INTRODUCTION

Europe is committing suicide. Or at least its leaders have decided to commit suicide. Whether the European people choose to go along with this is, naturally, another matter.

When I say that Europe is in the process of killing itself I do not mean that the burden of European Commission regulation has become overbearing or that the European Convention on Human Rights has not done enough to satisfy the demands of a particular community. I mean that the civilisation we know as Europe is in the process of committing suicide and that neither Britain nor any other Western European country can avoid that fate because we all appear to suffer from the same symptoms and maladies. As a result, by the end of the lifespans of most people currently alive Europe will not be Europe and the peoples of Europe will have lost the only place in the world we had to call home.

It may be pointed out that proclamations of Europe’s demise have been a staple throughout our history and that Europe would not be Europe without regular predictions of our mortality. Yet some have been more persuasively timed than others. In Die Welt von Gestern (The World of Yesterday), first published in 1942, Stefan Zweig wrote of his continent in the years leading up to the Second World War, ‘I felt that Europe, in its state of derangement, had passed its own death sentence – our sacred home of Europe, both the cradle and the Parthenon of Western civilisation.’

One of the few things that gave Zweig any hope even then was that in the countries of South America to which he had finally fled he saw offshoots of his own culture. In Argentina and Brazil he witnessed how a culture can emigrate from one land to another so that even if the tree that gave the culture life has died it can still provide ‘new blossom and new fruit’. Even had Europe at that moment destroyed
if integration did not happen with the first generation then it might happen with their children, grandchildren or another generation yet to come. Or that it didn’t matter whether people integrated or not. All the time we waved away the greater likelihood that it just wouldn’t work. This is a conclusion that the migration crisis of recent years has simply accelerated.

Which brings me to the second concatenation. For even the mass movement of millions of people into Europe would not sound such a final note for the continent were it not for the fact that (coincidentally or otherwise) at the same time Europe lost faith in its beliefs, traditions and legitimacy. Countless factors have contributed to this development, but one is the way in which Western Europeans have lost what the Spanish philosopher Miguel de Unamuno famously called the ‘tragic sense of life’. They have forgotten what Zweig and his generation so painfully learnt: that everything you love, even the greatest and most cultured civilisations in history, can be swept away by people who are unworthy of them. Other than simply ignoring it, one of the few ways to avoid this tragic sense of life is to push it away through a belief in the tide of human progress. That tactic remains for the time being the most popular approach.

Yet all the time we skate over, and sometimes fall into, terrible doubts of our own creation. More than any other continent or culture in the world today, Europe is now deeply weighed down with guilt for its past. Alongside this outgoing version of self-distrust runs a more introverted version of the same guilt. For there is also the problem in Europe of an existential tiredness and a feeling that perhaps for Europe the story has run out and a new story must be allowed to begin. Mass immigration – the replacement of large parts of the European populations by other people – is one way in which this new story has been imagined: a change, we seemed to think, was as good as a rest. Such existential civilisational tiredness is not a uniquely modern European phenomenon, but the fact that a society should feel like it has run out of steam at precisely the moment when a new society has begun to move in cannot help but lead to vast, epochal changes.
Had it been possible to discuss these matters some solution might have been reached. Yet even in 2015, at the height of the migration crisis, it was speech and thought that was constricted. At the peak of the crisis in September 2015 Chancellor Merkel of Germany asked the Facebook CEO, Mark Zuckerberg, what could be done to stop European citizens writing criticisms of her migration policy on Facebook. 'Are you working on this?' she asked him. He assured her that he was. In fact the criticism, thought and discussion ought to have been boundless. Looking back, it is remarkable how restricted we made our discussion even whilst we opened our home to the world. A thousand years ago the peoples of Genoa and Florence were not as intermingled as they now are, but today they are all recognisably Italian and tribal differences have tended to lessen rather than grow with time. The current thinking appears to be that at some stage in the years ahead the peoples of Eritrea and Afghanistan too will be intermingled within Europe as the Genoans and Florentines are now melded into Italy. The skin colour of individuals from Eritrea and Afghanistan may be different, their ethnic origins may be from further afield, but Europe will still be Europe and its people will continue to mingle in the spirit of Voltaire and St Paul, Dante, Goethe and Bach.

As with so many popular delusions there is something in this. The nature of Europe has always shifted and – as trading cities like Venice show – has included a grand and uncommon receptiveness to foreign ideas and influence. From the Ancient Greeks and Romans onwards the peoples of Europe sent out ships to scour the world and report back on what they found. Rarely, if ever, did the rest of the world return their curiosity in kind, but nevertheless the ships went out and returned with tales and discoveries that melded into the air of Europe. The receptivity was prodigious: it was not, however, boundless.

The question of where the boundaries of the culture lay is endlessly argued over by anthropologists and cannot be solved. But there were boundaries. Europe was never, for instance, a continent of Islam. Yet the awareness that our culture is constantly, subtly changing has deep European roots. The philosophers of Ancient Greece understood the conundrum, summing it up most famously in the paradox of the Ship of Theseus. As recorded in Plutarch, the ship in which Theseus had sailed had been preserved by the Athenians who put in new timber when parts of the ship decayed. Yet was this not still the ship of Theseus even when it consisted of none of the materials in which he had sailed?

We know that the Greeks today are not the same people as the Ancient Greeks. We know that the English are not the same today as they were a millennia ago, nor the French the French. And yet they are recognisably Greek, English and French and all are European. In these and other identities we recognise a degree of cultural succession: a tradition that remains with certain qualities (positive as well as negative), customs and behaviours. We recognise the great movements of the Normans, Franks and Gauls brought about great changes. And we know from history that some movements affect a culture relatively little in the long term whereas others can change it irrevocably. The problem comes not with an acceptance of change, but with the knowledge that when those changes come too fast or are too different we become something else – including something we may never have wanted to be.

At the same time we are confused over how this is meant to work. While generally agreeing that it is possible for an individual to absorb a particular culture (given the right degree of enthusiasm both from the individual and the culture) whatever their skin colour, we know that we Europeans cannot become whatever we like. We cannot become Indian or Chinese, for instance. And yet we are expected to believe that anyone in the world can move to Europe and become European. If being ‘European’ is not about race – as we hope it is not – then it is even more imperative that it is about ‘values’. This is what makes the question ‘What are European values?’ so important. Yet this is another debate about which we are wholly confused.

Are we, for instance, Christian? In the 2000s this debate had a focal point in the row over the wording of the new EU Constitution and the absence of any mention of the continent’s Christian heritage. Pope John Paul II and his successor tried to rectify the omission. As
the former wrote in 2003, 'While fully respecting the secular nature of the institutions I wish once more to appeal to those drawing up the future European constitutional treaty, so that it will include a reference to the religious and in particular the Christian heritage of Europe'. The debate did not only divide Europe geographically and politically, it also pointed to a glaring aspiration. For religion had not only retreated in Western Europe. In its wake there arose a desire to demonstrate that in the twenty-first century Europe had a self-supporting structure of rights, laws and institutions which could exist even without the source that had arguably given them life. Like Kant's dove we wondered whether we wouldn't be able to fly faster if we lived 'in free air' without the bother of the wind keeping us aloft. Much rested on the success of this dream. In the place of religion came the ever-inflating language of 'human rights' (itself a concept of Christian origin). We left unresolved the question of whether or not our acquired rights were reliant on beliefs that the continent had ceased to hold or whether they existed of their own accord. This was, at the very least, an extremely big question to have left unresolved while vast new populations were being expected to 'integrate'.

An equally significant question erupted at the same time around the position and purpose of the nation state. From the Treaty of Westphalia in 1648 up to the late twentieth century the nation state in Europe had generally been regarded not only as the best guarantor of constitutional order and liberal rights but the ultimate guarantor of peace. Yet this certainty also eroded. Central European figures like Chancellor Kohl of Germany in 1996 insisted that 'the nation state ... cannot solve the great problems of the twenty-first century'. Disintegration of the nation states of Europe into one large integrated political union was so important, Kohl insisted, that it was in fact 'a question of war and peace in the twenty-first century'. Others disagreed, and twenty years later just over half of the British people demonstrated at the ballot box that they were unpersuaded by Kohl's argument. But once again, whatever one's views on the matter, this was a huge question to leave unresolved at a time of vast population change.

While unsure of ourselves at home we made final efforts at extending our values abroad. Yet whenever our governments and armies got involved in anything in the name of these 'human rights' – Iraq in 2003, Libya in 2011 – we seemed to make things worse and ended up in the wrong. When the Syrian civil war began people cried for Western nations to intervene in the name of the human rights that were undoubtedly being violated. But there was no appetite to protect such rights because whether or not we believed in them at home, we had certainly lost faith in our ability to advance them abroad. At some stage it began to seem possible that what had been called 'the last utopia' – the first universal system that divorced the rights of man from the say of gods or tyrants – might comprise a final failed European aspiration. If that is indeed the case then it leaves Europeans in the twenty-first century without any unifying idea capable of ordering the present or approaching the future.

At any time the loss of all unifying stories about our past or ideas about what to do with our present or future would be a serious conundrum. But during a time of momentous societal change and upheaval the results are proving fatal. The world is coming into Europe at precisely the moment that Europe has lost sight of what it is. And while the movement of millions of people from other cultures into a strong and assertive culture might have worked, the movement of millions of people into a guilty, jaded and dying culture cannot. Even now Europe's leaders talk of an invigorated effort to incorporate the millions of new arrivals.

These efforts too will fail. In order to incorporate as large and wide a number of people as possible it is necessary to come up with a definition of inclusion that is as wide and unobjectionable as possible. If Europe is going to become a home for the world it must search for a definition of itself that is wide enough to encompass the world. This means that in the period before this aspiration collapses our values become so wide as to become meaninglessly shallow. So whereas European identity in the past could be attributed to highly specific, not to mention philosophically and historically deep foundations (the rule of law, the ethics derived from the continent's history
and philosophy), today the ethics and beliefs of Europe – indeed the identity and ideology of Europe – have become about 'respect', 'tolerance' and (most self-abnegating of all) 'diversity'. Such shallow self-definitions may get us through a few more years, but they have no chance at all of being able to call on the deeper loyalties that societies must be able to reach if they are going to survive for long.

This is just one reason why it is likely that our European culture, which has lasted all these centuries and shared with the world such heights of human achievement, will not survive. As recent elections in Austria and the rise of Alternative für Deutschland seem to prove, while the likelihood of cultural erosion remains irresistible the options for cultural defence continue to be unacceptable. Stefan Zweig was right to recognise the derangement, and right to recognise the death sentence that the cradle and Parthenon of Western civilisation had passed upon itself. Only his timing was out. It would take several more decades before that sentence was carried out – by ourselves on ourselves. Here, in the in-between years, instead of remaining a home for the European peoples we have decided to become a 'utopia' only in the original Greek sense of the word: to become 'no place'. This book is an account of that process.

***

The research and writing of this book have taken me across a continent I have travelled well for years, but often to parts I might otherwise not have visited. Over the course of several years I travelled from the most south-easterly islands of Greece and the southernmost outposts of Italy to the heart of northern Sweden and countless suburbs of France, Holland, Germany and more. During the writing I have had the opportunity to speak with many members of the public as well as politicians and policy-makers from across the political spectrum, border guards, intelligence agencies, NGO workers and many others on the front line. In many ways the most instructive part of my research has been speaking to Europe's newest arrivals – people who sometimes literally arrived yesterday. On the reception islands of southern Europe and across the places they stay or settle on their way north all have their own stories and many have their own tragedies. All see Europe as the place where they can best live their lives.

Those willing to talk and share their stories were necessarily a self-selecting group. There were times, lingering outside a camp in the evening, when people emerged or returned who seemed – to say the least – not to be approaching our continent in a spirit of generosity or gratitude. But many others were exceptionally friendly and grateful for an opportunity to get their stories out. Whatever my own views on the situations that had brought them here and our continent's response, our conversations always concluded with me saying the only thing to them that I honestly could say without caveat: 'Good luck.'
What might have been

With the right political and moral leadership this could all have worked out differently. Chancellor Merkel and her predecessors would not have been unsupported or unaided had they taken a different set of steps from the beginning.

They could have started by asking themselves the question Europe never did: should Europe be a place to which anybody in the world can move and call themselves at home? Should it be a haven for absolutely anybody in the world fleeing war? Is it the job of Europeans to provide a better standard of living in our continent to anybody in the world who wants it? To the second and third of these questions the European publics would have said 'no'. About the first question they would have felt torn. That is why the supporters of mass migration – who would have said 'yes' to all three – found it convenient to elide the boundaries between those fleeing war and those fleeing something else. What, after all – such people asked – is the huge difference between being at risk from bombs and at risk from hunger?

Had Chancellor Merkel, her contemporaries and her predecessors thought this all through before transforming their continent, they could have consulted Aristotle among other great philosophers of Europe. From him they would have learnt why these questions seemed so complex. They were trying to weigh up the balance not between good and evil but between competing virtues: on this occasion 'justice' and 'mercy'. When such virtues appear to be in contravention, Aristotle suggests, it is because one of them is being misunderstood. Throughout this era of uncontrolled migration 'mercy' has consistently appeared to triumph. It is the virtue towards which it is easiest to pay homage, the one with the swiftest short-term benefits and the one more admired in the society in which those benefits are received. Of course, it was rarely asked how 'merciful' it really was to encourage people to cross the globe to reach a continent with few houses and few jobs where they would be ever less wanted. Yet justice – which took such a back seat even as all the laws of the continent were trampled upon – also had a claim. And if the appeal to justice to enforce the Dublin III Treaty or the laws on the repatriation of failed applicants had seemed like so much paperwork, still there ought to have been an appeal to a greater justice. When justice did emerge in the argument it emerged only as the justice demanded by or for those arriving. The absent party in all this, for whom justice was never considered, were the peoples of Europe. They were people to whom things were done, whose own appeals – even when they could be voiced – were not listened to.

In the great migration movements the decisions of Merkel and her predecessors had overridden all their rights to justice. Those on the liberal wing of Europe's political spectrum had reason to feel aggrieved about the way in which their customs and laws had been trodden upon and about the seemingly endless changes to their liberal societies: changes that endangered the carefully balanced ecosystems of which such societies were comprised. Liberals in Europe might rightly have wondered whether societies that are the product of lengthy political and cultural evolutions could be sustained with immigration at such rates. That the front lines of the mass migration era continually involved threats to sexual, religious and racial minorities should have alerted far more liberals than it did to the possibility that in pursuit of a 'liberal' immigration policy they might lose their liberal societies.

An appeal to justice of a different sort could just as well have come from those of a more conservative mindset. Such people might, for instance, have taken the view of Edmund Burke, who in the eighteenth century made the central conservative insight that a culture and a society are not things run for the convenience of the
people who happen to be here right now, but a deep pact between the dead, the living and those yet to be born. In such a view of society, however greatly you might wish to benefit from an endless supply of cheap labour, a wider range of cuisine or the salving of a generation's conscience, you still would not have the right to wholly transform your society. Because that which you inherited is good should also be passed on. Even were you to decide that some of the views or lifestyles of your ancestors could be improved upon, it does not follow that you should hand over to the next generation a society that is chaotic, fractured and unrecognisable.

By 2015 Europe had already failed the easiest part of the immigration conundrum. From the post-war period up until the seismic movements of the present century it had set about fundamentally changing the nature of European society out of personal comfort, lazy thinking and political ineptitude. So it is not surprising that it also failed the harder test, which was the migration conundrum that Chancellor Merkel confronted in her live televised discussion with the solitary Lebanese teenager but then buckled under when it came to the untold millions (a buckling that was precisely the opposite way around to most people, who abhor the crowds but pity the individual). She had misunderstood the virtues. Merkel could have been merciful to those in need whilst not being unjust to the peoples of Europe. How could this have been achieved?

The first way would have been to go right back to the basics of the problem: principally the question of who Europe is for. Those who believe it is for the world have never explained why this process should be one way: why Europeans going anywhere else in the world is colonialism whereas the rest of the world coming to Europe is just and fair. Nor have they ever suggested that the migration movement has any end other than the turning of Europe into a place belonging to the world, with other countries remaining the home of the people of those countries. They have also only succeeded to the extent they have by lying to the public and concealing their aims. Had the leaders of Western Europe told their publics in the 1950s or at any point since that the aim of migration was to fundamentally alter the concept of

Europe and make it a home for the world, then the people of Europe would most likely have risen up and overthrown those governments.

Even before the migration crisis of recent years the greatest challenge was always over genuine refugees. Like their publics, political leaders held consistently conflicted views on those refugees — conflicted views expressed not just one to another, but within themselves. Nobody could allow a child to drown in the Mediterranean but nor could it viable to allow the world in if the world was on our shores. In the summer of 2016 I got talking with two Bangladeshi men in Greece. One of them, a 26-year-old, had come through India, Pakistan, Iran and Turkey to get to Lesbos. On his journey, he said, ‘I saw dead bodies everywhere.’ He spent 15,000 Euros on this journey and said that he had to leave Bangladesh because he was involved with the political opposition. ‘My father is a bank manager,’ he said. ‘It is not about money. It is about life. Everyone loves their mother country, but nine out of ten people are here because they want to live.’ The evidence suggests otherwise, namely that the economic attractions are the main lure. Yet even if everyone coming to Europe was coming in the face of imminent death back home, there is no practical way that Europe could take in those untold millions. So even a refinement of the errors of European migration is itself based on an error.

Some people say that the crisis is primarily not Europe's but the world's — that even talking about this represents a Eurocentric way of looking at things. But there is no reason why Europeans should not be, or feel, Eurocentric. Europe is the home of the European peoples, and we are entitled to be home-centric as much as the Americans, Indians, Pakistanis, Japanese and all other peoples are. The follow-on claim that we should therefore focus our energies on 'solving' the problems of the world is a diversion. It is not in Europe's power to 'solve' the situation in Syria. Much less is it within our gift to simultaneously raise living standards in sub-Saharan Africa, solve all world conflicts, protect liberal rights universally and rectify all problems of political corruption across the world. Those who present these as problems that can be solved by Europe should start by explaining their detailed plan for solving the problem of Eritrea. Or finding it on a map.
Anyone in power with a genuine desire to help migrants could enact a number of policies. They could, for instance, prioritise a policy of keeping migrants in the vicinity of the country from which they are fleeing. Migration experts including Paul Collier and David Goodhart have – even before the current crisis – explained the importance of such a policy. It avoids the cultural challenges that arise from encouraging people to travel to the far end of a different continent. It also allows people to return home more easily when whatever the disaster they are fleeing from comes to an end.

Throughout the Syrian crisis Turkey, Lebanon and Jordan have taken in huge numbers of refugees. Britain and other nations have contributed huge sums in aid to relieve the situation in refugee camps and other places in which Syrian refugees are living. Policies like those suggested by Collier of European countries paying migrants to do work in Middle Eastern countries (where for reasons of local sentiment current labour laws often preclude refugees from entering the workforce) would be constructive. Such ideas would be predicated on the view that it is better for a Syrian to be able to work in Jordan than to be unemployed somewhere in Scandinavia.

What is more, the money that a country like Sweden now pays to house immigrants in Sweden is spendthrift even if the concerns of immigrants and potential immigrants were the only concerns of the Swedish government. The housing shortage in Sweden – which, as in the United Kingdom, is largely caused by immigration – creates huge problems for the Swedish government. Not least financial problems. In southern European countries such as Italy or Greece a temporary solution for migrants is to house them in tents. Because of Sweden’s cold climate it costs between 50 and 100 times more to house a migrant in a tent than it does in the Middle East. As Dr Tino Sanandaji has pointed out, it costs more for 3,000 migrants to be housed in temporary accommodation tents in Sweden than it does to fund outright the largest refugee camp in Jordan (housing around 100,000 Syrian refugees).

One other policy upon which European leaders could have embarked from the beginning was to ensure that asylum claims were processed outside Europe. For legal and organisational reasons, it makes no sense to begin the process of working out who is a legitimate asylum seeker and who is not once migrants are inside Europe. This was the policy of the Australian government when they experienced over the last decade a flow of migrant boats setting off for their country mainly from Indonesia. As with the situation in the Mediterranean a number of the boats sank and there were huge outpourings of public sympathy for the migrants. But asylum centres in Australia were full and the processing became a legal nightmare once migrants were in Australia. Although the stretch of water is far wider than the Mediterranean and the numbers were never of a comparable size, the Australian government instituted an emergency policy that swiftly saw a decline in the number of boats setting out. They used Nauru and Manus Islands, off the coast of Papua New Guinea, as holding centres and processed the asylum claimants there. Australian government vessels also increasingly located and turned back vessels heading to Australia illegally.

The situation is not precisely analogous, but Australian officials have said in private since the beginning of the current European crisis that this is the way in which Europe will have to deal with its crisis at some point anyway. With the political will and financial incentive there is no reason why European governments could not institute arrangements with various North African governments to set up facilities on their territory. A process of ‘leasing’ territory in Libya is not impossible at some stage. It would certainly be feasible in Tunisia and Morocco, and the French government could help persuade the Algerians to cooperate in a similar manner. Egypt could also be incentivised as part of its European cooperation packages. Processing claimants in North Africa would not only have a disincentivising effect, as it has had in the Australian case, it would also give the European asylum system a chance to catch its breath.

Another solution would be a concerted Europe-wide effort to organise the deportation of all those found to have no asylum claim. This is easier said than done: millions of people who are currently in
Europe have no legal right to be here. Some might welcome assistance to return home, having found themselves working for gangs or otherwise finding life in Europe less appealing than they had expected. Still, this would be a monumental task to undertake. But it would be better to do it than to pretend – as members of the German and Swedish governments did in recent years – to do it while having no real intention of doing so. To ‘include’ some people in a society necessarily means excluding others. Governments found it very easy to dwell on the sympathetic language of ‘inclusion’, but their publics – including legitimate asylum seekers – need also to hear the language of exclusion.

Another policy that would assist in a sensible migration policy and help restore public confidence would be a system of temporary asylum. If during the crucial months of 2015 Chancellor Merkel had called on European countries to take in a certain number of legitimate and properly vetted refugees from Syria until such a time as Syria returned to stability, there may have been significantly more public and political support. The fact that there was not – and the reason why the public as well as governments remained so opposed to Merkel’s quota system – was because those countries knew that asylum is nearly always for good. It is hard to convince the Swedish public that Syrian migrants are going to remain in their country only until Syria stabilizes when Sweden still has tens of thousands of asylum seekers from the Balkans, which has been at peace for two decades.

The nature of temporary asylum obviously has its own problems. People’s lives continue once they migrate. Their children enter the school system and other aspects of normalisation occur which make the return of whole families to their country of origin ever harder. But that is a reason why European governments would have to be strict with such a policy. If people apply for asylum and are given it, then they must recognise that the arrangement is benevolent but not permanent. Much confidence in the asylum system and the migration issue as a whole could be reclaimed if such a policy were implemented.

In order to bring an end to the ongoing migration problem and turn around the challenge that already exists, it would also be necessary for Europe’s political leaders to acknowledge where they have gone wrong in the past. They might, for instance, acknowledge that if Europe is concerned about an ageing population there are more sensible policies than importing the next generation of Europeans from Africa. They might concede that while diversity may be advantageous in small numbers, in large numbers it would irrevocably end society as we know it. They might then stress that they do not actually want to fundamentally change our societies. This would be a painful concession for the political class, but it would have overwhelming support from the European publics.

In recent years those publics have been exceptionally accepting of immigrants while opposed to mass immigration. Long before their political leaders told them that it was acceptable to have concerns about immigration, they knew this. Before the sociologists proved it, they knew that immigration weakened all sense of societal trust. And before the politicians admitted it, the public were struggling to get their children into over-subscribed local schools. It was the public who were told that health tourism was not a problem, even as they queued for appointments in waiting rooms filled with people from other countries.

The public also knew long before their political leaders that the benefits the migrants undoubtedly brought were not endless, and they sensed long before it became acceptable to say it that migration on such a scale would fundamentally change their countries. They noticed that some of the major battles of the twentieth century over rights were having to be refought again in the twenty-first century because of a growing number of opponents. They intimated that when it came to social liberalism Islam was simply the slowest child in the class. Just one result of which was that in the early twenty-first century, when Europe had hoped to have settled many of these issues – not least the separation of religion from politics and the law – the whole of society was having to go at the speed of this slowest child in the class. Thus, the increasing discussions about whether women should cover their faces in public, or be taken by their husband to their own special type of court if they happened to be of a particular faith.
The first arrivals benefited Europe by bringing a different culture, their vibrancy and their cuisine. But what did the ten millionth bring that was different from all those before? The European public was far ahead of the politicians in recognising that the benefits were not endless. Long before the politicians noticed, the public already knew that a continent which imports the world’s people will also import the world’s problems. And contrary to the race-relations industry, it turned out that the immigrants into Europe often exhibited far more differences than similarities to the resident populations and towards each other, and that the larger the numbers the greater the dissimilarities.

For the problems that exist are not just between minorities and their adopted country but between various minorities in their adopted country. Despite the much-vaunted horror of ‘Islamophobia’ trailed by ‘anti-racists’ and others in Britain, those who have actually killed Muslims in Britain have been overwhelmingly other Muslims murdering them for doctrinal reasons. There has been one case of a Ukrainian neo-Nazi who was in the United Kingdom for a matter of hours before killing his Muslim victim. Otherwise, the most serious attacks on Muslims have been carried out by other Muslims. Many Muslims from the minority Ahmadiyya sect came to Britain because they are so persecuted in their native Pakistan. But it was a Sunni Muslim from Bradford who travelled up to Glasgow before Easter 2016 to stab the Muslim Ahmadiyya shopkeeper Asad Shah repeatedly in the head for what his killer regarded as apostasy and heresy. And it was not knuckle-dragging white racists but other members of the Muslim communities in Scotland who caused the family of the murdered shopkeeper to flee the country in the wake of that murder.

Today in Britain it is rarely white racists who openly advocate the murder of minorities, but clerics from Pakistan who tour the United Kingdom preaching to thousands of British citizens the necessity of murdering other Muslims who disagree with them. Such problems within minorities are a foretaste of the intolerance to come.

Of even greater concern to the majority is the observation that many of those who come to Europe – even when they have no desire to hurt or kill anyone – seem happy about transforming European societies. Politicians cannot address this because they have colluded in it or helped cover it over. But it cannot go unnoticed when a Muslim of Syrian background such as Lamya Kaddor, for instance, goes on German television at the height of the migration crisis and tells the nation that in the future being German will not mean having ‘blue eyes and blond hair’, but will instead be about having a ‘migration background’. Only in Germany would such a sentiment continue, for the time being, to get applause. But most Europeans do not appreciate this common glee over radical changes to their society, and it would be wise for mainstream political figures to acknowledge this fact and concede that the resulting fears are not unfounded.

As part of that concession it would also be wise to extend the parameters of what is acceptable in mainstream politics. Parties of the centre right and centre left have found it enormously useful in recent decades to portray people who do not sign up to their narrow consensus as racist, fascist or Nazi, even when they know that they are no such thing. They have been able to position themselves as centrists and anti-fascists whilst smearing all opponents with the crimes of the last century. The complex situation in Europe, of course, is that there are parties which had fascist or racist origins. Belgium’s Vlaams Belang, France’s Front National and the Sweden Democrats all have histories that have included racism. In different ways all have changed to some extent in recent decades. The political mainstream finds it useful to pretend that such parties are the only ones on our continent who do not change, or are incapable of changing; or lie and conceal their true nature even after years of changing. However, at some point people have to allow the political far-right to moderate, in the same way that many socialist and far-left parties were allowed to enter the mainstream and moderated their views in the process. These nationalist parties should be allowed to occupy a place in the political debate without being forever charged with the sins of their pasts.

The move from Jean-Marie Le Pen to his daughter Marine Le Pen, for instance, is clearly a move of significance. A true devotee of racist nationalist politics would find it harder to join today’s Front National
than they would have done the party of Marine's father. There are of course serious questions all around the edges. Still, these parties have problems with people trying to get involved who hold to Holocaust denial and similarly extreme views. This is in part - as with the EDL in England and Pegida in Germany - a result of the entire media and political class telling people that this is what such parties stand for and effectively sending any true extremists to join them. It is also true that these parties include people with rancid political views. But so too, it must be noted, do mainstream parties of the political left and right. It is not possible to regard parties that often poll ahead of other mainstream parties as being wholly Nazi, fascist or racist, since it should be obvious to any politician with experience of the public in any of these countries that they are not largely Nazi, fascist or racist.

In other words, it will be necessary to broaden the political consensus and to accept thoughtful and clearly non-fascist parties once described as 'far right' at the political table. Not only would it be wise to continue to marginalise people who have spent years warning about events just as those warnings are coming true, it would also be wise to continue a situation which would mean that any truly fascist parties emerging in the years ahead (such as Jobbik in Hungary, Ataka in Bulgaria or Golden Dawn in Greece) can be identified accurately and without the accusation that this label had been used about almost everybody. Europeans have been deflating the language of anti-fascism ahead of a time when they might need it. Warnings of fascism should be used exceptionally carefully in Europe. In recent years they have been worn down and become so commonplace as to be rendered almost meaningless. Finally, it would be an unsustainable position for the political and media elites of Europe to continue to pretend that the views of the majority of the public are unacceptable whilst the pro-mass migration views of a comparatively small and extreme fringe are the only legitimate views for the mainstream in European politics.

It may be the case that the issue of racism has to adapt in other ways. One way to defang the constant frivolous uses of the term would be to ensure that the cost in social terms for making the charge falsely becomes at least as serious as being guilty of the charge. Or it may be that Europeans become so mired in accusations and counter-accusations from and towards every direction in the years ahead that there is an implicit agreement that unpleasant as racism is, it is one of a number of nasty facets to which some people are prone and not the basis for all political and cultural positioning.

Any solution to our crisis would also involve not only a fresh attitude towards our future but a more balanced attitude towards our past. It is not possible for a society to survive if it routinely suppresses and otherwise fights against its own origins. Just as a nation could not thrive if it forbade any criticism of its past, so no nation can survive if it suppresses everything that is positive about its past. Europe has reason to feel tired and worn down by its past, but it could also approach its past with an air of self-forgiveness as much as self-reproach. At the very least Europe needs to continue to engage with the glories as well as the pains of its past. It is not possible to give a comprehensive answer to this difficult problem here, but for my own part I cannot help feeling that much of the future of Europe will be decided on what our attitude is towards the church buildings and other great cultural buildings of our heritage standing in our midst. Around the questions of whether we hate them, ignore them, engage with them or revere them, a huge amount will depend.

Again it is worth pondering the question of what would happen if the bubble were to pop and the next generations of Europeans suddenly experienced a decline in living standards because people in the rest of the world were to catch up with them, or because the debts accumulated through Europe's expectations of 'normal' living standards piled up beyond acceptable limits. Enjoyable as it might be while it lasts, it probably goes without saying that the life of a mere consumer lacks any real meaning and purpose. Instead, it reveals a gap in human experience that every society in history has attempted to address and which something else will try to fill if our own societies do not apply themselves to it. A society that sells itself solely on its pleasures is one that can swiftly lose its attractions. That post-nightclub convert had experienced the pleasures but then came to the
realisation they were not enough. A society that says we are defined exclusively by the bar and the nightclub, by self-indulgence and our sense of entitlement, cannot be said to have deep roots or much likelihood of survival. But a society which holds that our culture consists of the cathedral, the playhouse and the playing field, the shopping mall and Shakespeare, has a chance.

Still, there remains the unwillingness to confront these deeper issues. And each time it seems to come down to a sense of fatalism – in particular the sense that we have tried all of these things before. Why would we do all that again? This must be one of the reasons why appeals to Europeans to recapture their faith – even by Church leaders – are made not in the admonitory tones of the past but in a spirit of impeachment or even partial defeat. When Pope Benedict implored Europeans to behave ‘as though God exists’, he was acknowledging something that his predecessors were rarely able to accept: that some people today cannot believe and that the Church ought nevertheless to have some approach to them. Indeed, it was this appeal, more than anything else, that made the dying Oriana Fallaci a believer in Pope Benedict even whilst not being a believer in God. Elsewhere, the Pope appealed for the great gulf between religion and philosophy to be breached, specifically appealing that rather than being enemies, religion and philosophy must at least be in dialogue with each other.

At the root of such appeals is an awareness that Europeans are unlikely to simply find or come up with another culture or a better culture. And also an acknowledgement that modern Europeans from school upwards are currently doing a very poor job of celebrating a culture that has nurtured believers and doubters of previous generations and may nurture believers and doubters in this generation too. A growing number of both believers and non-believers have begun to realise that during the potentially huge upheavals in the years ahead it will not be enough to face them by first stripping ourselves absolutely bare. That practice is of course a particular part of the French tradition and the reason why when the country seeks to circumscribe the wearing of the Islamic headscarf, or burka, it has to excuse it by circumcising the wearing of Jewish and Christian symbols as well. While many people will see the sense in this, it also risks a game of strip-poker in which you begin stripped down to nothing whereas your opposite number has come fully clothed. It is possible that Islamic radicals will remain in France despite the ban on the wearing of the headscarf in certain public buildings while it is also possible that Jews – caught between the Islamists and the stricter secularisation they have provoked – will leave. Neither would be a desirable outcome.

If the culture that shaped Western Europe has no part in its future, then there are other cultures and traditions that will surely step in to take its place. To re-inject our own culture with some sense of a deeper purpose need not be a proselytising mission, but simply an aspiration of which we should be aware. Of course, it is always possible that the tide of faith that began its long, withdrawing roar of retreat in the nineteenth century will come back in again. But whether it does or not a mending of the culture will be impossible if the religious think that those who have split off from the same tree are their greatest problem, while those on the secular branch try to saw themselves off from the tree as a whole. Many people can sense the pain of that separation and the resulting want of meaning that arises from the shallows. A split has occurred in our culture that it will take the work of a generation to mend.
'unemployed racists.' Among other imprecations he continued, 'We refugees ... do not want to live in the same country with you. You can, and I think you should, leave Germany. Germany does not fit you, why do you live here? ... Look for a new home.'

On New Year's Eve 2016, on the first anniversary of the Cologne rape attacks, there were similar sex attacks in a number of European cities, including Innsbruck and Augsburg. Police in Cologne were heavily criticised by MPs from the SPD and Green parties, among others, for allegedly 'racially profiling' those seeking access to the city's main square in an attempt to prevent a repeat of the previous year's atrocities. One year after Germany had awoken to part of its new reality, the censors had returned and resumed control. On the same night in France just under 1,000 cars were set alight - a 17% rise on the same night one year before. The French Interior Ministry described the night as having gone off 'without any major incident'.

Day by day the continent of Europe is not only changing but is losing any possibility of a soft landing in response to such change. An entire political class have failed to appreciate that many of us who live in Europe love the Europe that was ours. We do not want our politicians, through weakness, self-hatred, malice, tiredness or abandonment to change our home into an utterly different place. And while Europeans may be almost endlessly compassionate, we may not be boundlessly so. The public may want many contradictory things, but they will not forgive politicians if - whether by accident or design - they change our continent completely. If they do so change it then many of us will regret this quietly. Others will regret it less quietly. Prisoners of the past and of the present, for Europeans there seem finally to be no decent answers to the future. Which is how the fatal blow will finally land.
NOTES

THE FEELING THAT THE STORY HAS RUN OUT


5 Benedetto Croce, 'Why we cannot help calling ourselves Christians', in My Philosophy, George Allen & Unwin, 1949; Marcello Pera, Why We Should Call Ourselves Christians, Encounter Books, 2011.


THE END


2 'European Jews are too afraid to go to synagogue on religious holidays due to fears of anti-Semitic attacks', The Daily Mail, 20 September 2016.

3 'Merkel admits she would turn back the clock on refugee policy', The Financial Times, 19 September 2016.

4 'Trump wants border wall, but Britain is building one in France', NBC News, 12 September 2016.

WHAT MIGHT HAVE BEEN


WHAT WILL BE

1 Daniel Korski, 'Why we lost the Brexit vote', Politico, 20 October 2016.


5 YouGov poll for Population Matters, May 2014.

6 'Umfrage zeigt: Das denken die Deutschen wirklich über den Islam', Focus, 5 May 2016.

7 'What do Europeans think about Muslim immigration?', Chatham House, 7 February 2017.

8 The video is available on YouTube under the title 'Erstaufnahme Asyl RP Lübbe Kassel Lohfelden 14.10.2015'.

9 'Die Wutbürger sollten Deutschland verlassen', Der Freitag, 12 October 2016.