

Nothing, ladies and gentlemen, nothing that we are, think and dream, belongs to us alone. Everything is inheritance. Everything is transmitted. Europe is not news, it is not an invention or achievement of our time. We have received the European idea that includes more than just geographic data, as a gift from the past. People believed in Europe when there were no stopwatches yet, no institutionalized right, no idea of an open future. The hope that there could be a utopian order that binds conceptually what in reality threatens to shatter in one's hand.

The idea that the perimeter of the living space is larger than that which can be seen with one's own eye. Striving to break and record the sequence of time, to make history accessible - Europe: Pictures of an exhibition - these are the real driving forces of European thinking.

The majority and the powerful speak of Europe today, and mean: free trade, data and climate protection, counter-terrorism, legal security, and high quality standards for milk and democracy. They say Europe and mean the EU, position Brussels strategically as a counterpoint to Beijing, Moscow and Washington. As a system of values that secretly wants to be a system of goods, but it is too noble to admit it. Like an older woman who brags about her opera subscription in front of her girlfriends and then at home watches schmaltzy music shows on TV. Europe as a placebo - that is not what I want to talk about.

The real healing power of the idea of Europe can only be experienced by those who are open to what Europe means culturally.

Which secret, transnational links exist between art and architecture, language and typefaces. How spaces, gestures and schools of thought here contain mysterious affirmations of interplay. An interplay of different languages, living environments and traditions, but also and above all the interaction between two different regions of the mind: reason on the one hand and empathy on the other. This is the mixed doubles that Europe plays on a variety of courts, under different weather conditions; sometimes the return is stronger, sometimes the serve, but one never enters the court without the other. At the moment, rationality is much more popular. Society values critique and enlightenment more than wondrous faith and yearning passion.

But Europe is also defined by the mythos, and has always given the unexplainable, the inwardness and entrancement a strong right, accepted the slogan alongside the solution as the flip side of the coin.

Europe was and is also a romantic formula, a word of hope for fantasists and enthusiasts, a keyword for zeitgeist as well as for weltenschmerz. And it is the central basic concept of a cultural--one could also say "aesthetic"--education for freedom.

European scholar Jacob Burckhardt, who just had his two-hundredth birthday, argued that culture is the third great historical power in Europe, alongside the state and religion. As we reflect on Europe today, we should remember this, because simply ignoring the impact of culture can lead to serious consequences in the long run. We have to find a new tone again today, a completely different pitch, in which we talk about Europe. The phrases of politicians and bureaucrats, of traders and negotiators, but also of journalists and preachers, are faded and ineffective, because they are used by everyone everywhere without special effort. The political talk about Europe has become the talk of the advantages or disadvantages of the EU for individual member states. The poison that has thus quietly trickled back into the consciousness takes its effect through relentless focus on advantages, cynical malice and mutual mistrust. If Stefan Zweig in 1932 thought that a "detoxification of Europe" was possible not through political initiatives, but only through "trans-political" cultural understandings, then he relied on a special characteristic of culture: its temporal generosity. Unlike politics and business, both of which jump hectically between time periods, are quick to be absorbed by history and driven by progress and competition, the essential products of culture withstand the tides of time. A thought by Plato reaches through the epochs, a scene by Shakespeare, a Mantegna picture or a line by Marie Luise Kaschnitz do not lose their value as the years go by. Art and culture have no expiration date, they can touch people throughout the ages, instigate and integrate them, no matter which year they assign to their lives. And culture has another essential characteristic: it is transgressing. Where defined borders divide up the individual European countries - as they must, for the sake of the functionality of our educational and social systems - culture flies over them, has the opportunity to touch lives regardless of their geographic location: Finnish violin concertos are also understood in Romania, an Austrian can be touched by the line of a Spanish poem, a Dutchman can see himself in a Polish picture. Jose Ortega y Gasset once said: "If we were to take stock of our spiritual possessions, it would turn out that most of it stems not from our respective home-

land, but the shared European fundus. Four-fifths of our internal possessions are European common property.”

Culture is transtemporal and transnational. That’s its strength, what distinguishes it from politics and business, from the “state”. It is separated from “religion” (which also has a high potential for integration within a denomination) thanks to its open-mindedness of interpretation, and its playful instinct for entertainment. Dogma and radicalism are only conceivable in the process of development, in its reception culture must always be liberal, open to the many. That is why, in contrast to politics or finance, culture can serve as a “platform” upon which the national mindsets can come closer. Culture is in fact the only point of departure for approaching Europe as a “shared home of the heart”.

But in my opinion, culture can only become a “home of the heart” and strengthen Europe if it is independent of the other two potencies, in particular if it is emancipated from politics. We live in an age in which culture too often lets itself become the maid of moral policy. The urge to make oneself independent from the events of the day, to claim the freedom to create counter-realities, visions, mannerisms, words of art, seems weaker than ever. The urge is intimidated by the strict primacy of moral policy. The label “escapist” is attached to everything that is not directly related to current events: when an evening in the theater for once has nothing to do with Trump or a photo exhibit has nothing to say about the climate disaster. What has become of the artistic pleasure in the strange, the contradictory, mysterious, inexplicable? Why does culture let go of its unique selling proposition so easily? Its beauty is precisely that it does not have to be based on election programs, morality or profit rates. Art is free, they say. But free to do what? To simply recast the editorials and popular attitudes in its respective medium? Shouldn’t it instead be free to offer another, surprising worldview? To argue sensually, to look at humanity from an existential angle, to see the transtemporal potential of our emotions and come closer to our core. That would be the real freedom that art could take on. But it would once again have to claim a stronger intrinsic logic, courageously speak a different language than the one that can already be heard everywhere else. Imagination, beauty, weltenschmerz - these are its currently neglected godparents.

But only if culture remembers this, only if it confidently and willfully stands up to politics and speaks in its own words again, only then can it help Europe

become the home of the heart. If it is only a means to a day-to-day political purpose, it will not succeed. However you define art, as a means of existential consolation, as Euripides did, as way to purify the soul, as Aristotle did, as a drive for the re-enchantment of the everyday like the Romantics or as a chance to improve oneself as a human being in the mold of Schiller - in whatever form, art and culture offer the chance of a Mimesis of the world by other means. Its goal is precisely not to reach scientific truths, but to awaken the viewer's empathy and sentience, to tempt the viewer to think and feel more generously. There is a lot of humane and community-building power in culture. Take the theatre, for example: In essence, it offers the best opportunity to heal European society from the currently dominant, self-referential fixation on identity. As has been broadly remarked, the identity movement on the right and left relies on the same illiberal idea that their personal experiences in life alone entitle them to create a worldview. As if it was not a crucial part of the world, let alone a worldview, that it speaks to people of very different backgrounds and attitudes.

In the theatre you get to experience exactly that: the diversity of different character traits and attitudes towards the world. Here you meet the wise who were defeated anyway, the errant heroes, bourgeois blunderers and surreal messengers of death. You even get to know queens here. Where else can you meet them in 2018? For this reason alone, our politicians and identity activists should go to the theatre as often as possible to shake up their counter-images, to understand and accept otherness. To "morally detoxify", Zweig would say.

In the sense of its pluralistic claim, it is necessary for culture to also show the strange, the incomprehensible, the freaky, even the archaic, or reactionary, because it is present in our society: "When we are no longer able to voice the resentments that exist in Europe in the theater, that is when it gets dangerous." as Frank Castorf said recently; he who reveres Celine, Malaparte and Ernst Jünger precisely because they opposed the spirit of the times. And Chris Dercon calls out: "Good art is like an intruder who is taken in and whom I don't know yet."

In culture you don't get far with moral-political attitudes. It is the stomping grounds of unpleasant people, a murderer like Caravaggio or an anti-democrat like Balzac, who Marx said was a terrible royalist. And yet, no one described French society better than him. Or the movies of Roman Polanski,

which are hard to dismiss by simply referring to his dubious sex life. In politics and morality, that might be ok, but in culture one should be careful with prohibitions: To take down a painting because it doesn't correspond to current sexual morality, to remove a poem from a house wall because it evokes chauvinistic associations, to black out incriminating words in children's books - all this will make a European community of spirit not stronger, but weaker. What Europe needs from culture is disagreement, debate, productive disagreement.

While dangerous in the political arena, where tension and hatred are quick to arise, as Stefan Zweig suspected in 1932, in the protected sphere of culture everything can be tried out, there must still be room for the most daring experiments. In other words, here you can dream and agitate.

In order to encourage each other to find our own language again, it is necessary today that artists and those in the cultural sphere in Europe once again unite in groups. I believe that at the moment, more than ever, strength can only be developed collectively. Zweig's dream of "higher organizations" that are not "too un-youthful and professoral" make new, stimulating sense in our hyper-individualistic time.

Germany's cultural role today could be, as it was in the past (and most recently in 1947, after the devastating World War), as a breeding ground for artistic groups and movements that spread across Europe and unite, "play together" to return to the Tennis analogy. These groups are united by their interest in aesthetics, language, images, sounds, movement and thus they come together, not through their attitude towards gay marriage or the transfer union. Germany's role in Europe must not only be defined by its economic policy; it must also be filled by a cultural movement, which works together and is independent of party-political interests, which interrogates the European spirit, its past (including the dark sides) and draws strength from it for the future. Creative restoration plus nimble accelerationism would be the magic formula.

The idea of the European Community must be experienced on a small scale so that it can take effect on a large scale. The doubts about the European Union, which have become near-constant, can be countered not by treating Europe as a mere administrative-economic institution, but as a cultural focal point. An example of this is the group "Arbeit an Europa" ("Working on Europe"), which was started last year on the night after the Brexit vote and of which I am a member. Young thinkers meet regularly in a European provincial

region, away from the globalized metropolises to get to know the European intellectual space. These meetings consist on the one hand of discussing and re-defining central terms, and on the other hand of meeting local young Europeans and old eyewitnesses of history. There is talk of cultural futures and archiving of Europe's different pasts. It's not a question of political pedagogy, there is no clear programmatic goal. The meeting and the need to call Europe one's "home of the heart", to find new tones and colours to describe what surrounds us as an ideal that is what we call "working on Europe". Whether Stefan Zweig meant such an institution when he spoke in Rome in 1932 about the "moral detoxification of Europe"? In any case, he, too, wanted an energy-boosting community that shows the younger generation in all European countries that they are participating in a shared cause when they are working to increase the intellectual output of their countries.

His word holds: Whoever makes culture, is engaged in art or has a philosophical thought does something for Europe - not in the form of regulations, or trade agreements, not for the surface, but in the form of mental insurance certificates, of sentient supporting pillars. Nothing that we are, think and dream belongs to us alone. Everything is inheritance. Everything is transmission. Europe is one big broadcaster. There are so many secret frequencies, so many voices and moods. All we have to do is flip the switch to receive.