



Christians, Jews and Muslims, we all inhabit the same sea. On the etymology of Europe

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ABSTRACT: Starting from a reflection on the name of Europe and the ancient myths connected to it, and hinting at least, at the almost archetypal figure of Noah and his sons, at the history of the foundation of the Salerno Medical School and again at the late nineteenth-century utopia of a common language, we discuss more generally the value of intercultural and interreligious dialogue between Europeans, Jews and Muslims, whom a common root links to a shared Mediterranean sea (in a purely etymological sense), which is harbinger of an already ancient globalisation

KEYWORDS: Europe, Mediterranean, myths, interreligious dialogue, globalisation.

“Il mare è pietra, / riposo finale. [...] Il mare è la mia Terra”.
(Mario Ricca)¹

0. AS AN INTRODUCTION

There are several opportunities to reflect on the Mediterranean world from a cross-cultural perspective, and as I look back over some of the strands of my previous research, one in particular emerges. It develops within different but recalling stories and narrates the cultural history of that sea between the great cultures/religions that give it life. Europe as a term is incredibly ancient. Starting from the myth from which it originated, like the Cretan bull, it is a *trait d'union* between the two shores of the Mediterranean, where Ḥam, Šem and Japhet, as in a sort of Jungian archetype, have always been symphonically related in a “union in diversity” *ante litteram*.²

¹ The *exergo* presents some verses from a friend (see Ricca 2012), to whom I wrote an introduction: cf. Astori 2012.

² It is a deliberate reference to the official motto of the European Union, *In varietate concordia* (United in diversity, in English), adopted in 2000. This can also be seen from the privileged perspective of multilingualism that has always characterised it: cf. Astori 2020c. Some classical bibliography: Bertoldi 1937, Fishman 1976, Lambert 1964.

The search for the semiotic unity of the root of the name (§1) echoes, among many other possibilities, on the one hand in the ancient tradition of the Noachid Principles (§2), on the other hand in the founding myth of the Schola Salerni (§3), and finally appears again, in the ebb and flow of history, in the extraordinary u-/eu-topic challenge of a planned language which at the turn of the XIX and XX centuries was born from a dream that goes further beyond an interlinguistic reflection (§4).

The themes that we are going to discuss have been the object of my studies over the years, and to them I have dedicated part of my production. This necessary premise justifies the bibliography that might seem to be self-referential or expressing an unrealistic self-display intent, but whose entries on the contrary show a wide-ranging and documented collection of bibliographical references which provide useful information to explore every single theme.³



Figure 1 | From Guntherus Ziner, Augusta, 1472: picture from *Etymologiae* by Isidore of Seville (chapter 14, page 1).

1. MYTH AND POSSIBLE ETYMOLOGY

Reflecting on the origin of Europe as a name is always intriguing, as it rooted in an almost archetypal ancient time that ends up speaking to the present and to its most pressing challenges.

As the myth narrates, and more precisely as Apollodorus does (III 1,1)⁴, Europa, who is the daughter of Phoenix, king of Tyre or Sidon (or of Agenor 'the Superb'), is also the

³ Basing principally the imageries and the related reflections appearing in this contribution on excerpts of former articles and essays that the author has already published and discussed elsewhere is not due to a narcissistic exhibitionism of a scholar who wants to give rationale for linking some earlier studies, but to the fact that, in the correlation of the arguments, which is intended to be a more historical-cultural reflection than linguistic *tout court*, also considering the brevity of the text, it was decided to synthesize a content path, gradually referring to possible further studies already structured by evidence and bibliography. Special thanks go to the anonymous reviewers, who deeply helped me to better interpret the nature and value of my, and their role and professional profile.

⁴ For other attestations see *Neue Pauly* s.v. Europe; a history of Europe conception in the Greco-Roman world is in Astori 2013.



sister of Cadmus (founder of Thebes). An infatuated Zeus in the shape of a bull takes her from the East to the West but finally she marries Asterion, king of Crete.⁵

On a closer examination, the myth reveals the origin – the filiation, in other terms – of the Middle East: Europa, daughter of the East is trans-ported across the *mare nostrum* (the bull as a symbol of the Minoan civilisation and of its geographical mediation) and reaches the West, a place beyond, a place to where the sun moves to set (this is how the West is seen from the East). As for Cadmus, within the suggested perspective, the etymological relationship with the proto-semitic root *qdm* could be revealing: Hebrew toratic קדם *qedem* ‘East’, Arabic قديم *qadim* ‘old, ancient’ (what is in the East is earlier, therefore older than what follows it in the daily earth spinning around its axis with respect to sunlight⁶).

There is a protosemitic root ‘*rv*’/‘*vr*’, which indicates primarily ‘movement, passage’: the first form, linked to the concept of ‘passing, outstripping, moving, changing’, is attested for instance in Hebr. ‘avar ‘outstripping’, but also ‘breaching, transgressing’, and then ‘avar ‘past’ (what has passed, what has been left behind), ‘ever ‘opposite’, ‘iber ‘fecundating’ (namely, starting a process of change); Ar. abar ‘to cross’, *ubûr* ‘crossing’, ma’bar ‘ford’, *ibrâniyyu* ‘Jew’; the allotrope generated by the qualitative metathesis ‘*rv*’, linked to the idea of the ‘West’, ‘to set’, can have a relationship with terms such as Hebr. ma’arav ‘West’, ‘erev ‘evening’, ‘arava ‘dinghy’ (a means of transport that takes you from one shore to another), ‘arvî ‘Arab’ (one who lives in the West); Ar. *a’rabiyyu* ‘Bedouin’ (one who moves from one place to another), ‘araba ‘vehicle, car’ (same reflection as for Hebr. ‘arava).

Thus, said root would be an etymological *file rouge* common to Europeans (assuming that such a collective name makes sense), Jews and Arabs: actually it is the source, on the one hand, of the Hebrew term עברי *ivri* (‘the people who moved and left their place to go to another - crossing the Jordan’), and on the other, of the Arabic term عربي *arabi* (which emphasises a nomadic and migrant nature). The linguistic reflection suggests a bold hypothesis, namely a sort of common cultural Eurasian *humus*⁷.

⁵ “The idea of Europe, with all its cultural and political and not just geographical implications, was born in the ancient world. Therefore, those who want to study the genesis of this idea cannot ignore the ancient world: the contrast between Europe and Asia, in Greece, and between the West and the East, in Rome, always means the contrast between freedom and slavery”, as you read in the introduction of Sordi 1986. And more, with the famous expression of Federico Chabod: “The idea of Europe was born out of opposition. We are Europeans as we are not Asians”. See at least, for a minimal reference bibliography: Braccesi 2003, Galasso 1996, Urso 2001. Linguistics also confirms the West-East binary, embracing an Indo-European or Semitic etymology not only supported by linguistic data and its interpretation, in a process in which the passage from “possible data” to “possible interpretation of data” often implies an upstream vision of the context in which to frame it.

⁶ See Botterweck – Ringgren – Fabry 2003: 501 ff., s.v. – cf. Astori 2011a.

⁷ And the hypothesis could go even further and reach the heart of the capitalist spirit of the new, dreamt-of European empire: the *euro*, the only real glue of today’s Union, before being cultural or historical, or even political, is economic and market-based, which could not appear more Semitic. On the subject of ‘Europe’, especially from the point of view of the linguistic affaire, see Astori 2016a. For a minimal classical bibliography concerning the rich debate in progress on linguistic policies in Europe (from which it is clear, important for the proposed theme, that linguistic democracy also means economic justice) see:



2. NOAH AND HIS THREE SONS

This “family unity” evokes the great biblical episode which starts in *Gen.* 6.

Ten whole generations after ‘Adam, the first man, 1656 years after that first covenant,⁸ Noah is asked to build an Ark and to carry (namely, ‘trans-port’) mankind, through the Flood. Ordered by God and aimed at purifying the Earth from the sins of a degenerate humanity, the spiritual nature of the Flood (that is, of water) re-establishes the original Adamic principles, which the previous generation has betrayed.

Coming from the Ark, mankind was a single body: Noah, as a new Adam, is the ancestor of the whole humanity: the expression בני נח *b^ene’ noah* “Sons/Descendants of Noah” refers to anyone belonging to the human race and highlights the concept that the whole humanity descends from a single progenitor.⁹

Thus, three “macro-families” will repopulate the lands around a common sea, that very same *mare nostrum* which, in ancient but peaceful times, was the first truly global arena. This confirms the meaning of the original Hebrew ‘Noah’, which derives from the root נוח ‘resting, finding peace and serenity’¹⁰, and in הן *hen*, ‘beauty, grace’.

3. THE SCHOLA MEDICA SALERNITANA

Let us move to another significant moment of intercultural and interreligious dialogue, which is crucial to the path we are following.

According to the myth, during the Middle Ages which were a period characterised by travel and pilgrimages, four people met in Salerno, under the “devils’ bridge” (it was said that it was built in a single night, with the help of demons, by the magician Pietro Barliario). Among the four people there was a descendant of a noble Roman family, a man from Alexandria, a Jew and an Arab. During their discussion they all recognise each other as physicians, and decide to share their traditional knowledge to create a great Medical School.

Ammon 2001; Bourdieu, Swaan, Hagège, Fumaroli, Wallerstein 2001; Calvet 1987, 1993, 1996, 1999, 2002; De Witte 2004; Gazzola 2016; Gobbo 2005; Hagège 2000; Piron 1994; Selten 1997; Tsuda 2001; van Els 2001; van Parijs 2004.

⁸ The count of the years from the Abraham covenant takes place on the basis of the Jewish tradition.

⁹ Context readings are at least: De Renzi 1857, De Stefano 1990, Gallo 2008, Piscitello 2002. For further references see Astori 2010a.

¹⁰ A new ethical system for the whole humanity emerges after that encounter: the so-called seven Noachid principles (שבע מצוות בני נח), a kind of extensive normative categories, are broad fields within which specific religious laws are subsequently formulated in the shape of a set of common ethical values (the expression בני נח *b^ene’ noah* “Sons/Descendants of Noah” refers to anyone belonging to the human race). They are not a religion, but a universal message delivered to humankind, which is conceived precisely as progeny of a single ancestor. Here is some basic bibliography: Benamozegh 1914, Biberfeld 1937, Bindman 1995, Fontana 2007; 2009, Lichtenstein 1981, Pallière 1926, Revel 1942, Schonfeld 1955, Schwartz 2004, Werner 1942. Further reference to this topic is in Astori 2011b, 2016b.



Other versions of the myth, which also demonstrate the existence of a *humus*, of a common cultural background which provides with a basis the symbolic reflection on the ‘story’¹¹, mention different names. Yet, the symbolic characters who share the same origin, evolution and meaning, demonstrate beyond doubt that different medical and cultural traditions coalesced in Salerno.

Salerno, *civitas Hippocratica*, new Andalusia¹², at the confluence of different cultures, on the shores of the Mediterranean sea, will host and provide with support a school as ‘open’ and ‘syncretic’ as the city, which is a port and an important centre for trade and cultural exchanges – here again the *leit motif* of our study – in the middle of *mare nostrum*.



Figure 2| “Discussion among physicians”, Bagdad 1224

Figure 2| “Discussion among physicians”, Bagdad 1224

¹¹ A possible parallel between *Dialogus inter Philosophum, Judaeum et Christianum* by Pietro Abelardo (one out of many expressions of a particular cultural tradition, which includes Gilberto Crispino's *Disputatio* or Nicola Cusano's *De Pace Fidei*) and the famous *Ringparabel* as it takes shape in Boccaccio's words (and which Lessing himself recognised as the source of his *Nathan*) would take us too far. See Federici Vescovini 1993, *GCDisp*, Thomas 1970. We could also refer to Abraham Abulafia's parable of the son and the pearl, as a further example of a common European cultural background; in this regard, see: Idel 2020: 159-256 (chapter “The Parable of the Pearl and its Interpretations”).

¹² A place where the religious tolerance and the cultural-linguistic synergy of the Arab period were proverbial, to the point that Maimonides, one of the greatest Jewish philosophers, has a double-form name: *רבי משה בן מיימון* (Rabbi Moshe ben Maymon, from whose voweled acronym comes the name *Rambam*) and *موسى بن ميمون بن عبد الله القرطبي الإسراييلي* (Mūsā ibn Maymūn ibn ‘Abd Allāh al-Qurtubī al-Isrā’īlī) regardless of many contemporary misunderstandings.



4. A CONTEMPORARY CHALLENGE

“Union in diversity” is a great dream which may have appeared a utopia but from the remotest past it has reached the great statesmen of a recently created Europe, too, and has showed its linguistic counterparts.¹³

Let us mention only one of them, to which the title of this study refers, namely the Esperanto project, which was conceived by *Doktoro Esperanto*, “Doctor Hopeful” – a pseudonym that within a year after the publication of an expository textbook, the so-called *Unua libro* [The first book], in Warsaw on July 26, 1887 signed using the same pseudonym – became the language’s name¹⁴.

Zamenhof’s programme, which is much more articulated and comprehensive than it is superficially believed, is based on the idea that a privileged instrument of communication for mankind should be just the first step of a much more ambitious vision: Esperanto would be just a tool to create a common world culture, of a common feeling, of a common communion (pardon the pun) of intents. If, just like a *pontolingvo* (literally a ‘bridge-language’), it would have improved world communication and at the same time it would have preserved native languages, thus a *pontoreligio* (literally a ‘bridge-religion’) would have helped the progress of humankind¹⁵.

This vision of the world emerges clearly in the opening prologue to the first Universal Congress held in Boulogne-sur-Mer on August 5, 1905. It is a highly refined speech, which from the very beginning aims at highlighting the purpose of Zamenhof’s project, namely the “brotherhood of mankind” based on a “neutral foundation”, where Esperanto is presented as the antidote to the splitting up of humankind that took place at the time of Babel. So, the unity of humankind will be re-established in an act that, before being cultural-linguistic, is religious and sacral. It is significant, in this regard, the high frequency of words (and derivatives) such as ‘brother’, ‘family’, ‘man’, ‘idea’, ‘saint’¹⁶.

¹³ The author of this study framed the topic in Astori 2020a,b.

¹⁴ Among the numerous interlingual projects that have followed one another over the last few centuries, it is the only one to have shown any real functionality. For preliminary information see Astori 2018a (and its extensive bibliography) and Astori 2019, about literary production Minnaja 2019 and, in esperanto, Minnaja -Silfer 2015. More reference: Chiti-Batelli 1987 (among others, the contributions of illustrious linguists such as A. Bausani, A. Castellani, B. Migliorini and F. Pennacchietti), Blanke 2004, Boulton 1960, Centassi – Masson 1995, Fettes 2000, Janton 1988, Kökény – Bleiber 1933, Lapenna – Lins – Carlevaro 1974, Lins 1973, Tonkin 1977; 1997.

¹⁵ The ethical aspect of Esperantism can be explored further in Astori 2018b,c.

¹⁶ The text is available online in its original version, in Astori 2010b. A sort of opera omnia is contained in Zamenhof 1929. More than many theoretical reflections, it may be worth reading, at least *in excerpta*: “Dear ladies and gentlemen! I greet you, dear comrades, brothers and sisters from the great world human family who gather together from near and far lands from the world to shake your hands one another in the name of the great idea which links us together. [...] Today is a holy day for us. [...] In oldest times, so old that a very long time ago they disappeared from Man’s memory and about which no history has recorded even the smallest document, the human family separated and its members stopped understanding one another. Brothers who had been created according to the same and only model, who had identical



In closing his speech, Zamenhof’s focus shifted – almost unexpectedly, if one does not consider the background of his thought – from the linguistic to the religious level. His prolusion, which already showed, though under the veil of a linguistic reflection, a fully socio-political approach, closed – *mirabile dictu* – with the prayer that follows and introduced a sort of ecumenism *ante litteram* between the three great monotheistic religions¹⁷:

<p><i>Preĝo sub la verda standardo</i></p> <p>Al Vi, ho potenca senkorpa mistero, Fortego, la mondon reganta, Al Vi, granda fonto de l’ amo kaj vero Kaj fonto de vivo konstanta,</p>	<p>Prayer under the green banner</p> <p>To you, o powerful bodiless mystery, Superforce who rules the world, To you, great fountain of love and truth And fountain of constant life, To you, to whom everybody present in a different</p>
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bodies, the same spirit, the same abilities, ideals, the same God in their hearts, brothers who had to help one another and work together to achieve happiness and their family's glory, —those brothers became complete strangers to one another. They spread away apparently for good into enemy little groups, and eternal war started among them. For thousands of years, during as much time as history has recorded, those brothers have just fought to death one another and all mutual understanding was simple impossible. Prophets and poets daydreamed with certain nebulous time in which Man would start understanding again one another and would unite again into a family: but that was just daydreaming. This was talked about just as a sweet fantasy, but nobody took it seriously, nobody believed in it. And now for the first time that thousand years old daydream starts being true! To a little town on the French shore came people from the most divergent lands and nations, and they meet one another not like dumb and deaf people, but they understand one another, they speak to one another like brothers and sisters, like members of the same one nation. [...] In our congress there are no strong and weak nations, privileged and non-privileged, nobody humiliates, nobody is annoyed; we all stand on a neutral foundation, we all have fully equal rights, we all feel ourselves as members of one nation, as members of one family, and for the first time in human history we, members of the most different peoples stand one beside the other not like strangers, not like competitors, but like brothers and sisters who understand one another without forcing one upon the other, without distrusting because of dividing shadowy misunderstandings, who love one another and shake hands with one another, not hypocritically like foreigners, but sincerely, like man to man. Let’s be conscious of the whole importance of today, since today among the hosting walls of Boulogne-sur-Mer we gathered together not French with English, not Russians with Polish, but men with men. Blessed may be the day, and great and glorious be its consequences! [...] After many millennia of mutual dumb-deafness and war, just in Boulogne-sur-Mer mutual understanding starts in fact in great scale, and also it starts the union of members from divergent peoples from Human kind; [...] Soon the work of our Congress will start, devoted to the true brothering of mankind. At this solemn moment my heart is full with something uncertain and mysterious, and I feel the desire to ease out my heart by means of a prayer, to address some highest and most mysterious force and call its help and blessing. But likewise now I feel that I do not belong to any national or party religion, but I am just a man. And at the present moment I am not a member of any nation, but just a man. And in this moment in front of my soul's eyes stands only this high moral Force which everybody feels in the heart, and to this unknown Force I turn with my prayer”.

¹⁷ Zamenhof would even end up proposing, through his *Dogmoj de la Homaranismo* (published for the first time in *Ruslanda Esperantisto* – February 1906 – using the pseudonym ‘Homo sum’, and republished, with slight changes, under Zamenhof’s signature in 1913) a kind of natural secular religion, *Homaranism*. The principles that informed this new religion are brotherhood, equality and reciprocal justice aimed at equalling all human beings and at achieving a form of universalism that would guarantee humankind peace, prosperity and well-being. In Astori 2021 these texts are introduced, translated (into Italian), commented and discussed.



Al Vi, kiun ĉiuj malsame prezentas,
Sed ĉiuj egale en koro Vin sentas,
Al Vi, kiu kreas, al Vi kiu reĝas,
Hodiaŭ mi preĝas.

Al Vi ni ne venas kun kredo nacia,
Kun dogmoj de blinda fervoro:
Silentas nun ĉiu disput' religia
Kaj regas nur kredo de koro.
Kun ĝi, kiu estas ĉe ĉiuj egala,
Kun ĝi, la plej vera, sen trudo
batala,
Ni staras nun, filoj de l' tuta homaro
Ĉe via altaro.

Homaron Vi kreis perfekte kaj bele,
Sed ĝi sin dividis batala;
Popolo popolon atakas kruele,
Frat' fraton atakas ŝakale,
Ho, kiu ajn estas Vi, forto mistera,
Aŭskultu la voĉon de l' preĝo
sincera,
Redonu la pacon al la infanaro
De l' granda homaro!

Ni ĵuris labori, ni ĵuris batali,
Por reunigi l' homaron.
Subtenu nin, Forto, ne lasu nin fali,
Sed lasu nin venki la baron;
Donacu Vi benon al nia laboro,
Donacu Vi forton al nia fervoro,
Ke ĉiam ni kontraŭ atakoj sovaĝaj
Nin tenu kuraĝaj.

La verdan standardon tre alte ni
tenos:
Ĝi signas la bonon kaj belon.
La Forto mistera de l' mondo nin
benos,
Kaj nian atingos ni celon.
Ni inter popoloj la murojn detruos,

way,
But to whom everybody feels all the same in their
heart,
To you, who creates, to you, who rules,
I pray today.

To you I do not come with a national creed,
With dogmas of blind fervor:
Any religious dispute now quiets
And rules only the creed of heart.
With it, which is the same for all,
With it, the truest, without war-like imposition,
We stand now, offspring of the whole human kind
At your shrine.

You created Mankind perfect and beautiful,
But it divided through battle;
People attack people cruelly,
Brother charges brother like a jackal,
O, whoever you are, mysterious force,
Hear the voice of sincere prayer,
Give the children of large Mankind
Back peace!

We swore to work, we swore to combat,
To reunite mankind.
Support us, Force, do not let us fall,
But let us overcome the bars;
Grant us your blessing to our labor,
Grant us your force to our fervor,
That always against wild deeds
We stand bravely.

The green flag we will hold very high:
It signifies the good and beautiful.
The mysterious Force of the world may bless us
And may we reach our objective.
May we destroy the walls among peoples,
And may they break and explode,
And fall forever, and love and truth
May rule all over the earth.



<p>Kaj ili ekkrakos kaj ili ekbruos, Kaj falos por ĉiam, kaj amo kaj vero Ekregos sur tero.</p> <p>Kuniĝu la fratoj, plektiĝu la manoj, antaŭen kun pacaj armiloj! Kristanoj, hebreoj aŭ mahometanoj ni ĉiuj de Di' estas filoj. Ni ĉiam memoru pri bon' de l' homaro, kaj malgraŭ malhelpoj, sen halto kaj staro al frata la celo ni iru obstine antaŭen, senfine.</p>	<p>Join the brothers, bride their hands, forward with weapons of peace! Christians, Jews or Mohammedans we are all children of God.</p> <p>Let us always remember the good of humanity, and in spite of obstacles, without pauses and stasis let us address obstinately to the fraternal intent, forward, without end!</p>
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The sixth and last stanza, which was considered controversial at the beginning of the century and was not read at the time, nor was published in the *Fundamenta Krestomatio de Esperanto* (the first collection of style models, original and translated, published in 1903) comes full circle. It gives voice to Zamenhof's – and many others' – dream of a world in which the great classical religions based on revelation could set their differences to contribute, together, to the good of humanity.

5. ALMOST A CONCLUSION

The article, as shown, aims to take into account the intercultural and interreligious dialogue in Europe, according to three main points. The first concerns the etymology of Europe as name, whose Proto-Semitic root 'rv/'vr contains the idea of movement and passage (this is a "file rouge", common to Europeans, Christians, Jews, and Arabs, who have the same biblical ancestor Noah); the second point examines the confluence of different cultures in the *Schola Medica Salernitana*, a clear example of religious and cultural coexistence in Europe; the last point focuses on the Esperanto project, which proposes a cultural-linguistic, religious, and sacral encounter between Europeans, proposing the creation of a bridge-language and a bridge religion – Zamenhof's prologue focuses on this, expressing a desire for European unity. The three of them reflect about the unity of the manhood and the importance of the dialogue among cultural and linguistic traditions.



The idea of a ‘human family’¹⁸ is the successful cultural revival of an original mythological narration, but it is also inherent in human nature, which is always searching for peace and respect for diversity, as a biological necessity of its existence and of its natural possibility of dialogue and interrelation.

Despite our being *homines peditantes*, whom History – from the first (forced) migration from the *gan-eden*, to Abraham’s journey, to the post-Babel diaspora – has led to populate the earth in many and diverse forms and ways, we are all Adam’s descendants (or rather, Cain’s ... but that is another story), and therefore all brothers and citizens of the world, as we are all creatures of the same Mother Earth – “There are no races – I stated in Astori 2017 – but a single human race, born from a man, who is here represented by Adam and later by Noah”.

Even the initial slight etymological suggestion can encourage a reflection on these major themes and open up new glimpses in a contemporary globalised world which is paradoxically polarising more and more tensions between the two pillars of what, in ancient times, everybody would have called Eurasia. Despite being a single continent and a clear socio-cultural unity, that anyway we intend as two separate realities, Eurasia is based on migration and exchange, on contact and pollination, on mingling and interpenetration.

As I wrote in the introduction to Astori 2011c: "Eurasia has been a strange continent, a crossroads of encounters and fusions since early antiquity. The Phoenicians and their trade spread the alphabet throughout the Mediterranean (which, not by chance, was called *nostrum* in antiquity and is still called *medium* today). The Jews were in Rome before Christianity, in an empire, which was an experimental ‘melting-pot’ *ante litteram*. The Greeks, although they called others ‘barbarians’, told that Zeus asked the Ethiopians for advice; and the Odyssey is a wonderful learning journey across peoples and cultures. In Augustine’s words, as *itinerarium mentis in Deum*, Christianity is a symbolic journey, a long and complex process of globalisation (a telling episode is Peter's *katholikos* dream – *Acts* 10,9-16 – where a set table represents the absence of racial and cultural barriers). Aeneas, the founder of Rome but also a Trojan refugee from Anatolia, today would have a Turkish passport. And to remain in this kaleidoscope of inter-linguistic and cultural references, Rome as a name has probably Etruscan origins, but it would take us too far into a debate that has never ended”. This reflection echoes in Astori 2014: “In this world of ours, with our mind more and more projected at a future that is not reassuring at all, we could pose a challenge: taking shape from the ancient world, we could try to interpret the contemporary world tension from another perspective and see if it brings prosperity. The Mediterranean basin, which has been the melting pot of a common Eastern-Western vision since ancient times, has always shown (this argument furthers linguistic cause) a tolerance that could appear uncommon to our

¹⁸ The reference to the last encyclical of Pope Francis “Fratres omnes” is here essential, a text which deals with the same topics using the concept of “human fraternity”.



modern eyes. In a sort of ‘melting pot’ *ante litteram* or of globalisation just like the way today we can only hope for (not to say: dream of), the ancient world did not create barriers but representations of great macro-units, starting precisely from the concept of Eurasia. Without delving into a debate that would take us far away (i.e. the etymology of the term ‘Europe’), the facets of the myth allow us to perceive the freedom of movement, exchange, contamination which was experienced in the ancient world in a totally positive and constructive way if we compare it to our contemporary situation. Sauneron’s conclusion (1960: 41) is meaningful: “Dans un monde stable, les différences, comme les similitudes, ne sont pas des caractères fortuits, apparaissant à des moments donnés de l’histoire: elles sont éternelles, et prévues dès la création. Mais, derrière cette intentionnelle diversité, subsiste une fondamentale fraternité d’origine, [...] la conception d’une communauté humaine universelle”. It shows once again that a viable solution to solve the problem with the ‘other’ is precisely what we have briefly tried to explain at the outset of this study. According to a linguistic and communicative approach, the challenge of diversity – despite our inherent and biological fear of what is new – is the primary source of growth and enrichment, both for the individual and for the community. One of the main, if not the first and foremost, challenge of modernity can be found in the gradation which has led the Indo-European root *g^vosti- to become, on the one hand, *hostis* ‘the enemy’ and on the other hand *Gast* ‘the guest’: on this crucial distinction a large part of our future – and of our present, too – will be put into play”¹⁹.

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¹⁹ From the paronomastic games of the ancients, through the Leopardi and Vichian sensibility, up to the treatment of Benveniste 1969: 64-71 and the summary provided by Bettini – Borghini 1983, this relationship emerges as a sort of archetype within the history of human culture. See Astori 2020d for further development.



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