



## **EUROPE TODAY**

### **How to cope with her turbulences?**

European Humanism:  
*an obscure object of desire?*

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# How to cope with her turbulences?

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## A possible solution - Rethinking the European Identity

A possible answer: *The Paris Statement*, signed the 7<sup>th</sup> October 2017 by a group of (Catholic) conservative intellectuals - <https://thetrueeurope.eu/>

Among them: Rémi Brague (France), Robert Spaemann (Germany), Ryszard Legutko (Poland), Roger Scruton (United Kingdom). Italians are everywhere but here.

## A Europe We Can Believe In



In May 2017, a group of conservative scholars and intellectuals met in Paris. They were brought together by their common concern about the current state of European politics, culture, society—and above all the state of the European mind and imagination. Through delusion and self-deception and ideological distortion, Europe is dissipating her great civilizational inheritance.

# Main theses of the Paris Statement

## The true Europe and the false Europe

- A false Europe threatens us (2) and the true Europe is at risk (4). The patrons of the false Europe ignore, even repudiate the Christian roots of Europe (3).
- The true Europe: its ideal is one of solidarity (5); is a community of nations (7); doesn't seek the imposed, enforced unity of empire (8, 28); has been marked by Christianity (9) which affirms the equal dignity of every individual (10); draws inspiration from the Classical tradition, which encourages excellence (11); did not begin with the Enlightenment (12).
- The false Europe: boasts of an unprecedented commitment to human liberty, which is very one-sided (14); is characterised by: a political correctness which enforces strong taboos (16); a multiculturalism which is a colonization of our homelands (17, 27); a bad faith in thinking that assimilation will happen naturally and quickly (18); a technocratic tyranny of supranational institutions (democratic deficit) (19); equates critical thinking with a simpleminded repudiation of the past (21), which deprives the next generation of a sense of identity (23); is an ersatz religious enterprise with creedal commitments and anathemas (24).

# Main proposals of the Paris Statement

## There is an alternative

- We must restore a true liberalism, committed to public debate free from all threats of violence and coercion (25).
- We need responsible statesmen who do not lust for the approbation of the international community (26)
- We should renew national unity and solidarity (against multiculturalism and immigration without assimilation) (27)
- We need to restore a sense of spiritual greatness (29) and to renew the exchange of respect between social classes (30)
- Markets need to be ordered toward social ends (31)
- Education needs to be reformed (against a culture of repudiation) (32)
- Marriage, childbearing and childrearing are to be encouraged and strengthened (33)
- Populism can represent a healthy rebellion against the false Europe and should be engaged (34)

# Questions raised by the Paris statement

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## The Problem of European Identity

- Is there just one possible “true” Europe? (Multiple Identities)
- Is not cultural pluralism compatible with an axiological criterion? (Civilisation and Barbarism)
- Are international and national levels necessarily opposite and rival? (History tells another Story)
- Is populism a truly healthy solution to be engaged? (Democracy and Demagogy)

→ Let's have a look at the European Humanism



# Humanism

The byname of European civilization

# Three main uses of the term “Humanism”

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- **Historiographic**

→ Descriptive term with definite referents

- **Cultural**

→ Mythical rather than logical concept (a regulative ideal)

- **Axiological**

# Humanism as historiographic category

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Descriptive term with definite referents

- Italian Humanism (15<sup>th</sup> Century)
- Neue Humanismus (the *Goethezeit*)
- 20<sup>th</sup> Century Humanisms and Antihumanisms: Christian H. (Maritain), Pedagogical H. (Jaeger), Socialist H. (Merleau-Ponty, Fromm...), Existential (Jaspers, Sartre...), Antihumanisms (Foucault, Lévi-Strauss, Lacan...)
- 21<sup>st</sup> Century Post-Humanisms and Trans-Humanisms

# Humanism as cultural category

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Mythical rather than logical concept

Humanism as the byname of European civilization:

a regulative ideal, a catalyst for a *Weltanschauung*, an *ethos* that implies social and political institutions of a certain shape

What is supposed to be such a thing like a Humanism?

Let's see the axiological use

# Humanism as an axiological category (1)

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Mythical rather than logical concept

Based on two cornerstones

- The idea of **Humanity** – recognition 1) of the shared humanity of all human beings and 2) of this shared humanity as a task
- The idea of **Civilisation** (VS Barbarism) – humanism as a synthesising term standing for “civilisation” in a time of barbarism

# Humanism as an axiological category (2)

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## and different cultures

- Humanism not as a **dissolving of cultures** into a **conforming universalism** (the Paris statement is right)
- Rather as an **internal spur** of each particular culture (an **axiological criterion** and a **stimulus to openness** to the other) allowing an **innovative creativity**
- **Beyond the alterative between “cosmopolitanism” and “the clash of civilisations”**: we do not renounce an objective axiological criterion (Humanism, Civilisation...), while recognizing cultures and civilizations as different and legitimate ways to ‘truth’

# Humanism as an axiological category (3)

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and different cultures

- Concepts as “**barbarity**” and “**civilization**” as axiological criterions within each particular civilization
- There is **no possibility to identify one specific civilization with “the” civilization** – or, on the contrary, with the “barbarianism” – in itself (the Paris statement is not right)

# Humanism as an axiological category (4)

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and different cultures

- **Barbarity** designates, at all times and in all places, **the acts and attitudes of those who reject the humanity of others**, or judge them to be radically different from themselves
- A **civilized person** is one who is able, at all times and in all places, to **recognize the humanity of others fully** - no individual can be entirely 'civilized', in this respect (Todorov)
- The **plurality of cultures and civilizations** is recognized as a **positive reality**, while keeping the possibility of an **objective axiological criterion**

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