ROBERTO ESPOSITO

A PHILOSOPHY FOR EUROPE

Translated by
Zakiya Hanafi

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From the Outside

Roberto Esposito

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Introduction

1

If it is true, as Hegel wrote, that the need for philosophy arises when "the power of unification disappears from human life and oppositions lose their living relation and interaction,"[1] then nothing is more relevant than a philosophy for Europe. What goes by the name of "Union" has never faced a greater risk of coming apart, unless the oppositions that divide it manage to stick together in a meaningful relationship. Rather than relating to each other through their differences, its parts seem to be dispersed in an unrelated multiplicity that lacks even the constitutive force of conflict. The separation affects not just the member countries but something more profound, which pertains to their very incentive for staying together – as if the reality of Europe had become drastically estranged from its purpose, flattening into the bare fact of its geography. In the new order that the world is assuming, when everything calls for a strong European polarity, Europe appears devoid not only of a recognizable body but even of a soul. For this reason it might well be said that, even more than being separated internally, Europe is separated from itself – from what it should mean. The interests of its members, not to mention the values they bear, find no place of composition and not even a clear front over which to divide. They diverge in a lazy manner, which alternates between disorder and indifference. None of the big questions that touch its peoples to the core – from the still festering wound of the economic recession to the growing pressure of migratory flows

and to the unprecedented threat of terrorism – produces a shared response, while politics itself is rejected by larger and larger segments of the citizenry. And all this is happening right at a time when only a high-profile political vision – what Nietzsche called "grand politics" – could adequately respond to the economic, social, and military challenges that press upon us. While economic unification appears compromised to its roots by an untenable disparity in resources between member countries, the absence of political integration leaves Europe defenseless from the deadly attacks of its enemies.

This stalemate is precisely what opens up a new space for philosophical reflection – not because the latter has solutions at hand for highly complex problems but because, in times of drastic changes on the world scene, philosophy may be in a better position than other types of discourse to recognize beforehand the direction the events are taking. In certain cases, situated anywhere but in the twilight of historical epochs, philosophy can illuminate the contours of an era even before its outlines have settled into a solid figure. Of course, the individual stages of a crisis can be discerned through the social, economic, and political sciences. But when every point of reference is in a process of change such as the one we experience today, only philosophy is capable of grasping them together as a whole. When every avenue seems blocked, philosophy has a creative power that's often missing from other disciplines, which may be more oriented to the past, like history, or have less depth, like political science. Thus, when thinking about Europe in economic terms is no longer sufficient and imagining a political order for it seems absurd, it may well be that the only avenue still open is the one excavated by thought.

No wonder, then, that the most fitting analytical toolkit for interpreting the European situation comes precisely from the creative work spaces opened up by philosophical research. I am referring to the biopolitical paradigm developed over the past 20 years in France and Italy and spreading from there throughout the world, among the guardians of the old philosophical–political lexicon and their skepticism. Because, without sufficient warning, what was experienced for a long time as a simple economic crisis – one that soon implicated the European Union's political institutions – turned out to be a much more dramatic, biopolitical crisis. The growing number of bodies, alive or dead, carried for some time now by the Mediterranean current toward the southern coasts of Europe and the simultaneous attack launched by Islamic fundamentalism express the magnitude and urgency of this turning point. The earlier financial earthquake that shook the European states drove entire sectors of the population

to the threshold of pure survival, anticipating the direction of events to come. At the same time, the European Union's inability to absorb into its organs the portion of sovereignty lost by individual countries has made it clear that this concept fails to represent what happens in a regime that by now seems to have preserved nothing from the "sovereign" but debt.

But the magnitude of the migratory flow that has collided with Europe, on the one hand, the war that has broken out in its streets, on the other, signal a qualitative leap that was unimaginable only a few years ago. Obviously, in order to be understood, these unprecedented events need to be thought about together – which is to say, they need to be articulated, but also kept clearly distinct. All at once, they lay bare something we have difficulty perceiving because it is foreign to what we have taken for granted since the mid-twentieth century: the relative homogeneity of the European population and the absence of war inside its borders. Suddenly it is as if a curtain had been torn down, revealing a landscape that Europe's inhabitants were slow to perceive; now it is laid bare in all its complexity before their astonished eyes. What has been defined euphemistically as a "humanitarian emergency" presents the characteristics of a structural earthquake destined to alter the features of the Union through the composition of its very peoples. Perhaps for the first time since World War II, the drastic options available to European governments for dealing with mass immigration have placed politics in direct contact with the biological life of millions of human beings in flight from their homelands, devastated by war and hunger. Without exaggerating the importance of the ultimate question regarding their fate, they can be kept alive or left to die. The meaning of what we call Europe also depends to some extent on how it responds to this radical alternative. The terrorist attacks open up an even more lacerating wound, which puts the very future of Europe at stake, along with the foundations of our civilization. Death has erupted at the center of the political scene, with no more mediations, in the form of explosions that have bloodied the streets of Europe. In the direct entanglement between politics and biological life, the fate of the European continent is being played out, no differently from that of the rest of the world, on the precarious borderline that separates an affirmative biopolitics from a thanatopolitical* crisis of unknown proportions. The fact that these

* Translator's note: A "thanatopolitics" would be a "politics of death" (ancient Greek *thanatos*), in opposition with the "politics of life" (*bios*) that is biopolitics.

are the pivotal categories at the heart of philosophical discussion worldwide is further confirmation of what has been said. Philosophy and crisis illuminate each other, in a grip that makes one the filter for recognizing the other.

2

It is certainly no coincidence that the only approach capable of grasping the "metaphysical" density of the other major European crisis in the 1920s was also that of philosophy. In terms of radicalness and force of insight, Husserl's and Heidegger's analyses of it (to mention only the most famous names) have no parallels in almost any other type of approach, whether sociological, economic, or political in nature. This does not mean that contemporary philosophical inquiry can retrace their movements or position itself in continuity with them. On the contrary, this book insists on a clear-cut discontinuity that distances European thought of today, but earlier postwar thought as well, from an intellectual affair whose presuppositions and outcomes are no longer admissible. In fact one might even say that only when the philosophy of the European crisis, with all its posthumous addenda, finally took leave did a new era of thought open up that was capable of connecting with the questions posed to Europe by the globalized world. What removes us from that philosophy even more than its content, which dried up some time ago, is the space that circumscribed it – one entirely confined to the European region.

This book breaks with this inward-looking attitude right from its subtitle, by connecting Europe's philosophy to its "outside." The relation of thought to the outside is both the object of this study and the theoretical framework within which it is inscribed. Moreover, thought always comes from the outside when the object is to question a vision of things that is no longer representative of current events. The argument put forward in these pages is that an absence of this awareness is what froze European philosophy of the early twentieth century into a deadlocked orbit. Its self-focus prevented it from understanding what was happening outside itself, reversing the relations of cause and effect along with it. What spilled off onto philosophy from the historical and political terrain – the irreversible end of Europe's centrality – was instead understood as the outcome of a century-old philosophical crisis. This point of view took its most symptomatic expression in Husserl's conferences on the European crisis, but it reverberated, in varying tones, in all the

great philosophy of the period. Given the consubstantiality between Europe and philosophy, which philosophers took for granted, the crisis of philosophy automatically entailed the crisis of Europe, so that only by healing one could the other be saved. If there is a point of convergence between such markedly diverse perspectives as those of Heidegger, Husserl, Ortega, Benda, and Valéry, it is precisely this presupposition: since the crisis shaking up Europe was essentially a metaphysical one, most aptly referred to as nihilism, the only way to confront it lay within the philosophy that engendered it. For that philosophy, this was a matter of recovering the roots it had lost the moment it slipped outside itself. Only by recovering the original relationship with its Greek origins, by getting back inside itself, would the European spirit be able to defend itself from the disintegrative forces that come from the outside and ultimately identify themselves with the outside.

The fact that European philosophy was revived precisely by escaping from this *dispositif* when World War II broke out is paradoxical only in appearance. Before arriving at this point, however, it must be noted that the philosophy of crisis we are talking about did not embrace European thought as a whole. A different philosophical genealogy wound its way alongside it and in opposition to it: although lying within its confines, this other current looked at Europe from outside, challenging its prevailing self-representation at the roots. As the names of Hölderlin, Nietzsche, and Patočka, its leading voices, attest, this genealogy ran parallel to the Eurocentric current of Hegel, Husserl, and Heidegger without ever converging into it. It is distinguished by a tension toward the outside that shatters the *dispositif* of the crisis down to its presuppositions – not because it denies the existence of a crisis but because it views the crisis as originary rather than as occurring at a particular time. As Holderlin asserts, the conflict between opposites is constitutive of every identity – never truly such, evidently, because identity is always carved out of its own alterity. The radical idea that he expresses in a letter to his friend Bohlendorff is that the Greeks are inimitable not simply because they are altogether heterogeneous to us, but because, like us, they did not have an autochthonous nucleus around which to grow. In addition to being affected from the outset by its relationship with the other cultures that converged into it, the Greek spirit is traversed by the contrast between the opposing principles that received the names "Apollonian" and "Dionysian."

For Nietzsche, too, if there is something that Europe bears inside itself from its origins, it is precisely the conflicts on religious, political,

and social grounds that have incessantly torn it apart. What for Holderlin was a gaping rift between modernity and classicism in Nietzsche became an abyss into which all European values precipitated. The genealogical method that he put into practice, premised on the irretrievability of an authentic origin, shattered in anticipation of the teleological schema later used by the philosophers of crisis. But at the same time it offered a prefiguration of what could have become the "western peninsula of Asia" if, instead of focusing on self-celebration, it had measured itself against a world that was no longer governable according to its own interests. Only by looking at themselves from the outside could the "good Europeans" go beyond their own stereotypes, leaving behind the narrow-minded nationalism that had led them to the brink of the precipice.

What Jan Patočka added to this prognosis from his decentered position was the awareness that only when the long series of wars, violence, and exclusions with which Europe had identified itself had come to a close could another Europe rise out of it, which he called "post-Europe." In a philosophical inquiry lasting more than thirty years, as a witness to and victim of both totalitarianisms, he located the genesis of the crisis of Europe in the still yawning hiatus between its universalist pretenses and its nationalist retreats. This does not mean that one should be resigned to the crisis in the helpless fashion that Nietzsche had defined as "passive nihilism." But there is no way out of it unless two conditions are met: the establishment of an absolute caesura vis-à-vis that exhausted history; and a thorough interpretation of its innermost recesses. Only the memory of that past, with the responsibility it entails for the future, will be able to constitute the prerequisite for a post-European humanity capable of recapturing the universal values that Europe, blinded by the light of its reason, has long betrayed.

3

A striking similarity exists between these ideas and the more radical ones expressed in *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, written by Adorno and Horkheimer in their American sanctuary. This is further confirmation of the fact that, in order to speak once again to the world, European philosophy had to find a way outside the theoretical and geographic circle inside of which it had been locked up by the crisis. The planetary success of the Frankfurt thinkers gives a good idea of this phenomenon. There is something in this episode that goes well beyond

any specific life histories and beyond any tragic historical event, to touch the deep fabric of the philosophical work. As I have said, although tied to its homeland, philosophical thought needs equally to be deterritorialized in order to acquire momentum and breadth: the outside is always what illuminates the inside, and never vice versa. Just as the United States was deciphered most effectively by European intellectuals – from Tocqueville to Arendt, by way of Weber and Gramsci – the catastrophe of Europe was more ably reconstructed in all its twists and turns from the other side of the Atlantic.

But the forced dislocation of Adorno, Horkheimer, and Marcuse went far beyond territorial displacement. It radically transformed the content itself of continental philosophy. I am referring not only to the prominence that economics, politics, psychoanalysis, and art acquired in the research of the Institute [of Social Research], which was appropriately defined as "social," but also to the disruptive effect that such material, once released, had on the practice of philosophy itself, now removed from its self-referential tendency and literally penetrated by its "outside." For these thinkers, this does not in any way mean giving up on theoretical specificity, which Adorno in particular developed to the limit of its semantic complexity. But it does mean taking the question of the relation between concept and time well beyond Hegelian dialectics, yet without lapsing into Marxist scholasticism. The founding aporia – which risks making some of the pages of Adorno's *Dialettica negativa* literally incomprehensible – is wanting to express philosophically what lies outside philosophy. How can a work of philosophy communicate what it does not contain, since this is external to it? The question of this inherence of the outside in a lexicon that tends to expel it is raised by Adorno with a radicalism rarely to be found in twentieth-century thought.

This is the source of the inalienably negative characterization of this thought, situated as it is on the boundary that connects it to the real while simultaneously disconnecting it from the real. For philosophy to be able to break down its apparently separate language, it must introduce the real inside itself, thus including that which lies outside its confines. But, to be able to critique a reality that is coextensive with the domain, it must in its turn situate itself outside that reality, thus transcending it. For this reason, the tip of critical theory lies in the antonomic relationship between realism and transcendence. Philosophy must take its distance from the same real it carries within, opening up a breach in the totality of everything that exists. But, to arrive at this effect at the limit of the unsayable, it must continue to speak in negative terms, without ever flipping them into the positive

– as Hegel did in the end, when he used negation for reconciliation. Hegel's is also a thought of the outside, but expressed in a logical form that internalizes it, thereby dissolving it as such. For the negative to remain faithful to itself, the contradiction that conveys it must contradict itself as well. This only becomes possible by giving the concept an aconceptual content, by introducing the nonidentical into its identity. From this point of view, Adorno's project is, knowingly, pledged to failure. Philosophy must attempt to get outside itself while using the same conceptual language that blocks all the exits. The only way to do so is by negating itself. Still, this extreme negation alone provides a glimmer of the remote possibility that the world is worthy of what it could become, without ever having been so.

4

The second passageway to the outside, once again in the United States, is the one carved out by French theory. Unlike the one in German philosophy, this was a spontaneous shift, not determined by traumatic events, and hence devoid of tragic overtones. It involved a series of authors – Derrida, Foucault, Deleuze, Lyotard, Baudrillard, to name the most important exponents – who were already well known in their country and therefore invited to teach in American universities. In this case, too, a movement of deterritorialization produced an extraordinary dissemination of European thought throughout the world. At stake was not just a transfer across the shores of the Atlantic, expanded to the global space: the spectacular success of the French authors, who became genuine stars on American campuses, also brought about a change in cultural hegemony even in Europe, which until then had been dominated by German thinkers. The growing interest in the postmodern theorized by Lyotard and in the deconstruction practiced by Derrida was accompanied by a corresponding and rapid decline in the fortunes of Marcuse and Adorno. This explains in part the attack that Habermas launched against the Parisian thinkers in his book *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity*, provoking Lyotard's offended reply. At the heart of the skirmish lay a different assessment of the modern – for the French, modernity was exhausted; for the Germans, it remained unfinished – but also a markedly different idea about the role of philosophy, partly involving its relation to the political. The different meaning given by the Germans and the French to the term "theory" is enough to explain the divergence at play. In the "critical theory" practiced by

the Frankfurt philosophers, the adjective largely predominated over the noun, charging it with philosophical–political tones; in French theory, "theory" loses any critical tone to mean a practice of writing free from any normative aims. In the progressive literarization of philosophy, carried out especially by American deconstructionism, theory ended up losing any friction with the real, concentrating primarily on itself. The Frankfurt School's emphasis on the negative gave way to an impolitical tendency of neutralizing the conflict between opposing terms by means of a third pole that corresponded to neither an affirmation nor a negation.

This impolitical pursuit of French theory should not make us lose sight, however, of the internal fracture that divided it from the beginning into two inassimilable currents, one influenced by Heidegger and the other by Nietzsche. Lyotard and Derrida fall under the first, although in different ways, while Foucault and Deleuze can be placed under the second. The reason why I insist on this fault line in the chapter on French theory, starting from the acerbic polemic between Derrida and Foucault on the latter's *History of Madness*, is that it is founded on the relation between philosophy and its outside, which is central to this book. In reality, both authors ask this question but offer profoundly different answers to it. For Derrida, with respect to the inner flux that connects *logos* and *phonē*, the outside is writing. Writing is the external, reverse side of a voice that always rises up from inside. But writing is the outside of an inside, of course – in the sense that it constitutes the differential margin of the inside that articulates it to the outside, rather than the opposite.

The response to this relative outside is Foucault's absolute outside. Reading his work and retracing the uneven lines of his biography, one gets the impression that he gradually expands the space of the outside, shifting its final border further and further away. At an early stage, unlike for Derrida, madness is encamped outside reason, in a mode that evades his grasp. Next comes the statement – which, in the order of discourse, appears to be what decenters the subject, pushing it into its exteriority rather than being produced by the subject. Finally, with the passage from the archaeology of knowledge to the genealogy of power, the outside becomes coextensive with the forces that move bodies in the continuous dynamic linking power and resistance. The subject and the object of both is biological life – understood by Deleuze, too, as an impersonal and singular power that never allows itself to be taken hold of because it is what takes hold of us, in a form that lies outside our reach. The political – which is to say, the incessant struggle between the forces that

seek to subjugate biological life and those that seek to liberate it – is always implicated in biological life. The constitution of subjectivity is the alternating outcome of this dialectic in which life and politics are tied together in an inextricable knot.

5

What makes its entrance in this way within the horizon of European philosophy is the notion of biopolitics from which I began. We owe its development, which reworks and elaborates upon Foucault's insights in an original way, to the formation of a set of textual practices that can be subsumed under the name of "Italian thought." The substitution of the terms "philosophy" and "theory" with "thought" in this expression, only recently coined, marks a significant difference from the other two philosophical genealogies I am examining. Over the past twenty years Italian thought has not attained the prominence and internal divisions of German philosophy and French theory but has developed in a manner quite different from theirs. Considering that even its identification as a trend has come primarily from outside Italy, especially from America, it is difficult to impose a uniform profile on the thinkers considered to be its exponents. Besides, more than its difference from the other traditions of thought, its dominant trait appears to be a pronounced tendency toward contamination – as the adoption itself of the biopolitical paradigm attests. And yet its formative mode reveals a specificity of Italian thought attributable not only to culture but also to the history that precedes this thought and characterizes it in a peculiar way.

Once again, I am talking about the relation between thought and what presses against its outer confines until it makes its way inside and changes thought to its roots. In German philosophy this outside corresponds to the social; in French deconstruction it refers to writing; in Italy it is represented by "the political," also understood as what goes beyond the institution of the state. Without returning to the Machiavellian sources of Italian philosophy, which are nevertheless active in its contemporary avatars, we must locate the beginning of what would subsequently become Italian thought in the 1960s, specifically in the set of divergent behaviors known by the name of "workerism" [*operaismo*]. This sets up a sort of temporal paradox that sees the origin of a thought being acknowledged several decades after that thought was established. This chronological gap between the actual beginning of a canon and its formation places Italian

thought in an excentric position vis-à-vis German philosophy and French theory. Arising before French theory, it consolidated after the latter's driving force had lost impetus; as a result, it came out on the one hand less complete than it is and, on the other, rooted in a deeper layer of thought, which can be traced back to the early modern period. The alternative between a synchronic reading, which would confine Italian thought to the conflictual dynamics of the 1960s, and a diachronic one, which would connect it to a genealogy over a longer period, is of smaller importance, because in reality Italian thought is situated precisely at the point of juncture and tension between these two vectors. Not unexpectedly, then, one of its most distinctive traits is a transversal gaze that tends to intersect the archaic and the actual. If we consider some of the densest concepts developed in Italy – *imperium*, **sacertas*, *immunitas* – their significance as a whole lies in a theoretical *dispositif* that puts contemporaneity to the test of origins and seeks origins at the heart of the contemporary.

The predominant traits of Italian thought derive from an all-embracing transition from the linguistic turn – to which German hermeneutics and French deconstruction are still tied – to a biological turn, only partially anticipated by Foucault and Deleuze. What was missing from the perspectives of these two thinkers, even within the theoretical framework of biopolitics, was a more effective linkage between life and politics. The recourse to difference, which French thought opposed to the identity of the metaphysical tradition, is not enough to accomplish this. In order for this difference to shake off its impolitical tone, escaping from the Germans' negative and the French's neuter, it needs to be joined at the two opposite sides of the same line. This is exactly what workerism calls for, breaking the unitary horizon inside of which Italian Marxism located capital and the working class, in order to turn them into radically alternative points of view. Italian thought makes political conflict central to its perspective also through its engagement with Carl Schmitt. On these lines, it can be said that the subjectivity referred to by Italian political philosophy has the characteristics of twoness rather than those of oneness or multiplicity. But what characterizes it as a whole with respect to the negative register of the Germans and the neutralizing one of the French is an affirmative mode that makes it a "thought in action" – active and not reactive, to use Nietzsche's terminology. How an affirmative mode of this sort can be developed is still a matter of future development of what is, for now, just a trend. One possibility – certainly an arduous one – is an attempt to break free from the political–theological paradigm in which the entire western

tradition remains caught. While in this tradition every concept tends to be viewed through the negation of its opposite instead of in itself, Italian thought attempts to create an immediate relationship with what it affirms – starting from the biological life placed at the problematic crossroads of its diverging paths.

6

We had to wait until the events of 1989 for a shared thought on Europe to begin. Although the unity project goes back to the early post-World War II years, and did not fade out even during the period of the Cold War, only the collapse of the Soviet regime renewed its relevance. As long as the continent was cut across by the Iron Curtain, European philosophies were possible, but not a philosophy *of* Europe in the subjective and objective sense.* The breach opened by the Berlin Wall simultaneously broke down the barriers of reality and thought, inaugurating an era no longer indebted to the past but reaching out freely toward the future. The continuous shift forward of the eastern border seemed to push Europe beyond its ancient limits, so it could incorporate what for 50 years had become its absolute outside. It was as if the deterritorialization dynamics, which until then had mobilized single lines of thought, now extended to Europe in its entirety, demanding engagement from all its philosophy. And yet not even the ensuing convergence managed to homogenize the diverse modes of reasoning and philosophical styles. The fact that the difference between Europe's conceptual languages stands at the heart of the most insightful studies on the meaning of Europe means that a multiplicity of perspectives is a constitutive feature of European unity. A philosophy of Europe, or *for* Europe, as the title of this book reads, can only arise from the intersection between its traditions of thought.

The German debate on the possibility of a European constitution was spearheaded by Jürgen Habermas. His project of "constitutional patriotism" has the merit of having disconnected the modern link between national membership and republican citizenship in the direction of what he himself defined as "postnational constellation." The philosophical referent for this transition is a Kantian brand of Enlightenment: only a cosmopolitan horizon can give meaning to European unity in the context of globalization. Habermas has firmly

* Translator's note: a philosophy made by Europe (i.e. of which Europe is the subject) and a philosophy about Europe (i.e. of which Europe is the object).

maintained this viewpoint, even in the face of forceful objections directed at him by Dieter Grimm and Ernst-Wolfgang Böckenförde regarding the absence of a European people capable of lending democratic legitimacy and substance to the Union. For him, the formation of a European population is the outcome and not the prerequisite of a process of constitutionalization generated by the progressive expansion of an enlightened public sphere. The fact that it presupposes precisely the engaged and responsible civil society that is currently missing in Europe brings to light the reflexive circularity of Habermas's discourse, on the basis of which European citizens have to imagine a future that is made possible specifically through the force of their imagination. The feeling is that every step of this project was tied to the presence of presuppositions themselves dependent on conditions that were in reality absent. What ultimately appears to orient it is the idea that all conflicts, of interest and of values, are resolvable by means of rational argumentation, because they arise out of misunderstandings of a discursive nature. Nothing has been more roundly disproved than this hypothesis. Under the pressure of a migratory flux of such large dimensions and challenged by terrorist attacks, it is becoming harder and harder to imagine that the new Europe can be constructed on the basis of agreements of convenience and legal protocols.

What we might define as the "Derrida model" entails no smaller problems than the "Habermas model." In it, Europe's future is sought outside its borders – in the continuous change to which its identity is exposed. The fate of the continent is consigned by its French interpreters to uninterrupted change in order to contradict the universalist proposals of its philosophies and oppose the national egotism that has characterized these proposals. The Europe to come is one and the same as Europeanization – not in Husserl's sense of focusing on the original nucleus, but in that of a definitive decentering. This approach, whose extreme theoretical radicalness is laudable, proves nevertheless to be quite fragile on the political plane. The contradiction of conceiving of European identity by dissolving its differentiating features – under circumstances in which its very survival is being threatened – is obvious. The position taken by Étienne Balibar in a series of political studies and conference papers that put him in the avant-garde of thought on Europe has been problematic from early on. He was one of the first to grasp the biopolitical role created by borders for the subjects whom they include or exclude. But this does not mean that borders should be abolished – with the counterproductive outcome of encouraging undifferentiated homogenization.

Rather they must be democratized, in other words opened to those who are forced to cross them in order to escape unlivable conditions. This means responding to the biopolitical processes underway without succumbing to the thanatopolitical drifts that evading them can cause. Only an awareness of the irreversibility of the change that is at work and of the risks and resources it involves can make the European continent an advanced point of democracy in the world.

An even clearer demand of the need to define a European political space comes from Italian philosophical discussion. Strongly affected by the trauma of the September 11 massacre, the Italian dialogue embarked on a more realistic relationship with the profound changes in progress. It started with the historical–conceptual comparison of Europe with the grand political institutions that have characterized its deep genealogy. Scarcely compatible with the imperial paradigm, no matter how this is understood, the space of the union appears to be irreducible to a sovereign regime. The problem, framed from various perspectives, is that the category of sovereignty itself has proven to be on the whole inadequate for representing the biopolitical dynamics that face us. None of the emergencies that mobilize the current European scene – from transnational terrorism to mass migration, environmental risks, and macroeconomic options – can be resolved on a national level in the absence of shared political decisions. The only arrangement capable of tackling questions like these without evading the challenges of globalization but also without surrendering to its homogenizing tendencies is the multipolar co-presence of large regional spaces. Within the globalized world, Europe can be led back into the role of a "civil power" only on condition that this adjective receives the semantic weight it had in a tradition of thought going back to Machiavelli and Vico. In this tradition, terms like "civil" [*civile*] and "civilizing process" [*incivilimento*] never pretended, unrealistically, to deny force; rather they proposed to restrain it within the limits of political conflict. While there is no question that the terrorist challenge must unite European countries, it should not suffocate the dialectic set in motion internally across different visions of the integration. By *civilità* both Machiavelli and Vico meant the necessary predominance of the interests of the *popolo* [people] over those of the dominant social strata. Without calling into question the common ground of its founding values, the new Europe can only emerge from the confrontation, even the clash, between different political parties. This takes us back to the inherent need for the "oppositions" called for by Hegel. It is a matter of giving them back "their living relation and interaction." As Machiavelli asserted, a new order can arise only

out of political conflict between different social parts. The unresolved question of a currently absent European people also relates to this tension. It is true that legitimate institutions will never see the light without political conflict. Europe will certainly not be the product of treaties drawn up around the table or by the simple granting of sovereignty by its member states; it can issue only from the will and common needs of a citizenry expanded to all its inhabitants, of today and tomorrow. This cannot be given once and for all – as the single expression of a single European people. European citizenry can only be the outcome, changing from time to time, of a confrontation between the two peoples [*popoli*], unequal in their resources and in their opportunities for survival, that transversally cut across all the countries of the Union, mixing with the peoples that arrive from its outside. If the first people, with its interests and lifestyles, is already represented by the top levels of global finance, the other people, whose suffering continues to grow, has not yet found political representation worthy of this name. Only when this happens, when a true alliance is formed between the popular strata that compose the great majority of the European peoples, will Europe be able to recapture the deep motivation for its union.

Part I

The Crisis *Dispositif*

1

The Metaphysics of Crisis

At the end of World War I, the perception of a serious crisis permeated the entire European philosophical scene and unified it. Despite the diversity of perspectives and tones, authors such as Spengler and Husserl, Ortega and Valéry, Heidegger and Wittgenstein were united in believing that the tie that until then had inextricably bound together Europe and philosophy was now broken. The two no longer reflected each other, as they had for two thousand years. Europe ceased to be the land of philosophy and philosophy was no longer the constitutive language of Europe. Of course, this was not the first time when Europe experienced a critical situation, when its certainties vacillated until crumbling, or when it faced the need for a radical change. As Paul Hazard observed, Europe has always been in crisis one way or another – its particular character is actually the result of a continuous series of crises, coming back to back on each other and, time after time, transforming what had appeared to be an established framework.[1] But what changed so thoroughly during the second and third decades of the last century (1919 and 1939 can serve as the opening and closing dates for this phase) was the semantics of the concept. At a certain point, the crisis was no longer viewed as an interruption, as a temporary halt through which the process of European civilization would move in order to arrive at a superior phase of development. Instead, it was seen as the final threshold beyond which lay the risk of going uncontrollably adrift – unless a radical decision was taken (the other meaning of the Greek verb *krinein*), something equivalent to definitive surgery on a terminally ill patient.