



Europa eine Seele geben
A Soul for Europe
Une âme pour l'Europe

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Speech at the Berlin Conference "A Soul for Europe",
17-19 November 2006

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Giving Europe a Soul?

"What is Europe?"
"How is Europe?"

One has the impression
that Europe is a wreck,
fucked,
"foutue",
if you think back to the constitution disaster,
reflect on Europe's actual political influence
or on the lack of enthusiasm shown by its citizens
for "the European Cause" in recent times.
"The Europeans" have **had it up to here** with Europe...

On the other hand,
Europe is heaven on earth,
the **promised land**,
as soon as you look at it from the outside.
Over the last couple of months,
I have seen Europe from Chicago and New York,
from Tokyo and Rio,
from Australia,
from the heart of Africa, the Congo,
and, just last week, from Moscow.
I am telling you:
In each case, Europe appeared in a different light,
but always as paradise,
as a dream of mankind,
as a stronghold of peace, prosperity and civilization.

Europe:
Now you see it,
now you don't.

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Those who have lived for a long time in Europe
seem weary of it.
Those who are not there, who live somewhere else,
want to get here at any price and join us.
What is it then
that some HAVE,
yet no longer want,
and for which others YEARN so much?

I can just as well ask myself:
Why is it that I find Europe so "holy",
as soon as I see it from a distance,
and why does it appear so profane, humdrum, almost boring,
as soon as I am back?

When I was young,
I dreamed of a Europe without borders.
Now, I travel back and forth
without ever having to show my passport,
and I even get to use the same currency all over,
(even if it is pronounced differently everywhere),
but where has that big emotion gone?

Here in Berlin, I am German,
in the meantime with all my heart.
Yet, hardly do you set foot in America,
than you no longer say you are from Germany, France, Italy or wherever.
You come "from Europe," or you're about to return there.
For Americans, this epitomizes culture,
history, style, "savoir vivre."
It's the only thing they feel strangely inferior about.
Even rather permanently.

And even when viewed from Asia, let alone other parts of the world,
Europe appears to be a bastion of human history,
dignity, and, yes, this word again: culture.

Europe has a soul, indeed.
No need to invent or create one for our continent.
It's there in plain sight.
It is not to be found in its politics or in its economy.
It is first and foremost embedded in its culture.

I am kicking open doors.
Two years ago, the President of the European Commission



stood here in Berlin and stated the matter quite clearly.
I quote from the end of his speech:

"Europe is not only about markets, it is also about values and culture.
And allow me a personal remark:
in the hierarchy of values, the cultural ones range above the economic ones.
If the economy is a necessity for our lives,
culture is really what makes our life worth living."

I could quote other sections of his memorable speech,
in fact I'd like to read it in its entirety,
so much he took the words out of my mouth.

But, I'm afraid,
reality looks quite different:
to the outside world, and especially to its citizens,
Europe continues to present itself first of all as an economic power,
insisting on using political and financial arguments
over cultural ones at any give time.

Europe is not taking advantage of its **emotional potential!**

Who loves his (or her) country on account of its politics or its economy?
No one!

Just next door, 100 metres from here,
you'll find one of the "showrooms" of the European Community.
There's one like that in every other European capital.
And what's on display there?
Lots of maps, brochures, mostly economic information,
all sorts of statistics and stuff on the history of the European Union.
What a drag!
Who can possibly feel represented there?
Who are these places trying to reach,
or boring to death?

We live in the **age of the image**.
Today, no other realm of culture displays so much power
than that of the image.
Words, music, literature,
books, newspapers, rock'n roll, theatre...
nothing comes even close
to the authority of moving images, in cinema and television.



Why is it that today, not only in Europe,
but all over the world,
"going to the pictures"
is synonymous with
"seeing an American film"?!

Because the Americans realized long ago
what moves people most
and what gets them dreaming.
And they radically implemented that knowledge.
The whole "American Dream"
is really an invention of cinema,
and it is now being dreamed by the whole world.

I don't want to discredit this,
but merely ask the question,
"Who is dreaming the European Dream?"
Or better: How are we encouraged to dream it?

A concrete, current example just occurred to me:
In the next 2 months or so,
some 20, 30, or even 50 million Europeans
will watch one and the same film.
It started the other day:
every channel up and down,
every programme and news show,
- and I've been surfing TV stations throughout Europe -
reported at large on a film premiere in London.
As you have probably guessed already,
all the racket was about **James Bond**,
that knightly British gentleman,
who has been saving the world from disaster for the last forty years.
Do you recall that magnificent Scotsman, Sir Sean Connery,
who used to embody this European hero?
Or that most elegant, cultivated Irishman, Pierce Brosnan?

Now, over Christmas and through New Year's Eve probably,
millions of Europeans will all be watching, at the same time,
somebody who looks more like a thug,
and whose resemblance to Russian President Vladimir Putin
can scarcely be denied.
This new Bond is supposedly quite ruthless
and not too particular when it comes to applying violence.
What is the message here?
What is this American production trying to tell us?



All right, I might be exaggerating,
but the heart of the matter remains pretty much true:
our own myths don't belong to us anymore.
Nothing forms our contemporary imagination so intensely,
so specifically
and permanently
as cinema.
But we are no longer in control.
It doesn't belong to us anymore.
Our very own and precious invention has slipped away from us.

European cinema
- and it exists, in spite of everything! -
is produced in almost 50 European countries,
yet in European theatres our own European stories
no longer play a significant role.

Those images of European cinema,
could help a whole new generation of Europeans to recognize themselves,
they could define what Europe is all about
in emotional, powerful and lasting terms.
These films could convey European thinking to the world.
We could communicate our most valuable asset,
our CULTURE, in a contagious way,
could spread the word of the "Open Society,"
which was so urgently invoked here by **George Soros**, only yesterday,
our civilization of dialogue, peace, and humanity...
But we have let this weapon slip out of our hands.

I intentionally say WEAPON,
because images are the most powerful arms of this 21st century.

There will be no "European consciousness",
no emotions and no attachment felt towards our home continent,
in brief: no future European identity,
if we are unable to project, and to absorb,
our own myths,
our own history,
and our own ideas and emotions!

Spain, for example, has no stronger and more influential ambassador
to the world than Pedro Almodovar.
For Britain that would be Ken Loach,
Andrzej Wajda or Polanski for Poland.



Although he died some 13 years ago,
Federico Fellini continues to define the Italian soul...
And that is exactly what European cinema does -
it shapes and forms our consciousness of ourselves
and of each other!
It creates a European belief,
a European will,
that very European "soul" that we're talking about here.

However, have a look around
at the place we actually give to our TREASURE,
what a poor role it actually plays in the cultural life of Europe.
Yes, look at how European politics
continue to dismally neglect
not only cinema, but culture in general.
Yet, this is the CEMENT,
the glue that bonds European EMOTIONS!

All these countries yearning for Europe,
including all the new and future member countries from Eastern Europe,
could on one hand have the opportunity to introduce themselves,
tell us about themselves,
win us over,
and on the other hand be welcomed and embraced
by the European CAUSE
and the European SOUL...
... if only
we would provide more support for our **mutual ambassadors**,
if only Europe could be brought to believe in the power of images.

Mind you, a grave error is being made here.
Europe prefers to use political and economical arguments,
over emotional ones!
Next door, in the showroom,
the most boring maps are hanging on the walls,
while in our most important embassies,
in cinemas and on TV,
the superpower of imagery, America, is pulling people under its spell,
including our European citizens, of course.

These young people
now suffering from a "European withdrawal"
will one day turn against European policy makers
with the harsh and bitter reproach:
Why did you allow



a whole generation to get bored of Europe?!
Why did you just babble on about politics,
instead of SHOWING us how much our magnificent home continent
could have meant to us!

Europe HAS a cultural history,
it HAS its own culture of life, of conflict, of dialogue,
yes, it HAS an amazing political culture.
George Soros calls it "The Open Society."
And because, as he explained, America had failed in recent times
to exemplify and demonstrate its moral and political values,
Europe represents an even more important MODEL for the world.

BUT:
This model is invalid and weak
if it has no confidence in the power of its own imagery!
No one, esteemed Mr. Soros,
will be swept away, enthused and inspired by the OPEN SOCIETY,
as long as it remains an ABSTRACT IDEA.
Such a vision has to be attached to feelings,
to places, to memories.

These "European emotions" are right in front of our eyes,
you can almost grasp them,
the citizens of Europe are certainly yearning for them...
but politics is widely ignoring them.
The field of images
is largely being left to others.

I hope that Europe is not too late in recognizing
which **crucial battlefield** is about to be abandoned
with little resistance.