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GREEK AND ROMAN ROOTS OF EUROPEAN CIVILISATION

What is Europe? The modern scientific discourse leads to the conclusion that Europe and its civilisation are concepts that are imprecisely defined in terms of space, politics, society and culture. On the other hand, despite the complexity, multifacetedness of the issue of culture in relation to civilisation, it seems that there are some features, roots and, to a large extent, history that European countries share in common. In this text attention will be paid to Greek and Roman cultural elements that underlie the shaping of European civilisation, also called "Western civilisation." Due to volume restrictions imposed by the article, the contribution of barbarian tribes and Christianity will not be analysed, although the author is aware that a fuller picture of the "roots of Europe" also requires taking these factors into account.

First, a few general remarks will be made. In order to analyse the sources of European civilisation one should take into account the historical context. This context is useful for sociologists, philosophers and cultural scholars because without it understanding the mechanisms of the modern world would be impossible. History gives one the opportunity to think more deeply about the present.

The problem of understanding civilisation should also be solved. After all, there is more than one theory of civilisation, so one of the

available theories has to be chosen. Leaving aside the secondary dispute about the understanding of the relationship between civilisation and culture,[1] the author agrees with F. Braudel that civilisation is a special kind of culture that extends over a large geographic area, encompasses a large population and is characterized by long duration.[2] In addition, the author presupposes that civilisation integrates cultures that are proportionate in their genesis or content (essential characteristics), so he assumes that civilisation is the method of organizing the life of communities.[3]

While investigating the sources of any civilisation and the rules that govern it, one should also acknowledge that the process of its formation is long-lasting and complex, but at the same time indistinct, indefinite and devoid of characteristic moments.

The events that occur in the process of the emergence of a civilisation may be intentional, clearly visible and easy to locate in time and space, but they may also be natural, spontaneous and difficult to comprehend.[4] The words of Denis de Rougemont express this well:

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[1] See R. Wei, "Civilisation and Culture," *Globality Studies Journal* 24 (2011): 1–9 [https://gsj.stonybrook.edu/wp-content/uploads/2011/05/0024Wei.pdf; accessed on 8 March 2017]; M. Williams, *Culture, Civilisation and Theories* [http://libir.soka.ac.jp/dspace/bitstream/10911/4155/1/Mukesh%20Williams_35-2.pdf; accessed on 8 March 2017]. In the context of the relationship and meaning of the words *culture* and *civilisation* it is worth referring to the still valid and erudite study: S. Wędkiewicz, "Cywilizacja czy kultura? Z zagadnień terminologii nauk humanistycznych [Civilisation or Culture? From the Terminology of the Humanities]," in *Symbolae grammatice in honorem Ioannis Rozwadowski*, vol. II (Kraków 1928), 501–521. Cf. K. Krzysztofek, *Cywilizacja: dwie optyki* [*Civilisation: Two Points of View*] (Warszawa: Instytut Kultury, 1991), 5–21.

[2] See F. Braudel, *A History of Civilisations*, trans. R. Mayne, Allen Lane (New York: The Penguin Press, 1994), 9–36. Cf. M. Golka, *Cywilizacja współczesna i globalne problemy* [*Contemporary Civilisation and Global Issues*] (Warszawa: Oficyna Naukowa, 2012), 14.

[3] See, e.g., F. Koneczny, *On the Plurality of Civilisations*, trans. A. Hilckman (London: Polonica Publications, 1962), 122.

[4] See Golka, *Cywilizacja współczesna i globalne problemy*, 52.

> This is our civilisation, understood not as a pre-established creation . . . and not as a progressive realization of some Platonic idea of Europe. On the contrary: we see it as a broad weave of tension, looking for the still-challenged balance, a group of unexplored discoveries, which are constantly confronting new problems—in a word, as an adventure.[5]

European civilisation is a dynamic creation in a particular place and time, difficult to describe, yet that does not mean that attempts to do that are doomed to failure. There is no agreement among historians about the exact date of birth of the European civilisation, although their suggestions are quite similar. Christopher Dawson sets its beginnings in the period between the fourth and the eighth century, when, in his opinion, the later features and cultural achievements of Europe were initiated.[6]

Norman Davies adopts the years 330–800 as the time of Europe's birth. Those centuries were significant for the incubation of the Western civilisation, but its development was prolonged. In fact, the year 476, when Odoaker staged a coup in Rome, is no longer universally accepted today as a turning point closing the times of the Antiquity and opening the Middle Ages. Hence the indications of some of the later dates of the "birth" of European civilisation (e.g. Michael McCormick dates the birth of the European trading economy to the eighth–ninth century).[7] According to Peter Heather, it was only around the year 1000 that the European civilisation was formed and its essence was the cultural and

[5] "Voilà donc notre civilisation définenon point comme une création préconçue . . . non point comme la réalisation progressive d'une ideé platonicienne de l'Europe, mais *acontraire* comme un vaste complexe de tensions, de recherches jamais achevées d'un équilibre sans cesse remis en question et de découvertes inouïes posant toujours de novueaux problèmes—en un mot comme une aventure" (D. de Rougemont, *Lettre ouverte aux Européens* (Paris: Editions Albin Michel, 1970), 39).

[6] See Ch. Dawson, *The Making of Europe. An Introduction to the History of European Unity* (New York: Meridian Books, 1956), 250.

[7] See M. McCormick, *Origins of the European Economy. Communications and Commerce, A.D. 300-900* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 738–757.

religious Christian unity.[8] The emergence of the Western European civilisation, initiated in the period between the fifth and the eighth century, gained a visible political support in the tenth century through Otto III's attempt to establish, or rather renew, the Holy Empire with reference to the Romanesque and Carolingian traditions and with the influence of Christianity. It should also be kept in mind that around the year 1000 several countries adopted Christianity (The Czech Republic, Poland and Hungary). Additionally, Jerzy Kłoczowski recalls that "with the intense Christianisation of the ninth, and especially of the tenth century, and the rise of the »new Christianity« in the great Slavic-Hungarian-Scandinavian areas, Europe was ultimately built within the borders set for the whole millennium."[9] On the other hand, Gerard Delanty, in his study of the evolution of the idea of European identity, emphasizes that "by the tenth century the idea of Europe had evolved from a mere geographical expression to a cultural idea which had political uses but which had not yet stabilised to be the basis of a specifically European identity."[10] That process began later—in the fifteenth century, together with geographical discoveries, colonial expansion, the development of European science based on rationalism and the dominance of "culture over nature" achieved by this civilisation—and was fully expressed in the seventeenth century as a system of specifically European values.[11]

[8] See P. Heather, *Empires and Barbarians. The Fall of Rome and the Birth of Europe* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 612.
[9] J. Kłoczowski, *Młodsza Europa. Europa Środkowo-Wschodnia w kręgu cywilizacji chrześcijańskiej średniowiecza* [*Younger Europe. Central and Eastern Europe in the Circle of Christian Civilisation of the Middle Ages*] (Warszawa: PIW, 1998), 485.
[10] G. Delanty, *Inventing Europe. Idea, Identity, Reality* (London: Macmillan Press LTD, 1995), 29.
[11] See *ibid*., 33–36.

Europe in Relation to Legends

Every legend holds a grain of truth that symbolizes an important aspect of the community to which it relates. Europa is the "heroine" of one of the most respectable legends in the classical world. She was the mother of the ruler of Crete, Minos, and thus the ancestor of the oldest branch of Mediterranean civilisation. She was mentioned briefly by Homer, but gained immortality as an innocent princess, seduced by the father of gods in a poem about the abduction of Europa, the authorship of which is attributed to Moschos of Syracuse, and, above all, in *The Metamorphoses* by a Roman poet, Ovid.[12]

One day, when she was walking by the sea in her hometown of Phoenicia in the company of her ladies-in-waiting, she was enchanted by Zeus, who transformed himself into a snow-white bull. The girl came to the bull and sat on its back to ride along the beach. Meanwhile Zeus-bull, despite the screams of the girl, ran into the water and swam towards Crete.[13]

This is how Ovid describes that moment:

> At one moment he frolicks and runs riot in the grass, at another he lies down, white as snow on the yellow sands. When her fear has gradually lessened he offers his chest now for virgin hands to pat and now his horns to twine with fresh wreaths of flowers. The royal virgin even dares to sit on the bullís back, not realising whom she presses on, while the god, first from dry land and then from the shoreline, gradually slips his deceitful hooves into the waves. Then he goes further out and carries his prize over the mid surface of the sea. She is terrified and looks back at the abandoned shore she has been stolen from and her right hand

[12] See N. Davies, *Europe East and West* (Jonathan Cape 2006), 2.
[13] See R. Graves, *Greek Myths* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1955; Revised edition 1960), 118 and next.

grips a horn, the other his back, her clothes fluttering, winding, behind her in the breeze.[14]

This is how the legend of Europa was born, as depicted in the drawings on the Greek vases found in the homes of Pompeii, and as painted in modern times by Titian, Rembrandt, Rubens, Veronese and Claude Lorrain.[15]

Rembrandt, "The Abduction of Europa," 1632

The Greek historian Herodotus explained the abduction of Europa in more material terms: in his view, it was one of the incidents that took place during continued wars that resulted from capturing each other's women. Phoenicians from Tyre abducted Io, the daughter of the

[14] Ovid, *The Metamorphoses*, trans. A. S. Kline (2000), Bk. II, v. 862 and next.
[15] See Davies, *Europe East and West*, 3. Cf. P. Bugge, O. Wæver, *The History of the Idea of Europe*, ed. K. Wilson, J. van der Dussen (Walton Hall 1995), 29 and next.

King of Argos, so Hellenes from Crete went to Phoenicia and abducted the daughter of the ruler of Tyros. One of the many similar incidents of such payback:

> They landed at many places on the coast, and among the rest at Argos, which was then preeminent above all the states included now under the common name of Hellas. Here they exposed their merchandise, and traded with the natives for five or six days; at the end of which time, when almost everything was sold, there came down to the beach a number of women, and among them the daughter of the king, who was, they say, agreeing in this with the Greeks, Io, the child of Inachus. The women were standing by the stern of the ship intent upon their purchases, when the Phoenicians, with a general shout, rushed upon them. The greater part made their escape, but some were seized and carried off. Io herself was among the captives. The Phoenicians put the women on board their vessel, and set sail for Egypt. Thus did Io pass into Egypt, according to the Persian story, which differs widely from the Phoenician: and thus commenced, according to their authors, the series of outrages.[16]

However, the legend of Europa evokes various associations: Europa was a victim of deception (a god transformed himself into a snow-white bull) or of a brutal force symbolized by the bull, and because the abduction took place on the shores of Asia, this scene can be interpreted as the seduction of Europe by Asia. In another version of the myth, Europa is one of the Oceanides, the daughter of Oceanus and Thetis, or the mother of Euphemus, one of the Argonauts, son of Poseidon.[17]

Norman Davies draws attention to several symbolic aspects of the legend of Europa. Firstly, by abducting the princess from the shores of Phoenicia (present-day southern Lebanon) to Crete, Zeus moved the fruit of the older Asian civilisation to the younger colonies on the Ae-

[16] Herodotus, *The History*, Bk. 1, [1.1] [http://ncbible.info/MoodRes/History/Herodotus.pdf, accessed on 4 March 2017].
[17] See P. Jaroszyński, *Spór o Europę. Zderzenia cywilizacji* [*Dispute over Europe. Clash of Civilisations*] (Lublin 2015), 8.

gean Islands. Because Phoenicia was in the sphere of influence of the Egyptian pharaohs, Europa's journey meant the mythical union between Ancient Egypt and Ancient Greece.

Secondly, Europa's journey symbolizes the mobility of those who followed her. Unlike the great civilisations of the Nile Basin, the Indus Basin, Mesopotamia or China that lasted for a long time, but geographically and intellectually their development was slow, the civilisation of the Mediterranean Basin was stimulated by constant movement. The movement resulted in uncertainty and lack of a sense of security. That uncertainty was the breeding ground for a ferment of thought, and the lack of a sense of security was an incentive to be energetic. The legendary ruler of Crete, Minos, was famous for his ships. Crete was the first maritime power in the world. One can imagine that the ships carried people, goods and culture, accelerating all kinds of change wherever they went.[18]

Thirdly, Europa followed the way of the Sun—from east to west. And indeed, one of several proposed etymologies (by Eratosthenes) compares the origin of the name "Asia," i.e. "the land of sunrise" ("asu"—east, Asia), with the origin of the name "Europe" ("ereb" or "irib"—"the land of sunset," "evening land").

In retrospect, from the point of view of the later association of European civilisation with the West, the most likely origin of the name "Europe," which also explains the association of European civilisation with Western civilisation, is semantic. In the Phoenician language spoken by the ruler of Tyre, Agenor, and his beautiful daughter, the word "ereb" means the place where the sun sets, i.e. the West. In a straight line, Crete lies to the west of Lebanon, which then was Phoenicia, so it is to be assumed that to the inhabitants of Levant the *West* (*ereb*) is a Cretan State. The Hellenes started using the name Europe to refer to the areas west of the Aegean Sea in order to distinguish them from older lands in Asia Minor. Conquered or dominated by Greek tribes that soon

[18] See Davies, *Europe East and West*, 4–5.

formed a civilisation that was alternative to the Middle Eastern civilisation, the Minoan Crete must have seemed so stubbornly different that the name *West* clung to it, creating a kind of phenomenon. To this date the term *Western Civilisation* has been the only case of naming a civilisation after a geographical direction, and not after a nation or a religious or philosophical doctrine.[19]

The "Roots" of European Civilisation

Political organization is one of the elements representing civilisation, as a tool that enables not only its continuation, but also its expansion.[20] It is characteristic that the basis of European civilisation is not a single state, but a specific "European unity" that has been striving to create a mature political system, so far unsuccessfully.[21] For centuries, Europe was characterized by unbelievable and ever-changing political and state fragmentation, ideologically and culturally dominated by the Popes' religious sovereignty. That ideological superiority and relative wholeness of the European organism followed from the fact that the Popes chose Rome as their seat, which was to symbolise the continuation of the Roman Empire, as well as from the attempts to revive the idea of the European Empire made from 800 to 1806.[22]

[19] E.g. S. Huntington, defines great civilisations by referring to the religious system or the nation being the basis of that civilisation. The only exception is Western Civilisation. "The term »the West« is now universally used to refer to what used to be called Western Christendom, The West is thus the only civilisation identified by a compass direction, and not by the name of a particular people, religion, or geographical area" (S. P. Huntington, *The Clash of Civilisations and the Remaking of World Order* (London: Penguin Books, 1997), 46–47).

[20] See Golka, *Cywilizacja współczesna i globalne problemy*, 22.

[21] Oskar Halecki indicates that the birth of Europe as a historical community occurred because many nations, completely different from one another, managed to cooperate on the basis of similar understanding of traditions and cultural principles, without destroying the elements that distinguished them and without forming full political unions. See O. Halecki, *The Limits and Divisions of European History* (Sheed & Ward, 1950), 36.

[22] See Golka, *Cywilizacja współczesna i globalne problemy*, 53.

In identifying the roots of European civilisation one should take into account the influence of the Ancient Greece, the Roman Empire, the culture of European barbaric tribes and Christianity.[23] They are the components of European civilisation that are most often seen as its roots. In this article, again, the author focuses only on the description of Greek and Roman themes.

Greek Influence

The Ancient Greeks gave Europe its name: the word "Europe" first appeared in a song of praise to the Greek god, Apollo, dating back to the eighth century BC, whose authorship is attributed to Homer.[24] Greece is generally recognized as the cradle of European civilisation and its contribution is emphasized at a few levels.

Stefan Czarnowski indicates that

> although the Greeks were not the only ones whose legacy we use; although one may get into an argument about which plays a more important role in our culture today—the legacy of Hellas, Rome or Israel—they were the first to make the man and his reason »the measure of all things« and to apply this principle in practice.[25]

According to Czarnowski, only the Greeks consciously recognized the supreme model of beauty in the beauty of the human body. Similarly, in the field of literature we owe to the Greeks the consistent attention paid in literature to the development and struggle of passions and human duties, even if they were imposed by the gods or by fate. It is in the human, or between people, that the Greek tragedy takes place. The gods only observe its course and it is a human epopee, even if its

[23] For instance, M. Cranston indicates that to the Ancient Greeks we owe the name "Europe," whereas the Ancient Romans were the first to conquer a considerable part of it. See "Chrześcijaństwo, kultura i pojęcie 'Europa' [Christianity, Culture and the Concept of 'Europe']," trans. W. Hornung, *Europa* 1 (1992): 12.
[24] See H. Salman, *Uzdrowienie Europy. Obudzenie europejskiej świadomości* [*Healing Europe. Raising European Awareness*] (Gdynia 2002), 21.
[25] S. Czarnowski, *Dzieła* [*Works*], vol. I (Warszawa: PWN, 1956), 25.

protagonists are forced to overcome their human limitations. They are people of flesh and bone, with their burden of desires and passions, and they do great things because they are not a plaything, a tool in the hands of the gods.[26]

Through philosophy the Greeks overcame the mythological explanation of the world:

> Excluding Indian philosophy that had no direct influence on the development of European thought, the Greeks were the first to produce a number of thinkers who took it upon themselves to learn about the world of phenomena using only reason and experience, who set impassable barriers to authority and revelation, who assigned a task to themselves to explain everything and consistently apply the principle saying that whatever exists must be understood rather than believed.[27]

Greek philosophy revolutionised the understanding of the world, the man and his relationship with other people. The Greeks were the first to recognize secular, human, rational law (*dike*), compared to the divine law (*themis*), and to use it as the basis for human relations. They were also the first to use the ideal of a citizen seen as a responsible individual who knowingly cooperates not only in community activities, but also in setting the rules of these activities. This is the ideal individual whose highest law and purpose is the common good, at the same time being his own good.

> It is from the Greeks [Dawson says] that we derive all that is most distinctive in Western as opposed to Oriental culture—our science and philosophy, our literature and art, our political thought and our conceptions of law and of free political institutions. Moreover, it was with the Greeks that there first arose a

[26] "Apart from Hellenism"—Dawson explains—"European civilisation and even the European idea of man would be inconceivable" (*The Making of Europe*, 26).
[27] Czarnowski, *Dzieła*, vol. I, 26.

distinct sense of the difference between European and Asiatic ideals and of the autonomy of Western civilisation.[28]

Hellenism became the essence of Europeanness, was universal and was a thoroughly cultural reality that represented the distinctiveness and genius of the Greeks. The universality of Greek culture was based on the discovery of reason in man, which he manifested by the use of words. These abilities are not updated, they have to be shaped and nurtured, hence the inalienable role of philosophy and rhetoric.[29] Alongside the element of rationality in the Greek culture there is the theme of freedom, so characteristic of the later European civilisation. It was addressed by Lysias, who used the name "Europe" several times in his funeral oration honouring fallen Greek soldiers during the Corinth

[28] Dawson, *The Making of Europe*, 26.

[29] Isocrates says: "Philosophy, moreover, which has helped to discover and establish all these institutions, which has educated us for public affairs and made us gentle towards each other, which has distinguished between the misfortunes that are due to ignorance and those which spring from necessity, and taught us to guard against the former and to bear the latter nobly—philosophy, I say, was given to the world by our city. And Athens it is that has honoured eloquence. which all men crave and envy in its possessors; for she realized that this is the one endowment of our nature which singles us out from all living creatures, and that by using this advantage we have risen above them in all other respects as well; she saw that in other activities the fortunes of life are so capricious that in them often the wise fail and the foolish succeed, whereas beautiful and artistic speech is never allotted to ordinary men, but is the work of an intelligent mind and that it is in this respect that those who are accounted wise and ignorant present the strongest contrast; and she knew, furthermore, that whether men have been liberally educated from their earliest years is not to be determined by their courage or their wealth or such advantages, but is made manifest most of all by their speech, and that this has proved itself to be the surest sign of culture in every one of us, and that those who are skilled in speech are not only men of power in their own cities but are also held in honour in other states. And so far has our city distanced the rest of mankind in thought and in speech that her pupils have become the teachers of the rest of the world; and she has brought it about that the name Hellenes suggests no longer a race but an intelligence, and that the title Hellenes is applied rather to those who share our culture than to those who share a common blood" (Isocrates, "Panegyricus," sect. 47–50, in *Isocrates*, *Speech*, trans. G. Norlin George Norlin (Cambridge, MA, Harvard University Press; London, William Heinemann Ltd. 1980).

war.[30] He praised the Greeks for their nobility, the virtue of fortitude and the awareness that the war with Persians was not only over Greece but also over the domination over Europe. The clash between Greece and Persia took the form of a fight for freedom.[31]

The European ideal of freedom emerged during that war, and the sense of significant civilisational difference between Europe and Asia.[32] In his description of the Asians, Aristotle emphasized that they lacked the love of freedom. He admitted that they were creative, but not brave enough, and therefore easily succumbed to despotism. In turn, describing the peoples living in northern Europe (i.e. geographically Europeans), the Stagirite considered them brave but not smart enough. According to Aristotle, barbarians are neither smart nor courageous. The Greeks combine both of these qualities to the highest degree.[33]

Since the fifth century BC the European civilisation has found in Greece its elemental features, but also the seeds of its problems. After all, in Ancient Greece one may find the praise of democracy and freedom, but also the apotheosis of tyranny. The Greeks asked almost all the questions and expressed almost all the doubts that people can have in the face of the mystery of the world, the life and other people, as well

[30] See Jaroszyński, *Spór o Europę. Zderzenia cywilizacji*, 24.

[31] "For indeed, being of noble stock and having minds as noble, the ancestors of those who lie here achieved many noble and admirable things; but ever memorable and mighty are the trophies that their descendants have everywhere left behind them owing to their valour. For they alone risked their all in defending the whole of Greece against many myriads of the barbarians. For the King of Asia, not content with the wealth that he had already, but hoping to enslave Europe as well, dispatched an army of five hundred thousand. These, supposing that, if they obtained the willing friendship of this city or overwhelmed its resistance, they would easily dominate the rest of the Greeks, landed at Marathon, thinking that we should be most destitute of allies if they made their venture at a moment when Greece was in dissension as to the best means of repelling the invaders" (Lysias, *Funeral Oration*, 20–21, in Lysias, *Speech*, trans. W. R. M. Lamb (Cambridge, MA, Harvard University Press; London, William Heinemann Ltd. 1930).

[32] See Dawson, *The Making of Europe*, 26.

[33] See Aristotle, *Politics*, trans. C. Lord (Chicago-London: University of Chicago Press, 2013), 1255 b.

as their own existence.[34] Contemporary Europe is "indebted to the ancient culture" primarily in the intellectual sphere. Therefore, from the beginning of our era until the nineteenth century, disciples and students read the same works and shaped their minds on the basis of the same models. The ancient cultural heritage gave a constantly renewing creative power to European civilisation. On the one hand, for example, the era of the Middle Ages dissociated itself from the Greek gods, from the legacy of Epicurus, but on the other hand, it was influenced by the philosophies of Plato (e.g. St. Augustine) and Aristotle (e.g. Thomas Aquinas). The period of Renaissance, when the return to the understanding of man as the measure of all things took place, brought a revival of what was the most magnificent in the creations of the Greek minds. This Greek legacy has remained inspiring throughout the subsequent centuries and to this day.[35] From the Greek culture we have taken the distinctions: truth and falsehood, rationalism and dialectical thinking, competition and the idea of freedom, scepticism and dialogue.[36]

However, thanks to the Ancient Greece, Europe could also experience cultural diffusion from the East: from Mesopotamia, Persia, India, China, Phoenicia, Egypt and Carthage, without being absorbed by those cultures. The Greeks were able to creatively use the elements of Oriental culture and create a whole new quality.[37] This was manifested, for example, in their appreciation of cognition as knowledge (*theoria*): learning in order to govern or to collect taxes differed from learning in order to know the truth for itself. In the Babylonian civilisation they

[34] See Golka, *Cywilizacja współczesna i globalne problemy*, 54. Cf. G. Reale, *A History of Ancient Philosophy*, I–III, ed. and trans. J. R. Catan (State University of New York Press, NY 1990).
[35] See Czarnowski, *Dzieła*, vol. I, 26. See, e.g., the works of Z. Herbert, *The Collected Poems, 1956-1998*, intro. A. Zagajewski, trans. A. Valles (New York: Ecco Press, 2007).
[36] See Golka, *Cywilizacja współczesna i globalne problemy*, 54.
[37] "Although the civilisation of Egypt or Babylon"—Jaroszyński explains—"is older than that of Greece, the Greek introduced essentially new things to culture." (*Spór o Europę. Zderzenia cywilizacji*, 26).

watched stars to predict the future, and therefore in the Ancient Babylon there was astrology and not astronomy. Similarly, when one speaks of the civilisation of Egypt, one can see a high level of land surveying, but not geometry, because it was primarily about measuring the plots of land after the Nile floods in order to collect an appropriate tax or to build a pyramid. Those were amazing skills, but it was not science[38] yet and the Greeks raised these skills to a whole new level.[39]

According to Czarnowski, that spectacular success of Greek science would not occur without the curiosity of the world, navigation, comparison and competition. The Greeks developed seamanship, and thus increased the economic deposit, and they expanded their knowledge of other cultures and traditions by competing, for instance, with the Phoenicians. The fight for dominance at sea gave the Greeks a chance to improve their sailing and merchant skills, but also refined their critical faculties and gave them the impulse to satisfy the desire of knowledge,[40] manifesting itself in the gathering of news of the world. In the *Odyssey*, for example, one may read how the King of the Phaiacians asks Odysseus about various things because he is simply curious:

> But come, now, tell me this and declare it truly: whither thou hast wandered and to what countries of men thou hast come; tell me of the people and of their well-built cities, both of those who are cruel and wild and unjust, and of those who love strangers and

[38] See J. Burnet, *Early Greek Philosophy* (London 1930), 1–30.

[39] Stefan Czarnowski puts it as follows: "Not everything that the Greek [Greeks] taught and written philosophically or mathematically had a Greek origin. They borrowed from all sides: astronomers in Babylon, philosophers in Egypt, artists everywhere. Aegean were their most important musical instruments, Aegean were types of games, some cults, while others came from Egypt, from Phrygia, from Thrace. But the greatness of the work is not that every part of it was re-created, but that all was combined into one harmonious unit. This unit is the merit of the creator. The Greeks created it and gave it a rational, clear, human formula" (*Dzieła*, vol. I, 31).

[40] Aristotle writes: "πάντες ἄνθρωποι τοῦ εἰδέναι ὀρέγονται φύσει" [All men naturally desire knowledge] (Aristotle's *Metaphysics*, ed. W. D. Ross (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1924), Bk. I, 980 a).

> fear the gods in their thoughts. And tell me why thou dost weep and wail in spirit as thou hearest the doom of the Argive Danaans and of Ilios. This the gods wrought, and spun the skein of ruin for men, that there might be a song for those yet to be born. Did some kinsman of thine fall before Ilios, some good, true man, thy daughter's husband or thy wife's father, such as are nearest to one after one's own kin and blood? Or was it haply some comrade dear to thy heart, some good, true man? For no whit worse than a brother is a comrade who has an understanding heart.[41]

Curiosity of the world is a feature of the Greeks inherited by Europe not only in Roman times, but also in the times of great geographic discoveries. The Portuguese, the Spaniards, the Dutch, the English are the nations of sailors. In the expeditions of Dias, Columbus, Da Gama, Magellan or Cook one can see the features of the trend started by the Greeks. For although after the great discoveries Europe dominated the world imperially, it also discovered it for all, including members of other civilisations (knowledge of the world became available to all).[42] Returning to the Greeks, it may be said that their curiosity was the first definitive step on the path to creating science. Sailors and merchants were the ones who prepared the ground—and the thinkers came after them.[43]

Roman Influence

Roman influence on European civilisation was structurally different from the Greek one, as was Greece itself from the Roman Empire. As Davies explains,

> Whereas Greece had grown from scores of scattered cities, Rome grew from one single organism. Whilst the Greek world had expanded along the Mediterranean sea-lanes, the Roman world was

[41] Homer, *Odyssey*, trans. A. T. Murray (Cambridge, MA, Harvard University Press; London, William Heinemann Ltd., 1919), Bk 8, 572.
[42] See R. Krawczyk, *Podstawy cywilizacji europejskiej* [*Fundamentals of European Civilisation*] (Warszawa: WSHiP, 2006), 257–258.
[43] See Czarnowski, *Dzieła*, vol. 1, 32.

> assembled by territorial conquest. Of course, the contrast is not quite so stark: in Alexander the Great the Greeks had found the greatest territorial conqueror of all time; and the Romans, once they moved outside Italy, did not fail to learn the lessons of sea power. Yet the essential difference is undeniable. The key to the Greek world lay in its high-powered ships; the key to Roman power lay in its marching legions. The Greeks were wedded to the sea, the Romans to the land. The Greek was a sailor at heart, the Roman a landsman.[44]

However, one must keep in mind the continuity of the idea of civilisational distinctness with respect to barbarian tribes. Dawson indicates that Augustus, struggling against Antony and Cleopatra's monarchy of Alexandria, appears as a spokesman not only for Roman ideals but, more broadly, for specifically Western ideals. In this context it is worth mentioning the fragment of *Aeneid* by Virgil where one may see crowds of barbarians from the East who act against not only the city of Rome but also against the great gods of Greece—Poseidon, Aphrodite and Athena:

> All to the fight make haste; the slanted oars
> and triple beaks of brass uptear the waves
> to angry foam, as to the deep they speed
> like hills on hill-tops hurled, or Cyclades
> drifting and clashing in the sea: so vast
> that shock of castled ships and mighty men!
> Swift, arrowy steel and balls of blazing tow
> rain o'er the waters, till the sea-god's world
> flows red with slaughter. In the midst, the Queen
> sounding her native timbrel, wildly calls
> her minions to the fight, nor yet can see
> two fatal asps behind. Her monster-gods,
> barking Anubis, and his mongrel crew
> on Neptune, Venus, and Minerva fling
> their impious arms; the face of angry Mars,

[44] N. Davies, *Europe. A History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), 149.

> carved out of iron, in the centre frowns
> grim Furies fill the air; Discordia strides
> in rent robe, mad with joy; and at her side,
> bellona waves her sanguinary scourge.[45]

Virgil assigns the victory not to Roman Mars, but to Greek Apollo:

> There Actian Apollo watched the war,
> and o'er it stretched his bow; which when they knew,
> Egyptian, Arab, and swart Indian slave,
> and all the sons of Saba fled away
> in terror of his arm.[46]

On the one hand, Augustus' victory saved European civilisation from being absorbed by the civilisation of the Ancient East and Western barbarians, and on the other, it initiated a new period of expansion of classical culture. In the East the Empire cooperated with Hellenistic forces in order to expand Greek civilisation and municipal life, whereas in the West it launched Western and Central Europe into the orbit of influence of the Mediterranean civilisation, and at the same time was a barrier to the invasion of barbarians.[47] The Ancient Rome not only absorbed Greek culture and mediated in its continuation, but also gave the European civilisation the culture of law, political effectiveness, the organization of a democratic society (from the Roman Republic) and the political and civilisational dominance over large areas of the European continent.[48]

During the reign of Emperor Augustus, the Roman Empire covered continental territories (Italy, Gaul, Spain) and overseas territories where Hellenistic influences had already been developed. While it can be said that Roman organizational genius was politically and militarily victorious in Europe at that time, Hellenism prevailed in the social and

[45] Virgil, *Aeneid*, trans. Th. C. Williams (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1910), Bk. VIII, lines 671.
[46] *Ibid.*
[47] See Dawson, *The Making of Europe*, 20.
[48] See Golka, *Cywilizacja współczesna i globalne problemy*, 55.

intellectual sense. In fact, Romanization of the Hellenistic East merged with Hellenisation of the Roman West.[49] The Romans brought legal culture, but it should be remembered that it was a development inspired by the Greeks. As R. Sobański explains:

> It is enough to mention Heraclitus with his assertion that »The people must fight on behalf of the law as though for the city wall«, which implies that a specific role is attributed to the law; Protagoras with his claim that man is a measure of all things; Socrates with the question whether there can be a state where judgments can be overturned by a single person; Plato with his utopian and a very dangerous idea of perfect justice; Aristotle, whose teachings on justice still mark the starting point of all serious considerations of justice and law. The Greek philosophy of law flourished alongside the applicable law, but did not exert any influence on it. The Romans saw its practical usefulness and applied it in their legal deliberations to give meaning to such concepts as justice, righteousness, honesty, and to set criteria for the distinction between »ius and vis«.[50]

The influence of Roman law on European law was manifested through its implementation. Roman legal system started with the creation of *the Law of the Twelve Tables* in the years 451–450 BC, ended with its great codification in the form of the so-called Code of Justinian of the sixth century AD[51] and was subsequently incorporated into the legal systems of most European countries. Hence the remark made by Ernest Renan—*Europe is Roman*. When it comes to law, it concerned the extension of the principles and concepts formulated in Rome to practically the whole European continent.[52] If today the distinctiveness

[49] See Dawson, *The Making of Europe*, 17.
[50] R. Sobański, "Kultura prawna Europy [Legal Cuture of Europe]," *Studia Europejskie* [*European Studies*] 3 (1998): 119.
[51] See R. Tokarczyk, "Kultura prawa europejskiego [The Culture of European Law]," *Studia Europejskie* [*European Studies*] 1 (2000): 14–15.
[52] The statement by E. Renan may be viewed as a paradigm of the sources of Europeanness: "L'Europe est grecque par la pensée et l'art, romaine par le droit, et judeo-

of the English legal system may be noticed, it does not mean that they rejected the Roman understanding of law, but only that they constituted their system differently. The Ancient codes of Theodosian, and Justinian in particular, were the subject of intense study at Italian universities of the Medieval Period. From there a systematic study of Roman law spread throughout Europe. Due to the emergence of the European economic area in the late Middle Ages, Roman law successively replaced local customary law and was incorporated into the legal systems of most continental countries (except for England, the British Isles and Northern France, where the Franconian (North German) model of customary law has been used since the French Revolution).[53]

In addition to Rome's military successes and legal culture, one should also note its success in urban development, i.e. the introduction of cities as a type of settlement and as a specific kind of social community in continental Europe.[54] Along with the military gains, the Roman Empire developed settlements, a network of roads, created water supply systems, amphitheatres, temples, triumphal arches and stadiums.[55] In the capital city the *Roman Forum* was created, which was significant for Europe. Roman influence reached the Danube, the Euphrates in Asia, Africa's deserts and contributed significantly to the Romanisation of Europe.[56] Rome introduced the divisions of society according to

chrétienne par la religio [Europe is Greek in its thought and its art, Roman in its law, and Judaeo-Christian in its religion]" (quoted after Davies, *Europe. A History*, 44).

[53] See Krawczyk, *Podstawy cywilizacji europejskiej*, 216.

[54] See Dawson, *The Making of Europe*, 20–23. Cf. L. Benevolo, *The European City. The Making of Europe* (Wiley 1995), 19–26. The Autor connects the beginning of cities with the social life of the Ancient Greece (*Ibid*., 16). Cf. Aristotle, *Politics*, Bk. I, 1252 a–1253 a.

[55] "The whole empire"—Dawson writes—"was bound together socially by common lawsand a common culture, and materially by the vast system of roads, which rendered communications easier and safer than at any time before the seventeenth century" (*The Making of Europe*, 22).

[56] "There is a quality of cohesiveness about the Roman world which applied neither to Greece nor perhaps to any other civilisation, ancient or modern. Like the stones of a Roman wall, which were held together both by the regularity of the design and by the

property qualification to centurias and territorial units. On its territory rights were recorded and hierarchy of officials was formed (consul, praetor, quaestor, aedile, censor, tribune of the people), the role of the senate and the people's assembly was also appreciated. In Rome a professional army was established that strengthened the state, but at the same time increased the role and importance of great leaders (Marius, Sulla), for whom the army became a means of achieving their own political goals. It was the first time that rulers received the title of princeps[57] (the first citizen in the state), from which the word principal was derived in Europe.

Rome influenced the development of the theory of the state, literature, philosophy, architecture and art, poetry and historiography. In the context of the dissemination of Roman achievements concerning the law and the state, one should mention Marcus Aurelius and Publius Cornelius Tacitus. The influence of Roman literature on the next generations was primarily through the works of Virgil, Horace and Ovid. Rome also had its philosophers (Seneca the Younger, Epictetus, Marcus Aurelius, Plutarch of Chaeronea, Plotinus and Julian the Apostate), which resulted in the development of Epicureanism, Roman Stoicism, Platonism and numerous variants of Neoplatonism.[58]

peculiarly, powerful Roman cement, so the various parts of the Roman realm were bonded into a massive, monolithic entity, by phisical, organizational, and psyhological controls. The physical bonds included the network of military garrisons which were stationed in every province, and the network of stone-build roads which linked the provinces with Rome. The organizational bonds were based on the common principles of law and administration, and on the universal army of officials who enforced common standards of conduct. The psychological controls were built on fear and punishment—on the absolute certainty that anyone or anything that threatend the authority of Rome would be utterly destroyed" (Davies, *Europe. A History*, 149).

[57] See H. G. Wells, *A Short History of the World* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1922), 194–195.

[58] See K. Lastawski, "Historyczne i współczesne cechy tożsamości europejskiej [Historical and Contemporary Characteristics of European Identity]," *Polityka i społeczeństwo* [*Politics and Society*] 1 (2004): 221–222.

European civilisation is often perceived through the prism of the period of its greatest power. Indeed, in the nineteenth century Europe was the "factory of the world," while the colonies were the source of raw materials and a market for European goods. Some remember with nostalgia the period when several European countries controlled large parts of the globe through a network of colonies, protectorates and dominions. One may risk saying that such Europe would not exists without the layers that contributed to the so-called European identity.

In this article the author has described only two layers that became key elements of the European civilisation of the period between the eight and tenth century. To this day, Europeans refer to the models of a widely understood Ancient culture: the concept of *polis* as a community of equal citizens, representative bodies, elements of merchant culture, rationality and emancipation visible in numerous philosophical trends—these components of culture were successfully introduced into European civilisation. The concept of Roman law (tripartite) shaped the legal culture of the continental Europe, preparing the ground for economic development. The institution of a legal person and a joint stock company made it possible to accumulate wealth beyond the abilities of one person.

Due to volume restrictions imposed by the article, two other, no less important, sources of European civilisation have not been discussed—the contribution of the barbarian tribes and the role of Christianity, and only with these components an adequate representation of the "roots of Europe" may be reconstructed.

GREEK AND ROMAN ROOTS OF EUROPEAN CIVILISATION

SUMMARY

European countries share certain features, roots and, to a large extent, history. In the present article attention is paid to the Greek and Roman influence on European civilisa-

tion, or "Western Civilisation." To this day Europeans refer to broadly understood models of ancient culture contained in the concept of *polis* as a community of equal citizens, in promoting representative bodies, appreciation of elements of merchant culture, rationality and emancipation, the concept of Roman Law that together represent the *signa specifica* of the Western civilisation. If one adds to this the contribution of Christianity and barbarian tribes, one may reconstruct an adequate representation of the "roots of Europe."

KEYWORDS

Europe, ancient Greece, ancient Rome, civilisation, Western Civilisation, culture, *polis*, Roman law.

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