The Space of Crisis

Images and Ideas of Europe in the Age of Crisis: 1914-1945

Vittorio DINI & Matthew D'AURIA (eds.)

P.I.E. Peter Lang

Focusing on European cultural and intellectual history in first half of the twentieth century, *The Space of Crisis* investigates how notions of crisis and changing perceptions of space influenced the way Europeans imagined themselves, their past and their future.

The book is an attempt to reassess some of the main assumptions of historians and political theorists about the way intellectuals, artists, legal theorists and historians interpreted Europe's crisis during the 1920s and 1930s. By so doing, it investigates the intellectual foundations of the ensuing federalist and Europeanist movements, highlighting the importance of the writings of those years in understanding today's Europe and its current predicaments.

Contributors: Annamaria Amato, Adalgiso Amendola, Laurie Catteeuw, Matthew D'Auria, Richard Deswarte, Vittorio Dini, Annamaria Ducci, Francesca Ferraro, Zoran Milutinovi, Anita Prettenthaler-Ziegerhofer, Jan Vermeiren, Adriano Vinale.

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INTRODUCTION

Notions of Crisis, Shifting Spatialities, and Images of Europe

Vittorio DINI and Matthew D'AURIA

> *Every new era and every new epoch in the coexistence of peoples, empires, and countries, of rulers and power formations of every sort, is founded on new spatial division, new enclosures, and new spatial orders of the earth*
> Carl Schmitt, *The* Nomos *of the Earth* (1950)

In 1938, while Europe was teetering on the brink of the Second World War, the Italian painter Giorgio de Chirico sketched one of his metaphysical *œuvres* depicting a wide and deserted square in the centre of which was a statue of a lone man facing the horizon. The square was empty except for two half-hidden shadows on the far right.[1] The one in the painting, revealingly called *Melancholy of the political man*, was an empty space in which the purpose of the square itself as place of markets, discussions and meetings, was defeated by the absence of citizens. It is precisely this absence that explains the title of the work and gives an insight into de Chirico's perception of the defeat of modern politics. Mirrored by the lack of men and women discussing their own and the city's business, is in fact a sombre feeling of powerlessness and disinterest for politics.

Remarkably, de Chirico's use of a square to represent the defeat of politics brings to mind a certain idea of Europe. According to historian Santo Mazzarino, in fact, squares have been the pivots around which the lives of cities have revolved for centuries, deeply influencing the path of

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[1] For the painting's dating, Fagiolo dell'Arco, M. (ed.), *De Chirico: gli anni Trenta*, Mazzotta, Milan, 1998, p. 138; on de Chirico and modern spatiality, Trione, V., *Giorgio de Chirico. Le città del silenzio: architettura, memoria, profezia*, Milan, Skira, 2009. A fascinating comparison between the *Melancholy of the political man* and Giampaolo Tiepolo's *New World* in relation to the self-representation of Europe is made by Ossola, C., "Una lezione dai giovani europei", *Il sole 24 Ore*, 19 April 2009, p. 30.

Europe's history.[2] It is easy to see how the role played by the *Agorà* in ancient Greece, the *Piazza* in medieval Comuni and the *Place* in revolutionary France as centres of a 'European' public life, has turned the square into the symbol of a particular kind of politics, one based on the free gatherings of citizens. It could even be said that the notion of freedom so often associated with a liberal discourse on Europe could hardly be conceived without these public spaces. George Steiner has also stressed the importance of squares in the way Europe has represented itself. Going a step further than Mazzarino, he has contended that although squares are often named after the famous artists, men of letters, scientists and philosophers of Europe and, therefore, testify its greatness, they are also places where bloodsheds, wars and massacres are commemorated. Places, in other words, where Europe's darkest side is remembered and where tragedies are mourned.[3] Spread out across the Continent, these public spaces provide the scattered memory of Europe with a real place where its past(s) can visually be represented and where modern collective rites of remembrance can shape the memories of a public at once spectator and actor of its own history.

Going back to de Chirico's painting, although *public memory* is glaringly impossible in it, *history* remains nonetheless, represented and even embodied by the statue in the centre of the square. And yet the permanent fixture of passing time no longer performs its function. The one portrayed is in fact a *lieu sans mémoire* where, indeed, the *Melancholy of the political man* stems from his predicaments about making sense of the world and imagining his own place in it. It is from such an angle that it might be argued that de Chirico was portraying the crisis of the way Europe conceived politics and which, inevitably, was also the crisis of its own identity. In those years, a similar juxtaposition between identity and spatial and political crisis was made by Carl Schmitt who related the downfall of Europe to what he termed the 'global spatial revolution' of modernity. In his 1942 *Land und Meer* the German jurist argued convincingly that the twentieth century had started a new history for mankind through a radical shift in the way space was conceived. Technological innovations like planes, radio-communications, cars and their mass production induced by the Great War gave men a capacity to dominate space that was hardly imaginable in the late nineteenth century.[4] The progress in transport and communication was staggering. If at the outbreak of the First World War planes were just starting to fly, thirty years later transatlantic flights were carrying an incredible number of men and resources from the USA to Europe. The Second World War itself was a confrontation in which, as never before, the capacity to cover greater distances in shorter times was key to victory. Yet with this unprecedented capacity to control space came also a feeling of uncertainty and unease. A feeling of *disorientation*.[5] Technology had turned living and political territories into open, indeterminate, anonymous spaces to conquer, to cover, to traverse and to exploit. The spatial revolution had caused the uprooting of millions of individuals, in psychological as well as in physical terms. All this not only affected the path world history would take, but also changed the way Europe imagined itself and its place in a world that was getting smaller every day.

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[2] Mazzarino, S., *Fra oriente e occidente*, Milan, Rizzoli, 2000, pp. 200-201.

[3] Steiner, G., *Une certaine idée de l'Europe*, Arles, Actes Sud, 2005, pp. 31-34.

[4] Schmitt, C., *Land und Meer. Eine weltgeschichtliche Betrachtung* (1942), Hohenheim, Köln-Lövenich, 1981, pp. 103-107; see also Derman, J., "Carl Schmitt on land and sea", *History of European Ideas*, 2011, No. 37, pp. 181-189.

Although works on the European identity during the interwar period have recently been published,[6] more needs to be said on how notions of crisis and changing perceptions of space influenced the way Europe imagined itself. *The Space of Crisis: Europe 1914-1945* is an attempt to shed more light on such an aspect and help reassess some of the assumptions of historians and political theorists about the way intellectuals interpreted Europe's crisis during the 1920s and 1930s. Throughout this book, the importance of the idea of crisis in shaping alternative images of Europe will be highlighted. In some cases, it will emerge that the resort to such a notion was simply meant to describe an inevitable demise. In other cases, it was used to entice a reaction that would lead to a new, united Europe – though there was, of course, much disagreement on what this meant. Authors as different as Valéry, Ortega y Gasset and Jaspers all sensed the importance of the historic moment they were living in, arguing, like many others, that the Great War had opened a new phase in the way Europeans felt about their unity. For Benedetto Croce, writing in 1932, the war made them aware that they shared a "same destiny, aspiring to the same ideals, wounded by the same pains, proud of the same ideal heritage. For the time being, in every part of Europe, one can already see the growth of a new consciousness". Soon, he went on, French, Germans and Italians "would address their thoughts to Europe and their hearts will beat for her". Writing a year later, Georges Duhamel also agreed that during the war people had finally "gained a strong consciousness of Europe and of what she represented in the world".[7] While between 1914 and 1945 Europeans showed a growing awareness of their common past and shared values, they also understood that the road to follow was that of political unity. They started to believe Europe would either recover thanks to some sort of federation, or it would finally collapse as a civilization. As Martin Heidegger put it, the *crisis* had to be understood in its etymological sense, as an "*aut/aut*: either the destruction of Europe, or its salvation".[8] Like many others, the German philosopher saw no other alternative. In an attempt to diagnose both the illness of Europe and its cure, the men and women writing at the time were laying the foundations for, and creating the intellectual milieu in which, the debates on Europe's political unity would take place at the end of the Second World War in partisan movements, exiled governments and, in the years to follow, among political and bureaucratic élites. In a sense, while the military outcome of 1945, with the division of Europe into two opposing spheres of influence, created the geopolitical conditions for a united Europe, it was nonetheless the ideas of Valéry, Spinelli, Coudenhove-Kalergi and the many others writing in the 1920s and 1930s that provided the arguments for legitimizing the Rome Treaties.[9] In many cases their ideas were highly innovative. Because of the significance of the ongoing changes, Europe was becoming an intellectual and cultural *space of crisis*, where deeply rooted assumptions on politics, society, and economy and even on the way of imagining the past were being questioned. Shedding light on the ideas of intellectuals and the way they represented the space of Europe during those years is then crucial in understanding the path its unification followed.

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[5] See Galli, C., *Spazi Politici. L'età moderna e l'età globale*, Bologna, il Mulino, 2001, pp. 111-130 and Kern, S., *The Culture of Time and Space. 1880-1918*, Cambridge MA, Harvard University Press, 1983.

[6] Chabot J.-L., *Aux origines intellectuelles de l'Union européenne: l'idée d'Europe unie de 1919 à 1939*, Grenoble, Presses universitaires de Grenoble, 2005; Spiering, M. and M. Wintle (eds.), *Ideas of Europe since 1914: The legacy of the First World War*, Basingstoke, Palgrave, 2002 and especially the chapter by Ifversen J., "The Crisis of European Civilization After 1918", pp. 14-31; Stirk, P. (ed.), *European Unity in Context: the Interwar Period*, London, Pinter, 1989; Hewitson, M. and M. D'Auria (eds.), *Europe in Crisis: Intellectuals and the European idea: 1917-1957*, New York, Berghahn, 2012.

It is well known that the end of the Great War saw the spread of a strong feeling of anxiety that fed, and was fed by, a vast and widely read *literature of crisis*. Spengler's *Der Untergang des Abendlandes* (1918-1922), Albert Demangeon's *Le déclin de l'Europe* (1920), Guenon's *La crise du monde moderne* (1928), *La crise de l'Europe* (1935) by André Siegfried and Belloc's *The crisis of our civilization* (1937) are just a few titles revealing the nature of the intellectual climate. The works of Freud, Huizinga, Jaspers and Husserl were hardly less pessimistic. For many of them the idea of a Europe in crisis was firmly tied to a growing concern for the changing perception of the space, size and position of the Old Continent. As many of the essays in this book argue, notions and images of the crisis interacted with shifting *spatial models*, articulating innovative representations of Europe. Spatial models, therefore, are a concern of this book. These, as Fernand Braudel defined them, are "the charts upon which social reality is projected, and through which it may become at least partially clear". They are "models for all the different movements of time" and "for all the categories of social life".[10] As cognitive mappings, they interact in complex ways with all aspects of the existence of individuals and groups, influencing memories, identities and political decisions. The spatial revolution described by Schmitt, in this respect, clearly entailed changes in conceptions of nation, region and empire. It inevitably implied changes in the way political boundaries and their relevance were assessed and, more broadly, it led to new ways of conceiving the relationship between space and politics. The significance of the spatial revolution is confirmed by the flourishing, in the first half of the century, of geopolitics. Usually associated with expansionist and aggressive theories such as Friedrich Ratzel and Hitler's *Großraum* or the *Spazio vitale Mediterraneo* of the fascist journal *Geopolitica*, geopolitics influenced the mental mappings of European dictatorships.[11] More moderate views, like those in Jacques Ancel's *Géopolitique* (1936) and in the writings of Halford J. Mackinder and Martin Wight,[12] aroused vibrant discussions that were at once academic and ideological.

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[7] Croce, B., *Storia d'Europa nel secolo decimonono* (1932), Milan, Adelphi, pp. 435-436, 1999; Duhamel, G., in VV.AA., *L'Avenir de l'esprit européen*, Paris, Institut international de coopération intellectuelle, 1934, p. 128.

[8] Heidegger M., "Europa und die deutsche Philosophie" (1936), in Gander, H.-H. (ed.), *Europa und die Philosophie*, Frankfurt am Main, Klostermann, 1993, p. 31. On the notion of 'crisis', see Koselleck, R., "Crisis", *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 2010, No. 67, pp. 357-400.

[9] Spiering, M. and M. Wintle (eds.), *European Identity and the Second World War*, Basingstoke, Palgrave Macmillan, 2011.

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[10] Braudel, F., "Histoire et Sciences sociales: La longue durée", *Annales. Économies, Sociétés, Civilisations*, 1958, p. 753. On this, see also Schlögel, K., *Im Raume lesen wir die Zeit. Über Zivilisationsgeschichte und Geopolitik*, C. Hanser, Munich, 2003.

[11] For an overview of the history of geopolitical thought, Losano, M. G., *La geopolitica del Novecento. Dai Grandi Spazi delle dittature alla decolonizzazione*, Milan, Bruno Mondadori, 2011; Parker, J., *Western geopolitical thought in the twentieth century*, London, Croom Helm, 1985; Raffestin, C., *Géopolitique et histoire*, Lausanne, Payot, 1995; Lorot, P., *Histoire de la géopolitique*, Paris, Jouve, 1995. Also see Chiantera-Stutte, P., "Destino Mitteleuropa! Fra scienza geografica, geopolitica e pensiero politico conservatore da Ratzel a Hitler", *Filosofia politica*, 2011, No. 1, pp. 29-44. Loprieno, D., "La géopolitique du fascisme italien: la revue mensuelle 'Geopolitica'", *Hérodote*, 1991, No. 63, pp. 116-130.

[12] See Pechoux, P.-Y. and M. Sivignon, "Jacques Ancel (1882-1943), géographe entre deux guerres (1919-1945)", in Claval, P. and L.-A. Sanguin (eds.), *La Géographie française à l'époque classique, 1918-68*, Paris, L'Harmattan, 1996. Blouet, B. W. (ed.), *Global geostrategy: Mackinder and the defence of the West*, London, Frank Cass, 2005; Sengupta, A., *Heartlands of Euroasia: the geopolitics of political space*, Lanham, Lexington books, 2009. Hall, I., *The International Thought of Martin*

By 1918 many intellectuals and politicians shared the assumption that the centrality of Europe was definitively lost and that the rise of the USA and of the USSR had shattered all aspirations of world hegemony of its nation states. Many at the time would have agreed with the Russian journalist Briantchaninoff that “two formidable poles of attraction and rejection draw today’s economic and political world: New York and Moscow”.[13] In the middle, Europe ran the risk of being swallowed up by either one or torn apart in the struggle between the two. While still in 1914 Europe dominated the entire world from its centre, just five years later it was dangerously pressed on both sides. An important reason for the flourishing of the literature of crisis in the interwar period was precisely the feeling of encirclement of a Europe under siege in a newly globalized space.

On the other side of the Atlantic the staggering economic growth of the USA, fostered by the war, came to be perceived as a deadly threat. The high level of mechanization of its industries, the innovations brought about by Fordism and the financial expansion of its banks allowed the USA to reach unprecedented growth rates which the Europeans could only dream of. The French economist Henri Truchy considered this to be Europe’s greatest danger and advocated the unity of its nation states to avert an “economic half-vassalage which would not be without dangers for world peace”. Others went so far as to speak of an “American conquest of Europe”. Even Trotsky, in his comparison between America and Europe, predicted that the aggressive capitalism of the former would soon control the economy of a “declining Europe”.[14] Several members of Europe’s political and cultural élites connected this danger with a potential Americanization of morals and values. It was a view that would turn the economic struggle into a clash between two civilizations, the one seeing man as producer and consumer of goods, the other as an “independent and free spirit, a means in himself”.[15] According to the philosopher and psychologist Richard Müller-Freienfels the danger of Americanism lay not in the mechaniza-

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Wight, New York, Palgrave, 2006; Chiaruzzi, M., *Politica di potenza nell’età del Leviatano: La teoria internazionale di Martin Wight*, Bologna, il Mulino, 2008.

[13] Briantchaninoff, A. N., *Le problème de l’Union fédérative européenne. Ni Europe, ni Asie, la Russie est Russie*, Paris, Attinger, 1930, p. 101.

[14] Quoted in Le Trocque, Y., “La politique protectionniste des États-Unis en face des Etats d’Europe”, in Union douanière européenne, Comité français d’études (eds.), *Documentation présentée au congrès d’Amsterdam de la Chambre de Commerce Internationale, 8-13 Juillet, 1929. Fascicule 4-5*, Paris, L’Europe de demain, 1929, p. 19. Pomaret, C., *L’Amérique à la conquête de l’Europe*, Paris, A. Colin, 1931; Trotsky, L., *Europe and America. Two Speeches on Imperialism* (1926), New York, Pathfinder Press, 1971.

[15] Siegfried, A., *Les États-Unis d’aujourd’hui*, Paris, A. Colin, 1927, p. 351.

tion of production as such, but "in the levelling of the mind" it carried within. The same risk of forced conformity, like-mindedness and standardization was dreaded by Hermann Keyserling who saw Europe dangerously following America towards the age of the masses.[16] Huizinga also agreed that the way of life beyond the Atlantic hardly seemed "worth living", warning Europeans against the obsession with quantity and numbers that levelled everything.[17] As Georges Duhamel summarized it in his popular *Scènes de la vie future* (1930), Europe was foolishly emulating the USA towards the uniformity of taste, the mechanization of life and the annihilation of individuality.[18]

On the Eastern front the risks were even greater since, there, the danger was both ideological and military. As one of the most influential and active advocates of European unity, count Coudenhove-Kalergi, explained in his famous *Pan-Europa*:

> As soon as Russia recovers interiorly, not Poland, nor Rumania, nor Czechoslovakia will be able to contain its westward strive; still less disarmed Hungary, Austria and Germany. So the road to the Rhine, the Alps and the Adriatic is open to Russia. This will simply be a stage and this power, after having conquered Central Europe, will also try to conquer, after a truce, Western Europe [...] Russia is not hiding its aggressive intentions. Its foremen declare that their supreme aim is the destruction of European democracies and the reunion of the other people to the Muscovite bloc.[19]

Crushed by the two rising powers on both sides, subdued by American economic superiority and its freedom threatened by the Soviet Union, Europe would slowly decline and turn into "a purely geographical and historical expression". It would then become, according to Lucien Romier, an "empty space" between Bolshevism and super-capitalism.[20]

Interestingly, the solution put forward against American economic predominance did not focus on the need to mechanize European industries or on new ways of organizing production. If these were envisaged, they usually came after another, more radical change: the economic unification of the "European space".[21] It was clear that when "compared to the immense territories exploited by the giant nations spreading civilisation in the New World, Europe is too small and divided into a far too great a number of nations each with rather limited territories".[22] Only a shift in the size and scale of its economy, through the adoption of a single currency and the complete liberalization of trade, could give Europe "a market of a radius equal to that of the United States".[23] Francis Delaisi, the Secretary General of the *Union pan-européenne*, explained it in clear terms. The end of custom barriers and a common currency, by allowing raw materials, goods and people to circulate freely, would make it possible for each people of Europe to manufacture those goods it could produce at a lower cost, exchanging them with others it would produce at a higher cost. By such a token, the resources of each country would be used in the most profitable way, creating advantages to both consumers and producers.[24] The conservative politician and journalist Leo Amery also insisted on the need of a single market. The fact that Europe was divided into several "little states", animated by a burning nationalism leading them to raise their tariffs and impede trade, had heavy consequences on businessmen as well as on workers. It was a poor contrast with the situation across the Atlantic, "where an area as large as Europe has no internal tariff boundaries, enjoys development on an enormous scale, the market of all being available for the production of each, and in return by its purchases each strengthening the market of all the others".[25]

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[16] Müller-Freienfels, R., "Amerikanismus und Europäische Kultur", *Der Deutsche Gedanke*, 1927, No. 1, pp. 34-35; Keyserling, H., *Amerika: Der Aufgang einer neuen Welt*, Stuttgart, Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt, 1930, pp. 424-425; also Keyserling, H., *Das Spektrum Europas*, Heidelberg, Neils Kampmann, 1928.

[17] Huizinga, J. H., *America: A Dutch historian's vision, from afar and near*, New York, Harper and Row, 1972.

[18] Duhamel, G., *Scènes de la vie future*, Paris, Mercure de France, 1930; also see Curcio, C., *Europa. Storia di un'idea*, Turin, ERI, 1978, pp. 528-230. On European perceptions of America as a model or a threat, see the chapter by Richard Deswarte in this volume.

[19] Coudenhove-Kalergi, R., *Pan-Europa*, Vienna, Paneuropa Verlag, 1923, pp. 55-56.

[20] Mann, T., *Achtung Europa! Aufsätze zur Zeit*, Stockholm, Berman-Fischer, 1938, p. 93; Romier, L., *L'homme Nouveau: Esquisse des conséquences du progrès*, Paris, Hachette, 1929, p. 113.

If the economic unification of the Old Continent could help recovery and avert the risk of an American vassalage, the military threat perceived on the eastern boundaries required even tighter political ties among European nation states. Fearing the eastern threat, Ortega y Gasset saw in the "construction of Europe as a nation state" the only means to avoid the "victory of the quinquennial plan". Coudenhove-Kalergi believed that the common aim of all Europeans "should be to avoid an invasion by Russia", an aim to pursue through a "Pan-European defensive pact against the Russian threat".[26] One author who strongly feared the great eastern spaces, with their large resources and vast masses of men, was Carl Schmitt. Insisting during the Weimar years on the need for Europe, as neo-Christendom, to unite against the Soviet Union to fight its mixture of communism and Christian Byzantism, he later construed his *Mitteleuropa* as the heart of a European *Großraum* standing against a Russia intoxicated by modern technicity.[27]

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[21] See Chabot, *Aux origines intellectuelles de l'Union européennes*, pp. 218-219.

[22] Lucien, B., "Préface", in J. Marchal, *Union douanière et organisation européenne*, Paris, Sirey, 1929, p. v.

[23] Speech made at the Chamber of International Commerce on 5 March 1926 by the President Walter Leaf, quoted in Milhaud, E., *L'organisation économique de la paix*, Paris, Hachette, 1928, p. 86.

[24] Delaisi, F., *Les contradictions du monde moderne*, Paris, Payot, 1925, pp. 468-471.

[25] Amery, L. S., "The British Empire and the Pan-European Idea", *Journal of the Royal Institute of International Affairs*, 1930, No. 1, p. 3.

By the late 1920s the USA and the USSR had become rivals against which a declining Europe had to unite.[28] At stake were the values endangered by the cultural invasion of America's sheer materialism and unscrupulous profiteering and by the political and ideological threat of a new 'Asian barbarism'. The crisis engendered by the "inhuman liberty of Western plutocracy and the inhuman equality of the oriental dictatorship" – as Coudenhove-Kalergi wrote emphatically[29] – was connected to shifting spatial mappings in different ways. First of all, it was related to Europe's place in the world and to the clear perception that it was now squeezed between the USA and the USSR, its former vantage point of centre turning into a deadly menace. A second aspect was that the growing capacity to master distances had made it possible to project military power throughout the globe which meant, in the case of Europe, bringing closer the threat of the lateral powers. The crisis of Europe and of the ways it portrayed itself was related to the changing global spatiality in one more respect. It was linked to the idea that the larger the space under a single political authority, the more efficient its economy, the greater its productive capacities and the stronger its armies. For several authors writing in those years the future was one of large spaces united politically and economically and controlling enormous masses of men and resources. Compared to the USA and the USSR and, in a distant future, to China, a divided Europe was destined to play a marginal role in the political and economic world.

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[26] Ortega y Gasset, J., *La rebelión de las masas* (1930), Madrid, Espasa, 2010, p. 248; Coudenhove-Kalergi, *Pan-Europa*, pp. 54 and 58-62.

[27] Schmitt, C., *Römischer Katholizismus und politische Form*, Hegner, Hellerau, 1923 and Schmitt, C., "Das Zeitalter der Neutralisierung und Entpolitisierung" (1929), in *id*., *Der Begriff des Politischen*, Berlin, Dunker and Humblot, 1991, pp. 79-95. See also McCormick, J., "Carl Schmitt's Europe: Cultural, Imperial and Spatial Proposals for European Integration, 1923-1955", in Joerges, C. and N.S. Ghaleigh (eds.), *The Darker Legacy of European Law*, Hart, Oxford, 2003, pp. 133-142. On the vastness of the Russian compared to the European space, also see the remarks by Thomas Mann in his *Magic Mountain* (1924), New York, Vintage International, 1992, pp. 242-243.

[28] Muet, Y., *Les Géographes et l'Europe*, Genève, Institut européen de l'Université de Genève, 1996, p. 39.

[29] Coudenhove-Kalergi, R., *Lettre ouverte aux parlementaires français* (1924), n.p., n.d., p. 21.

The rise of great external powers, the sense of a lost centrality, the shrinking of global distances and its internal divisions, influenced not only the way Europe perceived its role in the world but, when comparing a dejected present with a glorious past, it also had significant consequences on the way it imagined its own history. From such a standpoint, the end of the world hegemony of its nation states strengthened, rather than weakened, the search for a common heritage. Many writers assumed that Europe could only be conceived in terms of a "historic unity"[30] – the boundaries of which, nonetheless, still had to be traced. Partly because of the new global scenario, the interwar period experienced an unprecedented effort to 'find' *a history European*. For some this task became imperative for reasons that went beyond intellectual curiosity. "We must rewrite our history – claimed Christopher Dawson in 1932 – from the European point of view and take as much trouble to understand the unity of our common civilization as we have given hitherto to studying our national individuality".[31] One attempt was made by the French historian Louis Halphen, whose *L'essor de l'Europe* (1932) sought a common medieval unity of Europe played against the Muslim threat. Others were Croce's *Storia d'Europa del secolo decimonono* (1932), Dawson's *The Making of Europe* (1932) and Fisher's *A history of Europe* (1935). Even the courses held by Lucien Febvre at the *Collège de France* shortly after the liberation of Paris, and at the University of Nazi-occupied Milan by Federico Chabod on the idea of Europe, testify the pressing urge to find an answer to Europe's crisis by looking at its history.[32] However, it was precisely by doing so that many recognized that the relationship of Europe with its own identity was, at best, a complex one.[33]

While the perception of a changing spatiality and the related "dwarfing of Europe" – as Arnold Toynbee famously called it[34] – strengthened the urge to find a common past, it also deeply affected the understanding of what history itself was and how its boundaries should be defined. Interestingly, during the 1913 International Congress of Historical Studies, Lord Bryce already claimed that the unification of the world, started with the discovery of America, had proceeded to the point where "whatever happens in one part of the globe, now has significance for every other part. World History is tending to become one history".[35] By the 1920s and 1930s many authors sharing Bryce's view also assumed that the history of the world could no longer be the history of Europe. Important steps in redefining the relationship between world and European history were H.G. Wells's *The outline of History* (1918), Spengler's *Untergang des Abendlandes* (1918-23) and Toynbee's *A Study of History* (1934-54) in which were told the histories of the struggles, the rise and fall of different civilizations in a unified world. And yet, in them, Europe still held a central role for at least two reasons. The first, quite obvious, was that Europe had dominated the world during the two previous centuries, deeply influencing every other civilization. The second was, for some, that having 'civilized' the world, Europe's mission had come to an end, making its decline inevitable. Underpinning such a view was the clear persistence – if not the heightening – of a strong Eurocentric feeling, for the contrast between the political decline of Europe and the claims of its cultural and moral superiority was sharp. It was by moving from such a standpoint that Ortega y Gasset interpreted the rise of the USA and the USSR as the rise of two worlds stemming from Europe and retaining some of its traits. Both American aggressive capitalism and Soviet illiberal Bolshevism, argued the Spanish thinker, were simply aberrations of values and ideas originally European. Yet separated from their cradle, they "lost their meaning" and were now heralded by civilizations fighting against Europe. A similar view was held by Paul Valéry who, in his *La crise de l'esprit* (1919), claimed that "everything has come to Europe and everything has come from Europe. At least, almost everything".[36] Hilaire Belloc went even further, stating that Europe "carries the fate of the whole world, lives by a life which is in contrast to that of every other region, because that life, though intense, is inexhaustible. There is present, therefore, in her united history, a dual function of maintenance and of change such as can be discovered neither in any one of her component parts nor in civilisations exterior to her own". Throughout its history, Europe had constantly sought a moral

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[30] Febvre, L., *L'Europe. Genèse d'une civilisation* (1944-45), Paris, Perrin, 1999, p. 37.

[31] Dawson, C., *The Making of Europe: an introduction to the history of European unity*, London, Sheed and Ward, 1932, p. xxiv.

[32] See Woolf, S., "Europe and its Historians", *Contemporary European History*, 2003, No. 3, pp. 323-337.

[33] On this, see Cacciari, M., *Geofilosofia dell'Europa*, Milan, Adelphi, 2003; VV.AA., *Penser l'Europe à ses frontières. Géophilosophie de l'Europe*, La-Tour-d'Aigues, Éditions de l'aube, 1993. On the concept of 'geophilosophy', see Deleuze, G. and F. Guattari, *Qu'est-ce que la philosophie?*, Paris, Éditions de Minuit, 1991, pp. 82-109.

[34] Toynbee, A., "The Dwarfing of Europe", in *id.*, *Civilization on trial*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1948, pp. 97-125.

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[35] Bryce, J., "Presidential address to the International Congress of Historical Studies", 3 April 1913, quoted in Powell, E., *The Evolution of the Money Market (1385-1915)*, London, The Financial news, 1915, p. 704.

[36] Ortega y Gasset, *La rebelión de la masas*, pp. 199; Valéry, P., "La crise de l'esprit" (1919), in *id.*, *Œuvres*, Paris, Gallimard, 1957, Vol. 1, p. 995.