represented: they were witnesses of something long gone, past, backward, childish. (...) The idea of inferiority, which expresses the value of a person judged by his or her ethnic and racial belonging, has thus entered the overall picture of Europeanism destined to dominate others. The understanding of otherness as inferiority has grown into a modern form of the idea of the Empire, called imperialism.”

(the USA), as the direct product of Modern Age combination of the ideas of the Enlightenment and Protestant ethics.

And they have also lost control of the vast areas of the Orient, which are now the most progressive elements of the world economy in addition to the United States: the countries of Southeast Asia, China and Japan.

An the final question may be: what minimal contours would a new European ideology or a transformed religion have to have in order not to turn Europe into a provincial colony of these countries in the coming century?

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