

Introduction

THE CROWNING transatlantic achievement of the twentieth century was the preservation of freedom on the European continent. Europeans and Americans, united in a common cause, did it together. Ours was, initially, a partnership of mutual interests, but it became a relationship based on common values, and for some also a friendship made of trust, affection, and respect.

At the beginning of the twenty-first century, like the disappearing smile of Lewis Carroll's Cheshire cat, the vision of our once grand relationship is fading away. It is being replaced with criticism and dissension. We have become quick to interpret our contrary opinions as signs of weakness or arrogance, rather than to consider the differences between us and how they affect our regard for each other.

One of the few things that Europeans and Americans do agree on is that we are drifting apart. Does it matter, some of us wonder? Well, that depends on whom you ask, but I believe it does matter, enormously. If our current estrangement continues, and worsens, our relationship will eventually dissolve.

The dissolution will not happen overnight, and its progress will not capture our undivided attention. In that event, however, Americans and Europeans would no longer be allied in the defense of the principles we have protected in the past. The former union would consist, instead, of fragmented coalitions of expediency between America and individual European countries. Rivalry and strife would replace constructive competition and healthy cooperation.

If this occurs there will be unhappy consequences for all of us. Our

rapport will be tainted by uncertainty, even mistrust. We will no longer be able to distinguish with confidence who is a true friend and who is a resentful former ally. In our search for reliable partners we will find it easy to dismiss as opportunists those who disagree with us and convenient to praise as friends those who tell us what we want to hear.



This depressing scenario is not preordained, nor is it a self-fulfilling prophecy. What we have in common is of greater moment than our controversies. The values we cherish have a power of their own. The principles that unite us endure and compel. They have been given different names, at different times, by different people: truth, liberty, moral decency, respect for human freedom, opposition to tyranny. In fact, these are the principles on which European civilization was built and which Europeans later brought to America. Today, we still share a belief in all of them.

Our differences are not of principle, but of practice. They arise from our histories and our fashions. Nineteenth-century visitors to the Old and New Worlds wrote about continental ways and American manners. Modern travelers continue to discover them. Europe and America have not been built in the same way. Our attitudes have been shaped by our experiences.

Most of us, however, are unfamiliar with the origin of our differences. Often we do not even know what they are. Our neglect contributes to misunderstandings, and our ignorance to disagreements. When this occurs our quarrels become divisive, and we react with impatience. Rather than listening, we sermonize. It is, too often, a dialogue of the deaf.

It is this colloquy that has become the hallmark of recent times—since the end of the Cold War in 1989–1990, and especially since the attack on the World Trade Center in 2001. Our approach has soured the satisfaction we derive from our undertakings, and has injured the pride we take in our accomplishments. We have forced the conclusion that the interests of the Old and the New World have become so fundamentally contradictory that partnership is no longer possible. Some contend that

our relationship was never based on common values, and that what divides us is of infinitely greater weight than the substance of our friendship.



Americans and Europeans, dancing together in the dark,¹ is a depiction of what often happens when we seek a harmonious relationship. While we hold one another in a fond embrace, we step on each other's toes and try to lead at the same time. Our conversations are full of conviction and rich with opinion, but we talk at cross-purposes. Seldom do we discuss the striking contrasts between the Old World of Europe and the New World of America.

Yet we both gain by developing knowledge of our historical legacies and cultivating respect for them. It takes time, and exertion, but that is part and parcel of nurturing a relationship that is more than just a marriage of convenience. We did so during the twentieth century, and we learned that the effort was worth the investment. To do so successfully in this new century, however, requires greater resolve than we have been willing to show to date.

We do not have to look far to find the reason why. Most Europeans understand much less about America than they think they do, and today's Americans are blithely unaware how little they know about Europe. In both cases the product is often arrogance: on the one hand, arrogance born of condescension, and on the other, arrogance born of naiveté. The predictable result is that many of us, with real confidence, misjudge each other's motives and behavior, just as we look forward eagerly to our next dance.



This book is a consideration of our differences and affinities and our interests. Consisting of seven essays presented in three parts, each is related to the next; thus, they should be read in order, beginning with the essay on "Differences" in Part One and concluding with that on "The Force of Things" in Part Three. As a whole, the parts form an account of those attitudes, approaches, and affections which give shadow to the past and provide substance to the present. It is with their force, also, that the future

of our relationship will be written. The past, indeed, to paraphrase William Faulkner from his novel *Requiem for a Nun*, is never dead nor ever past.

The “Continental Contrasts” presented in Part One are introduced with an essay on *the essential difference* between us. It is found in how Europe and America were built—from the top down and from the bottom up. The difference is profound in its impact, because it marks our history and continues to affect how Europeans and Americans conduct their private and professional lives. This difference is part of the heritage which shapes our views of the world, as seen from our respective backyards. Our horizons, too, are seldom the same, because they are cast and colored by geography, distance and space, by art and music, and by our manners, customs, and traditions.

The stage is thus set for the discussion in Part Two of the influence of the essential difference on our modern interests; interests to which we have committed ourselves since the end of World War II. These are properly called the pursuits of peace and prosperity, the guardians of the values we hold dear in Europe and America. In many ways we describe them with the same words and terms. But our attitudes concerning how the principle of human freedom should be reflected in our qualities of life produce different approaches to how we define and protect them, and on occasion result in dramatically conflicting orders of priority.

The contemporary contrasts are most jarringly apparent, not in our debates over power and weakness, but in how we speak about our concepts of equality, opportunity, and stability and in how we view the purpose of competition and assess the propriety of free and open markets. Hence, the first essay of Part Two treats, (1) the post–World War II origins of “The European Model,” built from the top down after 1945 and influenced to a significant degree by the politics of socialism, and (2) “The American Model,” which reflects a commitment to a quality of life built from the bottom up, marked by individual liberty and responsibility and molded in the arena of competition for ideas, goods, and services. The second essay considers (1) the forces which transformed the European model into a common market and drove its expansion into a broader European Union, and (2) whether that union will lead to a trans-Atlantic

relationship of constructive competition, or to destructive rivalry between an isolated America and an irrelevant Europe.

The subject of Part Three is the future of our undertakings. The first of the three essays focuses on our respective legacies, ancient and modern, and therefore on who we are and on what we may become. The second addresses the effects of the fly in the soup of our relationship; namely, our impatience with each other's approach to life often results in explanations of each other's motives which are simplistic and foolish, and undermines the significance of what we have forged together. The concluding essay clarifies the essence of our most important foreign policy asset. That asset is our joint and several commitments to common values. It may be poetic justice that they come from the very histories whose defining differences still lead us to different paths on our journeys to the same place. But if this is so, it is also the essential difference that obligates us to reject the temptation to trivialize the nature of the principles which unite us. These, born out of our past, must become both the shadow and substance of our future.



Some of the people with whom I discussed the subjects in this book asked whether it is difficult to write in general terms about Europeans and Americans. The answer, of course, is yes. Europeans are not all the same, nor are Americans. Nevertheless, Europeans share a great many judgments in their estimation of Americans and America, just as Americans, who also differ tremendously from one region to another, hold remarkably similar views of Europe and the Europeans.

My colleagues at the Hoover Institution also raised a concern which defines the inquiring scholarly environment. Although few of them know Europe well, most of them are curious about what separates and unites Americans and Europeans. What evidence, they wanted to know, did I have for my conclusions? What criteria have I used to select the differences and affinities, the interests, and the habits of life discussed in these pages? Theirs are legitimate questions, and the straightforward answers are short.

My own experiences are the evidence. I am the son of William Carroll

Bark, cited further on in this book, who was a professor of medieval history at Stanford University. Both he and my mother, Eleanor Carlton, encouraged my interest in Europe, initially at home where my brother and I grew up as the sons of medieval parents in the modern world, and later on as well, when they encouraged without reservation my wish to earn my Ph.D. in history at the Freie Universität Berlin.

Since 1970, when I left Germany after living there for more than four years and became a fellow at Stanford University's Hoover Institution, I have spent my professional and private life discussing trans-Atlantic differences, interests, and affinities with European statesmen, politicians, businessmen and -women, scholars, writers, and journalists. In the course of my research and writing I have often found the thinking of my European interlocutors familiar, but I have also encountered surprising contrasts in outlook between Europeans and Americans. For many years I have recorded our habits of private and professional life, and decided finally that it would be worthwhile to distill my observations into some general principles. The selection that follows is based on what my life, spent almost equally in America and Europe since the age of twenty, continues to teach me are the telling aspects of the bewildering nature of our relationship.



This book is written for those who would examine this puzzle, which is what it truly is, and for those who would seek to understand how the pieces fit together.

The pages which follow are for Europeans who admire what their descendants have accomplished in the New World, for Americans who keep the Old World in affection and regard, and for Europeans and Americans who recognize each other's strengths. It is also the intention that the discussion of the relationship, which has continually shifted and changed since Europeans first arrived in America, will appeal to those who are neither European nor American, who stand outside the Atlantic sphere and view it from farther shores.

This book, finally, has a specific purpose. It is to recall to life the words of English statesman Edmund Burke that "nothing is so strong a tie of

amity between nation and nation as correspondence in law, customs, manners and habits of life. They have more than the force of treaties in themselves. They are obligations written in the heart.” That is to say, this book is written with the belief that the amity between Europe and America is irreplaceable, and with the conviction that those who argue otherwise are guilty of promoting a fatal conceit.