

On the cultural unity of Europe.

For the project of a *European* dictionary.¹

It is a pleasure to speak here, in this Florence of ours, in this cradle of the Renaissance, in this jewel of art, which is a proud achievement of our history and of human civilization.

And, as I did at Mannheim and at Tsadar, let me apologise for not being a ‘professional’ linguist and, consequently, for taking the risk of saying something lacking purely scholarly interest, from the point of view of linguistics.

After passing my research life in the company of the great authors of political thought, Plato, Aristotle, Cicero, Locke, Constant, Tocqueville, Kant, Hegel, John Stuart Mill, and many others, with these great men who <always speak, and never let us speak>, as Machiavelli says of them, I flatter myself that I understand the concepts of state, society, historical change, more than the concepts of language contact, dynamics, diversity, etc., which only recently have begun to become familiar to me.

Latin, the common cement of our cultural tradition

Therefore, I will rather try to contribute to the concept of *European cultural unity*, to this concept as it was in the past, as it is now, and as to what ought to be done, to enhance the togetherness of our continent.

I need not to repeat what I maintain about Latin: that it is the common cement of our cultural tradition. This will perplex our East-European colleagues. Nevertheless, <ist Latein der denkbar beste Schlüssel zu einem globalen Wortschatz geblieben ... Es ist an der Zeit, daß wir uns dieser großen abendländischen Spracheinheit, die zumal in Begriffen und Vorstellungsschatz vorhanden ist, wieder bewußt werden. Keine politische und wirtschaftliche Organisation kann leisten, was diese kulturelle Einheit bietet> (<No political and economic organisation can supply what this cultural unity gives>, T. S. Eliot), to use the words of a German author.² This can be taken for granted, particularly if considering that the author of this statement, as I repeat, is a German, his mother tongue having far less in common, with Latin, than English, not to mention the Romance languages. Surely, he cannot be suspected of particular reasons for campaigning for Latin.

In Tsadar I observed that in Germany, more than elsewhere in Europe, a new consciousness has arisen, concerning the role of Latinate vocabulary. And, as for the Germanic world, some essential points should be put forward.

One should not forget, for example, that in Austria “Kaiser Joseph II ... an Stelle des Lateins Deutsch als Verwaltungssprache einführt”.³ But Joseph II, the son of Maria Theresa, was Emperor from 1780 to 1790. This means that, until then, Latin was the language of administration in that country. As for Hungary, “im Parlament wurden die Debatten noch bis 1843 ausschließlich in lateinischer Sprache geführt”,⁴ and “als Staatssprache diente das Latein bis zur ersten Teilung des polnischen Staates im Jahre 1772”.⁵ Last, concerning Russia, Vossen reminds us that, after the fall of Constantinople, in 1453, Moscow became “das dritte Rom”,⁶ and classical studies were cultivated. The vocabulary of Russian is 20% of French and Latin origin, and there “existierte der humanistische Gymnasialunterricht bis 1917”.

Europe, a unified entity

What strikes the reader of Vossen’s brilliant demonstration of the lasting influence of Latin, is the uniformity of European cultural history, in the sense that the same phenomena took place in the same period, and in all the countries of the continent. From a cultural point of view Europe is a unified entity, *from the Atlantic to the Urals*, and not only in the Western part of it, as many believe. The divisions of the past could not destroy what unites us, because there are many reasons for unity, far fewer for disunity. Vossen’s book helps us understand European history better, and we must be grateful to its author for this.

Let us now consider another German book, less brilliant, perhaps, but more rigorously scientific, *Eurolatein*, edited by Horst Haider Munske and Alan Kirkness.⁷ We can say that this book represents the *consciousness* of the *common* origin of European languages, and marks a step forward towards a new idea of the history of Europe and of its linguistic unity. Nevertheless, its contributors still see things from the point of view of the cultural tradition of their own nation, as is proved by the conclusions they reach. The contents of the work can be summarized in the words of Helmut Henne, who

¹ Paper delivered at the University of Florence, on 7 July 2003, at the XV ICAES- International Congress of Anthropological and Ethnological Sciences, Symposium on Language Dynamics and Linguistic Diversity in Anthropological Perspective, July 5th-7th.

² Karl Vossen, *Mutter Latein und ihre Töchter. Europas Sprachen und ihre Herkunft* (14. Auflage, 1999), 8. Italics mine.

³ Vossen, *ibid.*, 197.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 200.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 202. In Germany Schopenhauer published in 1830 in Latin his *Theoria Colorum Physiologica*.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 207.

⁷ *Eurolatein. Das griechische und lateinische Erbe in den Europäischen Sprachen*, Reihe germanistische Linguistik, Max Niemeyer Verlag (Tübingen, 1996).

writes that “die eurolateinische Forschung ist, soweit ich sehe, im Stadium der Inventarisierung”.⁸ And Alan Kirkness theorizes “ein multilinguales, paneuropäisches Lexicon, das von einem mehrsprachigen, internationalen und interdisziplinären Team/Kollektiv gearbeitet wird”. Nevertheless, he adds, “eine solche Polyglotte ist jedoch *auch im neuen Europa wohl noch eine Utopie*”.⁹

The authors of *Eurolatein* conceive things from a purely academic, or scholarly, point of view. They miss the *political* dimension of the subject, and do not properly consider the concept of society, of the state, and so on, because, of course, this was not their purpose.

But languages live in society, in the sense that they constitute the essential instrument of communication, without which mankind could not form a community.

If we look around us, we see a world rapidly changing, and the need for more and more refined means of communication. If we think of Europe, we see that the nations of the continent are progressively losing their traditional identity, while the concept of nation state is disappearing, to be replaced by far larger communities.

National languages, in their turn, *do not* remain *national*, a word that has now a meaning quite different from the one it used to have in the first part of the XIXth century, when it embodied the concept, held with almost religious devotion, of freedom, of redemption of an entire people from the chains of foreign domination.

The problem of communication

The peoples of Europe, not to say the peoples of the rest of the world, mix without restraint, there being no more physical boundaries to separate them. But there is, still, a boundary difficult to overcome: that of *communication*, notwithstanding the progress that has been made, in this regard.

More than ever the political dimension is essential, when considering the role of languages, particularly in the present state of Europe. The Western part of our continent has now a Constitution, which definitively recognised that the differences of the past are indeed bygone, supposing that they ever were as great as they used to appear in the past.

What to do, therefore, in this new situation of European history?

We have been spectators, in the last few decades, of a development and of an extension of studies, in consequence of which linguistics has attained great results. The work of historical excavation, of documentation in language changes, has been considerable. The problem is whether we shall limit ourselves to scholarly works, to being mere spectators of these changes, giving up any willingness to *direct* and to *command* them.

Samuel Johnson established, with his *Dictionary*, a vocabulary for the English language. To promote the advancement of knowledge we have, nowadays, more refined means of enquiry, which never were equalled in the past. The danger is in this, that we content ourselves with documenting the past, filling the museums, so to say, or the libraries, with scholarly items, but that we do not create anything new and alive, for the future generations.

Therefore, shall we let the *natural* trend of changes in linguistics and civilization operate without our intervention, without our conscious, systematic command?

The modern educational system reaches all the social strata, and renders communication possible, although not necessarily easy. This is the result of centuries of history, during which the demand operated from the inside of society, but, along with it, also operated a political programme, sometimes conscious, sometimes unconscious, which envisaged a different, more advanced social structure.

Need for a *political* consciousness of our cultural unity

What Europe needs, at present, is the *political* consciousness of cultural unity, and this cannot be left to a few academic books. That consciousness must be *political*, in the sense that it must involve society and its aims. The world of politics is far wider than the academic world. In the name of *local* traditions, of anything that is *original*, in Burkean sense, we seem to neglect the fact that a number of enlightened ideas are also necessary, for the advancement of learning. These ideas, obviously, must co-exist with anything that is traditional, in the sense that we cannot conceive of any *constriction*, even of a purely intellectual kind, in society. Hence the role of the educational system, which must transmit to the new generations the results of enquiry.

In Mannheim I said that, in the *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary*, new in 2,000, 91,5% of the words listed under letter A are of Graeco-Roman, or of Romance origin.¹⁰ And in Tsadar I added that, in *Der Duden Deutsches Universal Wörterbuch A-Z*, ed. 1989, more than 25% of the words listed under letter A are of Latin origin.

Furthermore, German is tending to abandon the words of purely Germanic origin, replacing them with Latin words, owing to the influence of English. It must also be remembered that German vocabulary used to be much more similar to

⁸ H. Henne, ‘Das Eigene im Fremden’, in *Eurolatein*, 277.

⁹ A. Kirkness, ‘Zur lexicographischen Dokumentation eurolateinischer Wortbildungseinheiten’, *ibid.*, 255; see also 271. Italics mine.

¹⁰ “Von dem rund 400.000 Wörtern des grossen Oxford English Dictionary nicht weniger als rund 80% des gesamten bestendes romanischer, d.h. mittel oder unmittelbar lateinischer Herkunft”, although the frequency list is less favourable to the vocabulary of Latin origin, Vossen, 162. Furthermore, p. 275, Vossen emphasizes a sentence by Karl Korn (<keine Ende mit dem Latein>, FAZ, 5.1.1972), concerning “der Vormarsch des Lateins ... die Latinisierung der Nationalsprachen”.

Latin, as a consequence of French influence, at the time of Frederick the Great, and before that pernicious phenomenon, which was called *Sprachreinigung*, and which, sad to say, separated Germany from the rest of Europe, severely damaging contemporary civilization.

Since Latin is “der Schlüssel zum europäischen Wortschatz”,¹¹ *the next step, the decisive one, must be in considering European history and, along with it, European languages, as a unified, living entity.* This has not been done for long time, not since the Reformation, because of the prevalence of the nationalistic, irrationalistic element, the source of many evils in history. But also today I see too many hesitations, from this point of view. To free ourselves from the chains of the past is a difficult, often painful process, to which only history can give a sanction.

What to do, then, to achieve the aims indicated above? What is the role of the scholarly world, of the educational system, and of publishing, which is its necessary subsidiary?

Accepting the principle of the common origin of European civilization, means giving up any emphasis on the local, national element. This must be accompanied by the consciousness that there exists a *learned* element, in culture and in linguistics, which is not necessarily *enlightened*, in the sense that it aims at replacing, or at *criticising*, the *romantic* one, with all that this means. Both must co-exist, in a synthesis which I have called a *new humanism*. And the world of learning, in particular, apart from documenting all that is local, individual, national, must also have, as its central aim, the offering of new instruments of comprehension, or communication, to mankind.

People must realize that the concept of *national* language is now being progressively replaced by the concept of *European* language. In this way, for example, my mother tongue, Italian, should be considered, and studied, no more as the language of the Italian nation, but as a *European* language, in the sense that it is no more than a variant of a common tradition which, after *only* five centuries of separation -consequence of the fury of rabid men, whose actions have too long been emphasized, and justified, and praised on political ground, while they should simply have been historically explained- needs now to re-unify, emphasizing what is common, and not what separated us.

It is a common observation that a process of simplification and unification of European languages is slowly taking place. These languages are progressively discarding words that are not shared in common, or are not mutually understandable. They are gradually adopting a vocabulary that is as common as possible to them all. In a couple of generations the vocabulary of the principal languages in Europe and the West may be moving nearer to being simplified and unified. Aim of 2.000. *The European Journal*, which is now in its fourth year, is that of moving alongside these changes, observing and monitoring these tongues, simply because we are convinced that Europe has much to say, in the third millennium.

Need for a *European* dictionary

The paper I delivered in Mannheim contains the following statements:

“As we know, there is a number of words substantially common to European languages, and understandable by any learned European citizen. We should, first of all, identify these words ... This should be the first step. The next step should be selecting, in a dictionary which we could start to compile, for each Latin or Romance word a Germanic one, and vice-versa.... Discarding slang, for example, could help identify this common European vocabulary. This could lead on to the compilation of a ‘European’ dictionary, in which the ‘history’ of words, or their etymology, would be fundamental. This would also revolutionise the way of studying languages, and of approaching our common historical and cultural European tradition.

In understanding a language, in fact, the real problem is not that of the language structure. This is true, in part, for Latin and German. The principal problem is rather the vocabulary. And we have to consider a different, quite different approach to the study of languages”.

According to the above indications, I have gone on with my programme, jotting down some early drafts, to be submitted to colleagues and to publishers. The premise of the programme is obviously that the dictionaries proposed are intended to show Europeans what European togetherness is. Their basic principle is that words must be understood through their history, i.e., the entries must be based on ‘historical’ principles. Hence the relevance of etymology, which is the *history* of a word and of its meaning, from its oldest known origin. Therefore, if until now dictionaries have been ‘national’, from now onwards they must be ‘European’, for the history and for the future of European and of Western civilization.

I reproduce here part of the draft on the basis of English as *langue de départ*, concerning only a few entries starting with letter A, as from the *Oxford Advanced Learner’s Dictionary*, putting the English word and the corresponding Italian word near to each other. When there is no correspondence, the English entry is just printed, without any further indication. For families of words (e.g., *abandon, abandoned, abandonment; abbess, abbey, abbot*, and in other cases) the corresponding Italian entry has been judged unnecessary, given the similarity of the word in the Italian translation.

¹¹ Ibid., 230.

Aback __

aba·cus *n* (L *abacus*, Gr *ἄβαξ*; 16c), F *boulier, compteur*, S *ábaco*, I *abaco, pallottoliere*, G *Abakus*; a frame, with sliding balls, for calculating; archit., upper section of a capital; [ital] **à·ba·co** *sm* (lat *abacus*, gr *ἄβαξ*; 1348); ing *abacus*, fr *boulier, compteur*, sp *ábaco*, ted *Abakus*; a) *abaco, pallottoliere*, b) *sezione superiore di un capitello*

aban·don *vt* (OF *à ban donner*, see *ban*; 14c), F *abandonner*, S *abandonar*, I *abbandonare*, G *verlassen* a) to leave someone or something b) to give up control; [ital] **ab·ban·do·nà·re** *vt* (dal fr *abandoner*, ant fr *à ban donner, à bandon, au pouvoir de*; 1211); ing *abandon*, fr *abandonner*, sp *abandonar*, ted *verlassen*; lasciare, un'idea, un progetto; **aban·done** *adj*, F *abandonné*, S *abandonado, desierto*, I *abbandonato*, G *verlassen, aufgegeben*; a) deserted, no longer used b) having a careless behaviour

aban·don·ment, *sb*, F *abandonnement*, S *abbandono*, I *abbandono*, G *Überlassung*; a) the act of leaving a person, a place; b) abandonment of an idea, of a project, etc.; [ital] **abbandono**

abase *v* (OF *abaissier*, LL *bassus, short of stature*; 14c), F *abaïsser, humilier*, S *humillar, degradar*, I *umiliare, avvilitare, mortificare*; G *erniedrigen, demütigen*; to abase oneself, showing that someone is more important, etc; [ital] **ab·bas·sà·re** *v tr* (tlat *bassum*; 1276); ing *to lower, to reduce*, fr *abaïsser*, sp *bajar, aminorar, disminuir* (fig), ted *niedriger stellen, machen*; porre verso il basso, __ *le tendine di una finestra*, diminuire, __ *i prezzi*

abash, abashed __

abate *v* (Ofr *abatre*, LL *ad+battēre*; 13c), F *diminuer, faiblir*; S *diminuir, reducir*; I *diminuire, abbassare*; G *vermindern, verringern*; to become less strong; [ital] **ab·bàt·te·re** *v tr* (lat volg *abbattēre, ad+battēre*); ing *to knock down, to fell* (alberi), fr *abatire, renverser* (un obstacle), sp *derribar, abatir, demoler*, ted *niederwerfen, niederreißen*; far cadere, *abbattere un albero*, fig *abbattere i costi*; **ab·at·toir** *n* (F *abatire*, LL *ad+battēre*; 19c), F *abattoir*, S *matadero*, I *mattatoio*, G *Schlachthaus*; slaughterhouse

ab·bess *n* (LL *abbatissa*, OF *abbesse*; 13c), F *abbesse*, S *abadesa*, I *abatessa*, G *Äbtissin*; a nun, at the head of other nuns in a convent, prioress

abbey *n* (L *abbātia*, OF *abaie*; 13c), F *abbaye*, S *abadia*, I *abbazia*, G *Abtei*; a monastery, with a large church, the head of the community being an abbot; **abbacy**

abbot *n* (eccl L *abbas*, Gr „*bbŠv*), F *abbé*, S *abad*, I *abate*, G *Abt*; a man, who is in charge of an abbey; head of an abbey

ab·bre·vi·ate *vt* (LL *abbreviatus*, from *abbreviare*; 15c), F *abrégér*, S *abreviar*, I *abbreviare*, G *abkürzen, verkürzen*; to reduce, to shorten; **ab·bre·vi·ation**; [ital] **ab·bre·vià·re** *v tr* (tl *abbreviare*; XIII sec); ing *abbreviate*, fr *abrégér*, sp *abreviar*, ted *abkürzen, verkürzen*; ridurre, accorciare

ab·di·cate *v* (L *abdicāre*; 16c), F *abdiquer, renoncer*, S *abdicar, renunciar a*, I *abdicare*, G *aufgeben, niederlegen*; to abdicate (the throne), to abdicate one's own responsibilities, to resign; **ab·di·ca·tion**; [Ital] **ab·di·cà·re** *v* (l *abdicāre*; 1375); ing *abdicate*, fr *abdiquer, renoncer*, sp *abdicar, renunciar a*, ted *aufgeben, niederlegen*; rinunciare, *abdicare al trono, alle proprie responsabilità*; **ab·di·ca·tò·rio**, che ha abdicato

ab·do·men *n* (L *abdomen*; 17c), F *abdomen*, S *abdomen*, I *addome*, G *Abdomen*; the lower part of the body, which contains stomach and intestines; [ital] **addome**

ab·duct *v* (L *abducēre*; 19c), F *enlever, détourner*, S *raptar, sequestrar*, I *rapire, sequestrare*, G *entführen*; to take away a person, using force

ab·er·rant *adj* (L *aberrāre*; 19c), F *aberrant*, S *aberrante, anormal*, I *aberrazione*, G *Abweichend, Verwirrend*; an anomalous event, unusual, *an aberrant behaviour*; [ital] **aber·rànte** *agg* (lat *aberrāns*); ing *aberrant*, fr *aberrant*, sp *aberrante, anómalo*, ted *Abweichend, Verwirrend*; anomalo, non abituale, *un'idea aberrante*; **ab·er·ra·tion** *n* F *aberration*, S *aberración*, I *aberrazione*, G *Abweichung, Verwirrung*; an anomalous, or unusual, event, or behaviour;

aberrance, aberrancy __

abet, abettor __

abey·ance (old Fr *abeance*, LL *baddāre*)

ab·hor *v* (L *abhorrēre*; 15c), F *avoir horreur de, exécrer*, S *aborrecer, detestar*, I *aborrir, detestare*, G *verabscheuen*; to dislike, to hate, esp for moral reasons; [ital] **a·bor·rì·re** *v* (l *abhorrēre*); ing *abhor*, fr *avoir horreur de, exécrer*, sp *aborrecer, detestar*, ted *verabscheuen*; detestare, avere in orrore; **ab·hor·rence** *n*, F *exécration, répugnance, abomination*, S *aborrecimiento, detestación*, I *ripugnanza, aborrimento*, G *Abscheu*; feeling of dislike, of hatred;

ab·hor·rent *adj*, F *exécration, répugnant*, S *aborrecible, detestable*, I *repugnante, disgustoso, abominevole*, G *verabscheuungswürdig*; someone or something which causes repugnance, hatred, dislike, *an abhorrent situation*

abide, abide-ing __

abil·ity *n* (L *habilitas*, OFr *ableté*; 14c), F *aptitude, capacité*, S *habilidad, capacidad*, I *abilità*, G *Fähigkeit, Befähigung*; talent, skill; [ital] **a·bi·li·tà** *n* (l *habilitas*, fr med *ableté*); ing *ability*, fr *habileté*, sp *habilidad, capacidad*, ted *Fähigkeit, Befähigung*; talento, attitudine, *abilità nel fare, nel conseguire qualcosa*

abject *adj* (L *abject-us*; 15c), F *abject, misérable*, S *abyecto, vil*, I *abietto*, G *niedrig, elend*; base, mean, wretched, *base behaviour*;

[ital] **a·bièt·to** *agg* (lat *abjectus*; XIV sec); ing *abject*, fr *abject, misérable*, sp *abyecto, vil*, ted *niedrig, elend*; spregevole, ignobile, *comportamento abietto*; **abjection** [Ital] **a·bie·zió·ne**

ab·jure *v* (L *abiurāre*; 16c), F *abjurer*, S *abjurar*, I *abiurare*, G *abschwören*; to give up publicly his own religious beliefs; **abjuration** **abjurer**; [Ital] **abiurare**

ablaze __

able *adj* (L *habilis*, OFr *habile*; 14c), F *capable*, compéteñt, S *habil*, *capaz*, I *abile*, G *fähig*; in possession of skill, intelligence to do sth; **ably**; **able-bodied** *adj* (*habilis+body*), F *fort*, *robuste*, S *sano*, *robusto*, I *sano*, *robusto*, G *kräftig*, *körperlich*, *leistungsfähig*; physically strong and healthy **able-seaman**__ [*ital*] **abile**

abloom__

ab-lu-tion *sb* (LL *ablütio*, from *abluëre*, to wash; 14c), F *ablution*, S *ablución*, I *abluzione*, G *Waschung*; act of washing oneself, generally as part of a religious ceremony; [*ital*] **abluzione**

ab-nor-mal *adj* (L *ab-normalis*; 19c), F *anormal*, S *anormal*, I *anormale*, G *abnormal*; anomalous, eccentric, abnormal behaviour, etc.; **ab-nor-mal-ity** *sb* (L *ab-normalitas*), F *anormalité*, S *anormalidad*, I *anormalità*, G *Abnormität*; a condition outside normality, *congenital*, *behavioural*

abnegation (L *ab+negāre*); [*Ital*] **abnegazione**

aboard, abode__

abol-ish *v* (L *abolēre*; 15c), F *abolir*, *supprimer*, S *abolir*, *suprimir*, I *abolire*, *sopprimere*, G *abschaffen*, *aufheben*; to suppress, annul, cancel; [*ital*] **a-bo-li-re** *v* (l *abolēre*); ing *abolish*, fr *abolir*, *supprimer*, sp *abolir*, *suprimir*, ted *abschaffen*, *aufheben*; sopprimere, annullare, cancellare; **abo-li-tion** *sb* (L *abolitio*), F *abolition*, *suppression*, S *abolición*, *supresión*, I *abolizione*, *soppressione*, G *Abschaffung*, *Aufhebung*; suppression, annulment, cancellation; [*Ital*] **a-bo-li-zio-ne** *s* (l *abolitio*); ing *abolition*, fr *abolition*, *suppression*, sp *abolición*, *supresión*, ted *Abschaffung*, *Aufhebung*; soppressione, cancellazione; **abo-li-tion-ism**; **abo-li-tion-ist** *n* F *abolitionniste*, S *abolicionista*, I *abolizionista*, G *Abolitionist*; person in favour of abolishing a particular practice, law, etc.

abom-in-able *adj* (L *abominābilis*; 14c), F *abominable*, S *abominable*, *execrable*, I *abominevole*, *esecrabile*, G *abscheulich*, *scheußlich*; causing disgust, unpleasant, very bad; *abominable weather*, *the abominable snowman* [*Ital*] **a-bo-mi-nà-bi-le**, **a-bo-mi-né-vo-le** *agg* (l *abominābilis*----); ing *abominable*, fr *abominable*, sp *abominable*, *execrable*, g *abscheulich*, *scheußlich*; sgradevole, che causa disgusto, *situazione*, *tempo abominevole*, *l'abominevole uomo delle nevi*;

abom-in-ate *v* (L *abominātus*, from *abomināri*; 17c), F *abominer*, *détester*, S *abominar*, *detestar*, I *abominare*, *detestare*, G *verabscheuen*; to feel disgust for sb/sth, *a morally abominable man*, *action*, etc.; **abom-in-ation** *sb* (L *abominātio*), F *abomination*, S *abominación*, I *abominio*, G *Abscheu*; feeling of disgust for sb/sth, eg, *for the bad behaviour of a man*, *of a group*, etc

abo-ri-ginal *adj* (L *ab+originalis*; 17c), F *aborigène*, *indigène*, S *aborigen*, *indígena*, I *aborigeno*, G *eingeboren*, *ursprünglich*; a person or population original in a country, esp Australia; **abo-ri-gine** *sb* (L *aborigines*; 16c), F *aborigène*, S *aborigen*, I *aborigeno*, G *Ureinwohner*, *Urbevölkerung*; original people who lived in Australia, before the arrival of the Europeans

abort *v* (L *abortus*, *ab-orīri*; 16c), F *avorter*, S *abortar*, I *abortire*, G *Frühgeburt haben*; miscarriage, the ending of a pregnancy before the child develops and is born; [*ital*] **a-bor-ti-re** *v* (l *abortus*, *ab-orīri*); ing *abort*, fr *avorter*, sp *abortar*, ted *Frühgeburt haben*; terminare anticipatamente la gravidanza, non condurla a termine, non riuscire, *ha sofferto una minaccia d'aborto*, *il tentativo è abortito*; **abor-tion** *n* (L *abortio*; 16c), F *avortement*, S *aborto*, I *aborto*, G *Abort*, *Frühgeburt*; the act of aborting; **abor-tion-ist** *n* F *avorteur*, S *abortista*, I *abortista*, G *Abtreiber*; one who is in favour of abortion, or performs abortions, often illegally; **abor-tive** *adj* (OFr *abortif*, L *abortivus*, from *ab-orīri*); F *avorté*, *manqué*, S *abortivo*, I *abortivo*, G *zu früh geboren*; non successful, failed, *an abortive attempt*

abound *v* (OFr *abunder*, L *abundāre*; 14c), F *abonder*, S *abundar*, I *abbondare*, G *im Überfluß vorhanden sein*; to abound with/in, *the shop abounds with/in Italian wines*; [*ital*] **ab-bon-dà-re** *v intr* (fr med *abunder*, l *abundāre*; 1272); ing *abound*, fr *abonder*, sp *abundar*, ted *im Überfluß vorhanden sein*; avere ricchezza di, *il negozio abbonda di vini italiani*

about, about-turn ; above;

abra-ca-dabra (LL *abracadabra*; 17c), F, S, I *abracadabra*, G *Abrakadabra*

ab-rade (L *abradēre*; 17c), F *abraser*, *écorcher (la peau)*, S *raer*, *raspar*, I *erodere*, *corrodere*, G *abschürfen*; to rub the surface, to scrape, wear off

ab-ra-sion *n* (L *abrāsio*; 17c), F *abrasion*, *écorchure*, S *radura*, *raspatura*, I *abrasione*, G *Abreiben*; the act of rubbing, a lesion of the skin; **abra-sive** *adj/n* (L *abrasivus*; 19c), F *abrasif*, S *abrasivo*, I *abrasivo*, G *abreibend*; having the power of rubbing

abreast__

abridge *v* (OF *abregier*, LL *adbreviāre*; 14c), F *abrégér*, S *compendiar*, *resumir*, I *abbreviare*, G *ab+verkürzen*; to shorten, abbreviate, reduce, *an abridged edition of the dictionary*; **abrigement, abridgement**

[*ital*] **abbreviare** *v tr* (tl *abbreviare*; XIII sec); ing *abbreviate*, fr *abrégér*, sp *abreviar*, ted *abkürzen*, *verkürzern*; ridurre, accorciare

abroad__

ab-ro-gate *v* (L *abrogāri*; 16c), F *abroger*, S *abrogar*, I *abrogare*, G *abschaffen*, *aufheben*; to abolish officially, formally, *to abrogate a law*; [*Ital*] **abrogare**

The entries here examined are 64 out of 1690 in letter A, and it seems unnecessary examining more of them, if considering how extended is the vocabulary of Latin origin in English.¹² They give an idea, which, hopefully, will be judged as exhaustive, of the similarity of the European, or, at least, of the West-European, vocabulary. And an idea, also, of the difficulties lexicographers have to face, in compiling such a dictionary, which in no case should exceed 1,500 pages, to be easy to consult, and useful to the educational world.

Obviously, although the drafts here submitted are limited to the five principal languages, and our East-European colleagues will certainly be perplexed at the general implant of the work I am proposing, no European language should be excluded, in principle. But this task goes beyond the responsibility of one man, or of a group of men, and involves a different project, or different projects, and the participation of other groups of scholars.

What is certainly feasible, at the moment, with no few difficulties, indeed, is the project here above sketched, although not all the opinions are coincident, concerning it. For example, that of some publishers, who have been consulted, or to whom the main lines of the endeavour have been submitted, with a few details, just to give an idea of the reasons for it.

In general, the endeavour has been judged complex to realize, and the difficulties of the market have been alleged. But illuminating is the circumstance that the only two of them, to whom the project has been submitted in its details, have answered declaring themselves sure that readers still privilege monolingual or bilingual dictionaries, and that they are themselves sceptic about multilingual dictionaries.

These answers could hide different motivations, but they prove what has been said above, on the necessity of *thinking European*, and how this concept is far from being rooted in the mind of the citizens of the Union, and of large part of its world of learning.

There are, certainly, historical reasons for this, also ‘biological’ reasons, let us admit, in order to content all the ‘schools of thought’, so to say. Nevertheless, while we are about to have a common Constitution, we remain jealously attached to our traditions, to our national histories; while we accept to speak, and to write, in particular, in one of the European languages, the one which is now *lingua franca*, because everybody understands it, we scarcely realize the concept of the *common* European history.

Therefore, I am submitting to your attention the main lines of a cultural battle, still to be fought, and won, in the common European conscience. It is a difficult battle, aiming at convincing the world of learning, publishing, politics, of the validity of the principles which have been expounded, here, above.

In fact, while we privilege what is national, local, individual, the product of tradition, we risk losing the principal European heritage, the consciousness of the common vocabulary, which would be erroneous considering as the product of separate histories, communicating, but not unified.

This is the first, and most difficult battle, to be won, and consists in modifying the current way of thinking, about our common history.

Appeal to colleagues

It is true that this way of thinking is slowly, *naturally* changing, but where is the role of the world of learning? Shall we be like the owl of Minerva in Hegel’s philosophy, the owl that begins flying only at the sunset, when the events have already taken place (meaning that philosophy is the *conscience* of the past, and not an active intervention in the present)? Or shall we consciously *direct*, or *command*, these great cultural changes in society and in the world history?

Therefore, I wish to end with an appeal to European colleagues. Their scholarly works help us understand better our common history, but they should be accompanied by a more profound consciousness of the unified nature of our common tradition. And by a consciousness, at the same time, of the necessity of an active intervention, at least from the point of view of learning, in society, in the sense that culture should aim not only at *understanding*, but at *modifying* social phenomena. And language is the first, and most important social phenomenon, the premise of all the others, the one without which society could not take shape.

The battle I have committed myself is no doubt difficult, and consists in modifying the traditional way of thinking (let me recall to our memory Immanuel Kant’s ‘natural lazyness’ of mankind). By contrast, it is far from being impossible, and we can say of it that it is in the way. The problem is only that of taking it up consciously, of our willingness to abandon traditional ways of thinking, in favour of what is new in history, without any fatalistic acceptance of events.

I could also conclude that my task ends here, with this appeal; that colleagues endowed with a particular experience in the field of linguistics should take this endeavour up. And so will I, declaring, again and again, that my journal, which has been founded for this very purpose, is at the disposal of everybody who wants to take part in it, contributing to what we consider as a necessary advancement of civilization in our continent, conscious, as we are, that this cannot take place without the advancement of learning, its necessary premise.

Vincenzo Merolle
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¹² See above, n. 10 and text corresponding with n. 10.

