A European patriotism can be generated only through political acts that create a sense of solidarity, says historian Pierre Manent. If invocations of Europe are to be anything but vacuous, Europe needs to be decisive in defining its interests and demarcating its boundaries.

Ariadna Lewanska: Since 2004, two million Poles have emigrated from Poland. We expect to see a further wave of migration after the opening of the labour markets in Germany and Austria. To what extent do you think migration encourages us to reflect more deeply on our bonds with national groups and the European Community?

Pierre Manent: This is a very complex issue. Any assessment is hard to make because the countries now forming the European Union have long been familiar with migrations. Think of the Poles who came to northern Europe in the Twentieth century, the Italians who settled in the south of France, or the Spanish who escaped after the civil war. In France migrants differ greatly from each other. Some have simply become French – like the Poles living in the north of the country, or the Italians who have been in the south since the nineteenth century, or some Spaniards. Yet the Portuguese case can seem very similar to the situation of Poles in Great Britain. Because, though Portuguese people feel entirely comfortable in France today, they nevertheless maintain a very strong and vital link with their country. They are quite at home in France, but they remain Portuguese. From the point of view of the French experience, this represents an example of perfect integration without assimilation, or actually becoming French. There are exceptions, of course, but the integration of Portuguese migrants in France could well be seen as a model for the construction of Europe. As large numbers of people from one European state move to settle among members of a different national group, they maintain a crucial and powerful bond with their own nation and country. And they do so without even crossing the border. This helps build a European Community in the real sense of the word.

AL: So you regard emigration as something positive and useful?
PM: In that sense, I do. It’s a hugely positive phenomenon; indeed it’s essential to the formation of a shared European lifestyle. But, of course, from the point of view of a country that is losing its citizens, the perspective is different. That is why every case has to be considered on its own merits. There are both gains and losses. Take an unemployed worker who finds a job abroad and sends money home. It is very hard to offer any kind of unequivocal judgement or sensible generalisation in cases such as this. But let me reiterate: from the point of view of common, shared lives in Europe, emigration is undoubtedly a positive and creative development. Nor do I have the impression that migratory movements have significantly raised tensions between states within the European Community. It’s true that once, during the French elections, the celebrated issue of the “Polish plumber” came to the fore, but don’t let’s forget that this was just a slogan used for the purposes of the referendum campaign. It was not directed at Poland in any way. It was simply a case of politically exploiting a European Commission project named the Bolkenstein directive. And the blameless Polish plumber became a victim of electoral skirmishes between France and the Commission. In actual fact, the problem did not exist. We have never witnessed any drastic inflow of Polish plumbers.

AL: But in Paris you often hear Polish spoken up on the scaffoldings...

PM: Sure. But there is no sense of any kind of real threat from the Polish community. Their presence on the labour market isn’t causing tensions. This is one of the happiest aspects of the situation: population movements in Europe are generally well accepted on both sides. Internal European migration helps to reconcile the old nations with a burgeoning new community of Europeans. We should not think of migration exclusively as the liberalization of the labour market or a free circulation of the work force. We should interpret it rather in political, social and cultural terms. Thanks to this kind of movement something completely new is being formed. We might call it a shared European lifestyle. This is something the continent has never known. That is why it’s impossible to say what the consequences of such a large migration from Poland might be. There are reportedly 200,000 French citizens in London. What effect will this have on London, or indeed on France? It’s very hard to say. The only information we have is based on old waves of migration – which were just as European, but different. The migrations that happened centuries ago have merged fully into the landscape of French life. The new arrivals supplied their talent and integrated. What will happen to the descendants of today’s migrants a century hence is unclear. Will they integrate or maintain their separate identity? Either way, the Portuguese I mentioned earlier have remained very close to their native country.

AL: How do you explain this?

PM: One reason may lie in the fact that, today, population displacement is a simple matter. One can live in France yet remain very closely in touch with one’s homeland. A hundred years ago returning to the home country was much more complicated because the costs were gargantuan. You can see this more clearly when looking at non-European populations. One factor that prevents them from integrating enough to feel comfortable is effortless contact with their own country: easy telephone links, the internet, Skype, cheap or free audio-visual transmission. Today, migrants can also watch television in their own language and follow political developments at home. The pressure to integrate is far weaker than ever before.
AL: The Poles have a long tradition of emigration. But it was often experienced as asylum or exile. Return was hampered not by expense but by repression.

PM: The Spanish and Portuguese were in a similar position. Democracy is back, so they too can go home whenever they want. But they stay on because there are better opportunities for employment. The fact that all the countries of the European Union are democracies enormously eases the free movement of people.

AL: While maintaining national identity?

PM: This flow of people is hugely significant. In my view, travel favours national groups far more than it harms them.

AL: Let’s talk about Poland and your own “remarks on Polish government”.

PM: My knowledge of Poland is very general. It is based on press reports and chance conversations, so I can only really talk about my impressions. But Poland seems to be a country without serious existential troubles. It is likely to find ways of caring for itself in the future, because it liberated itself in the past. The Poles were the only national group to take mass, collective action – to use a rather dated term. What’s more important still, it was the only country to act in a consistently coordinated way. Thanks to the epic achievement of Solidarity, Poland is the only country in eastern Europe which has brought genuinely important change to the recent history of Europe. Major political facts are far more significant than micro-sociological developments in any particular country. Poland emerged victorious in an extremely hard battle fought in a very difficult war. That is why I sense a fundamental vigour there. Another thing to note is that a lively political opposition is the basis of any democracy. Once again, I don’t have too many details, but if this is absent then democracy is in jeopardy. As an external observer, it seems to me that in Poland we are seeing the formation of such a healthy, reliable and clear-thinking opposition between two political parties that take up extreme postures on many issues and represent completely different positions both in internal and international affairs – on questions relating to the Church, Russia or tradition, for example. It is also worth noting that despite such a strong and fervent opposition, Poland has a culture of citizen’s democracy. There is no indication of any threat of violence or social upheaval, or any sign of the dangerous pathologies one can see in other countries in this part of Europe. You can be critical of what we call Polish nationalism of course, just as you can be critical of anything, but it doesn’t have the sometimes troubling hue of Hungarian nationalism. This may be because Poland seems reconciled to the shape of its borders, while the Hungarians continue to be troubled by the partition of their country which took place after the First World War.

AL: We also have a different history. After all, the Polish state did not exist while nation states were being formed in Europe. Could you comment on this? And does the history of Polish emigration have any significance for us today?

PM: Hugely so. We are talking about the existence of a nation. Poland is one of the most spectacular examples of the fact that nations do indeed exist: they are real communities, in a spiritual dimension. Your country is just such a community. It survived for so long without the possibility of political expression. And, to go back to a comparison with other
countries in this region of Europe, there can be no doubt that, thanks to the vitality of Poles living in exile, Poland preserved the greatest spiritual integrity. It is astonishing that, though deprived of its existence by its neighbours, Poland retained its spiritual autonomy among nations which did not achieve this. If we look at its loyalty to the Catholic Faith by way of explanation, we see that even this has been translated into a distinctively Polish context. Integrity of spirit has allowed Poland not only to survive but to develop. The crisis of nations to which Mickiewicz once referred has led to a triumphant Polish resurrection.

I’d say that, today, Poland can pride itself on a successful national history. It is a history that has maintained continuity in the face of all the dramatic events and adverse conditions of the past. And it has been fulfilled. Poland has succeeded and its victory has given it a strong position alongside other eastern European states. In western Europe we are seeing something which could be termed the decline or fall of nations, or of the general concept of nationhood. I am thinking in particular of France and England. Germany has its problems as well, but these relate to its particular condition. It is all the more admirable, then, that in the European context Poland has emerged so triumphant, as a nation.

This really does have considerable significance. And it may well allow Poland to play a major part in the next phase of European history. I doubt if it would be a good solution for Poland to think of leading the representatives of eastern Europe in the EU. It should be seeking a role as one of the great nations of the European Union: not as a representative of the east, but as Poland. In western Europe it has become the norm to accept that France and Germany determine the Union’s political orientation: they have the requisite experience, the ambition and a political agenda. It seems to me that Poland is entitled to the ambition to lead Europe alongside France, Britain and Germany. But it should not be seeking ways to create an eastern European confederation to counterbalance western Europe.

AL: We are preparing to take up the presidency...

PM: The presidency is a ceremonial role that lasts six months. I am thinking of something far more important. Poland has exceptional political experience: a deep and vital knowledge of relations between religion and the people, as well as between religion and liberal democracy. Your country has passed a difficult test. I think that Poland not only should, but has the capacity to play a serious part in forming a new profile for the European Community. Poland has a marvellous opportunity to play an active, creative role in shaping the new Europe, steering the jointly coordinated actions of the European nations and creating this community. What’s more, it is the only country in this position.

AL: Yet you often quote Rousseau’s dictum that “nations are no longer being formed”.

PM: That’s true. Poland exists. The Polish nation, or people, is already there. And it’s astonishing how powerfully Poland resisted anything that could have destroyed or broken her.

AL: So we shan’t be seeing a “nation of Europe”? 
PM: There’s no such things as a single European people, and there will be no European nation. But that doesn’t mean that the concept of Europe is vacuous or that it lacks meaning. In any case, it’s not a notion as abstract as “humanity”. Europe was born of an agreement between a group of nations, with a well-known and profoundly embedded sense of their common history. By that I mean the Greek and Roman tradition, Christianity, the Reformation, the Counter-Reformation, and the Enlightenment. The nations of Europe participated in these spiritual, political, scientific and artistic quests in their different ways. But they did it together. Independently, yet together. There were rivalries, there was imitation, tension, but we share a deeply entrenched and real sense of cultural community. In relation to this, one can say only that a common European culture exists when the European nations build it through their joint, creative undertakings. The dominant idea on European formation unfortunately confuses two issues. Some say: since a common European culture exists, we should use it to create European politics. Others argue that, since there is no such thing as a single European people, we should go back to the old notion or model of nationhood.

In fact we should retain and reconcile both these options. From the point of view of coherent political ventures there is really nothing better than the old-style nations, because so much political experience is concentrated in them. On the other hand, they no longer hold sway over the world in which they function. Yet in the near future they will be obliged to face powers which are not necessarily well disposed towards Europe. The natural issue for Europeans to address, at the present time in history, is ensuring that leaders of the European nations discover their roles in jointly coordinated ventures. Migration between nations makes this initiative very natural. There is no such thing as a European nation and, as we turn our minds to our current projects, we should not allow ourselves to be under any illusion as to its existence. Since there is no such thing as a European society, there is not really any such thing as European policy. But there is a beginning, and an open road that may allow us to take control over what is happening to us within the Union. We know what we could and should do to give Europe some kind of political form. But human beings are like children: we want to touch. So if Europe is to exist it must be tangible and not invented. Europe will last if, in the near or more distant future, we succeed in working on something together, so that we can say: “Europe achieved this”, no matter if the venture is military, political or diplomatic.

Let us imagine, for example, that European diplomacy (or the diplomatic effort of several European countries working together) works out and implements successful peace negotiations between the Israelis and the Palestinians, or else makes headway in the Chechen issue or in Georgia. This would be a far more significant contribution to the political construction of Europe than some magnificent festival of European values or the feting of yet another pan-European institution. Collective life is like the life of any individual. There are memorabilia, dates and birthdays. But life itself, the life of any individual or community depends on the consistent effort that gives it shape and meaning. It surprises me that European institutions are not concerned about giving Europe some identifiable external features. We impose Europe on our countries like a straw hat. We don’t even perceive that our institutions are inconsistent on the history of Europe, and that they aren’t breathing any life into it. At present, Romantic music, revolutionary poetry, or the influence of Rousseau on Goethe and Kant have more to say about the existence of Europe than its bureaucratic institutions, although these are, no doubt, extremely useful. We should differentiate very clearly between undertakings that
really help to form Europe, and purely bureaucratic, ideological activity. I am not using these words in a pejorative sense. But I do believe that we should celebrate the political and spiritual watersheds at the heart of the European story – such as the Treaties of Rome or the Franco-German agreement – because these are great and crucial matters. For some time, everything in Europe has been developing an exclusively bureaucratic or ideological character.

But we should remember that there are doubtless vital things going on under the bureaucratic umbrella. One is emigration, which touches on relations between many different countries. Others might include germinating joint initiatives, which are often non-governmental. Yet all this remains very uncertain, nebulous and unclear. We need to turn all our positive energies in this direction. Yet we tend to function between two simplifications: one calls for a return to traditional, even nationalistic national politics and consists mainly of a campaign against Europe. The second comes from the intellectual elite and advocates the idea that to step into Europe, it’s enough to turn your back on the people. It seems to me that the only sensible and practical way forward is to combine the two: to act as a nation but retain a European perspective. In fact, this has already been implemented. I am thinking of what we have achieved between France and Germany. That is why it is sometimes said that our union with Germany is the axis of Europe. These two historically feuding countries – with their bitter experience of wars in the twentieth century – have shown that what creates European identity is coordinated work. The cooperation of France and Germany has offered a model and an emerging range of potential gains. The fact that we are not moving forward on European issues comes from the fact that this fruitful union between France and Germany has lost its energy and momentum. Other countries have meanwhile been reluctant to join this kind of venture. Britain has always kept to the sidelines, for example. The countries of Eastern Europe have not only maintained a British distance, but an openly utilitarian stance: taking advantage of European funding, and sometimes winning elections while exhibiting a pro-European posture. That is all. This is catastrophic, as everyone knows, yet they continue to do it. And it guarantees the erosion of any germinating seeds of European life. Today it is vital to identify countries with enough confidence in their own strength to prevent this erosion and undertake joint projects. Because, if we fail to trust in our own powers, we shall be cheating ourselves, leaning on Europe and, by doing so, contributing to its downfall.

**AL:** You have said that Europe should promote an *agendum*, in other words clarify “what ought to be done” and the aims it seeks to implement. You emphasise that the European purpose must be clear. Could you give an example?

**PM:** I’ll offer a basic example. One vital issue affecting the future of Europe is the demarcation of its borders. This is how Europe defines itself. One of the most destructive things for Europe is the impression that it can continue to develop and endlessly expand its borders. How are Europeans supposed to achieve a sense of community if they are told that Europe has no borders? That it would be ignominious to identify its boundaries and that the natural future is infinite expansion. So the *agendum* for today should be the establishment of these borders. Creating a sense of where the limits lie.

**AL:** A border that follows the trail of Gothic cathedrals, as Alain Besancon put it?
**PM:** That was the invention of a historian. It represents a purely cultural perspective. We would all gladly shake off our borders and fall back on the beauties of the Renaissance. But, politically speaking, this is pointless. The highest stakes in European politics today lie in the definition of relations with the Islamic world. An expression of the definitive political and spiritual existence of Europe would be, for example, giving Turkey the unequivocal message that it cannot join the Union. Please don't misunderstand me. I only give this as an example of a way of establishing borders for the European Community. If Europe were in a position to say to Turkey, with all the necessary courtesy and diplomatic form: “You are always invited. We want to have the best possible relations with you. But Europe is something very particular. It remains burdened by its idiosyncrasies, and for a number of reasons it would be unwise for you to join us.” This would give Europe real political and spiritual independence, not just in relation to the Muslim world but to the United States as well. The USA is putting pressure on us to accept Turkey into the EU. In saying that Europe will be formed by defining its relations with countries beyond its borders, I am thinking of these concrete and hugely complicated issues. But the effects of taking such as stance cannot be overestimated. It is a mistake endlessly to draw out these negotiations: it is straightforward cowardice. But if we said “no” while maintaining, defining, and working out the best and clearest possible relations between ourselves and Turkey, this would pacify the feeling among Europeans that they have no say in their own fortunes, and give the Americans a signal that there exists a political voice, with a fully formed Europe behind it. Yet Europeans prefer endless consultation, so we are losing out on every front.

**AL:** Does this caution, or this excessive desire to do the right thing, stem from the fact that we feel obliged to promote humanitarian values globally? Are we weighed down by the legacy of the Enlightenment, or indeed by Western megalomania?

**PM:** We still have no sense or understanding of the quintessential feature that identifies Europe. So we are all feeling our way as we go. We confuse Europe with humanity, yet “humanity” is a totally abstract concept. Often those who talk about Europe are not really talking about it at all, but are invoking an indeterminate vision of the human race. Europe is made of a combination of the experiences through which it was formed – particularly its discourse and debate with the Greek and Roman traditions of citizenship, Christianity and Judaism. It is a blend of spiritual and political experiences which Turkey did not share, at least from within. While seeking to construct a European nation, let us be Europeans, maintaining the best possible relations with all other countries of the world. But we must remember that we shall come into being as Europeans only when we are able to say to countries which have not shared our experience that they simply are not a part of Europe. The alternative is to find that Europe does not exist at all, or that we have no chance of coming into existence as Europeans.

It would be far easier to resolve the problems of Muslim communities in our countries, such as for example the Islamic hijab (which is now a symbolic issue) if the fact that we have opened our doors to migration from Arabic countries did not hinder us from maintaining our European identity in the face of the Muslim world. If Europeans feel that the arrival of many people of the Islamic faith in our countries leads to a kowtowing to the Muslim world outside our borders, this could induce feelings of absolute hopelessness. An indecisive stance in external relations may create very strong anti-Muslim reactions within our community. But if we maintain our political and spiritual
sovereignty we shall recover our power to accept greater numbers of migrants, including
migrants from Islamic countries, as our citizens. And this will be done on a salutary basis
because Europeans will know and appreciate their own strength. If they have no sense of
their identity, the Muslims living in European countries will become stronger than they
are. This will awaken understandable fears and anxieties, and then Muslim immigration
in Europe will indeed become a massive political and spiritual issue that could take
Europe to the brink of an international conflict. As a separate, unassimilated community,
Muslims will be too strong for us. Yet they are over here. Or partly here. I am convinced
that many of them would prefer us to remain spiritually independent from the Arab
world. That is why they have come here. So the main aim of European politics, in the face
of the growing independence and identity of the Islamic world in our territories, should
not be counting up citizens and drawing up census lists, but maintaining the political and
spiritual independence of the continent. If this is reflected in more decisive action, it will
greatly ease the integration of the Muslim community. That is the substance of this
agenda. The Turkish question is now a central and emblematic issue of the European
constitution. If Europe is to continue its political and spiritual quest it must find the
strength and assertiveness to refuse. You have mentioned Israel. If we were to seek a
country with an essential bond with Europe, lying beyond its borders, it would have to be
Israel. But I doubt if Israel would very much want to join the EU.

**AL:** What about Ukraine and Georgia? We are constantly promising them support...

**PM:** I think it’s a mistake to think about broadening the influence of Europe by extending
its borders. I do not think that the only way to help Ukraine is to plan its official accession
to the EU, considering the number of conditions it would have to meet. Of course we
began our formation in this fashion, but there comes a time when any *modus operandi*
has to be changed. Further expansion would be backbreaking. There are too many of us
already. Ukraine is a huge country and one can already see that this wouldn’t work. A
good policy towards Ukraine would not be based on accepting it as the 31st or 45th
member of the EU, but on ensuring that Europe is strong enough to compete with Russia.
The Union should develop policies and influences that could effectively challenge Russian
policy, so that Russia would no longer negate the independence of Ukraine or interfere in
its closer relationship with Europe. We are not condemned to choose between a Ukraine
within the EU or a Ukraine swallowed up by Russia. We can ensure Ukrainian
independence, drawing it as close as possible to the Union but not necessarily organising
its institutional integration into the Community. Because it is already evident how hard it
is to function as 27 countries. All too often we see Europe through a prism of illusory
appearances, as a tangible organisation based solely on institutional functioning. In fact
Europe can only come into existence through its capacity to exert influence. And this
implies a readiness to apply pressure, to alarm, threaten or intimidate an adversary. In
politics, influence can be either positive or negative. The Russians must understand that
they cannot do everything they want with Ukraine. But that does not mean that Ukraine
must necessarily become part of Europe. The Russians need to develop a sense of respect
towards us. There can be no doubt that this is more important than drawing up lists of
conditions for Ukraine to join the Union, when it would not be able to fulfil these for
many years in any case. But no one imagines it will be easy.

**AL:** What about the Nord Stream gas pipeline? Is this our Polish *agenda*?
PM: It’s a good example. Helping Ukraine is a practical way of not yielding to Russia. The German decision was a huge mistake in relation to Poland and Ukraine. That is what I am leading up to. We must not engage in the Russian diplomatic game which consistently aims to subordinate anyone it can. Establishing a strong position is far more important than institutionally integrating more countries into the EU. The Union is now so huge that – as the Nord Stream case has shown – it cannot be steered. To all intents and purposes it is ungovernable. There is no point in adding further countries to it – unless one wants to make it even more unpleasant, alienating and outlandish. We must acknowledge clearly that although the institutional mechanisms do work, they are stretched to full capacity. The most important thing now is the policy of European nations towards external challenges, and defining a basis on which the Union can maintain its partnership with the rest of the world.

AL: Do you think there can ever be such a thing as European patriotism? Can we learn to love Europe?

PM: Certainly not by singing the *Ode to Joy*, or organising firework displays in European national colours.

AL: You say that we treat Europe in a utilitarian way. What then should we sacrifice? Will shaping the new patriotism be the next European *agenda*?

PM: We will create European patriotism when we begin to act as Europeans. Patriotism isn’t just about sacrifice and love; it is largely reflected in decisive action. It can’t be fashioned from ideas and slogans. The test of strength between Europe and Russia might serve as a good example. Let’s imagine that the Russians decide to cut off our gas. If enough countries agreed to refuse to accept Russian conditions, this would stimulate a new European patriotism. But at present there is nothing in Europe that resembles the patriotism of nations. National patriotism was bound up with experience, sacrifice, military victory and defeat. Invoking Europe devalues national patriotism without creating a European patriotism in its stead. European patriotism will emerge if Europe does something as Europe. It will appear when Europe allows itself to be recognised through deeds that create a sense of solidarity, and inspire a readiness among member states to engage in political, military or diplomatic action. Otherwise patriotism in Europe will remain a spectacle that is as empty as it is dispensable.

AL: Perhaps this is the answer to the blood steeped history of Europe? What should intellectuals do to encourage a contemporary patriotism that can be taken seriously? Must we first of all accept national patriotism in order to understand it and the European *agenda*?

PM: This is a serious problem. Patriotism holds an embarrassingly low position in the values prioritised by European countries. But we must also be sure that, if we recreate a new kind of patriotism, it will not target other national groups. With regard to the issue of Russian gas, one might expect Europe to create some kind of front that would encourage a sense of bonding, as well as a feeling of independence from Russia. If we can access this sense, nothing will intimidate us. This kind of patriotism should be like national patriotism, but with a European perspective.
AL: You often say that what characterises Europe and sets it apart is philosophy. We are
not only democrats - in that we govern ourselves - but we have discovered, in addition,
that the mind can govern itself.

PM: Indeed. This is a thesis which can be challenged of course, like everything else. The
West is characterised by the fact that it has developed the potential of the human soul
more fully than other civilisations. Western Man is most fully aware of his own potential,
the scope of his action and of life as a whole. Other societies are more tied down to their
past, more bound to tradition. That is why they are far less conscious of “what ought to
be done”, the *agenda*, that which must be accomplished. Western people have a far
greater sense of duty in the face of an indeterminate future. We are acutely aware that
politics constantly determines our actions. The Greek notion of *polis* is revealed as
coherence in action. It instantly, or rather simultaneously, defines a human being as the
one capable of thought and action. Western thought distinguishes action as a potential
attribute of the human spirit. But equally and paradoxically it draws attention to a second
option, in a sense opposed to action, and that is thought. But it is a very distinct kind of
thought: not reflection on the change that humanity has wrought through its actions, but
reflection on things that do not change. That is what philosophy is: the science of
thought; the understanding of absolutes.

It could be said that, in a sense, other civilisations have focused on action that never
changed but remained constant. The West, however, expanded the scope of action. In our
culture, action is associated with change because the goal of action is the transient. But
we also developed the other option: theory, reflection on the absolute. In this
dichotomous disclosure of the potential of the human spirit, its needs are satisfied and
revealed, yet everything remains to be done. For we discover the demands of the endless
questions and objectives to be met. Once we find that we govern ourselves, we cannot
stop doing so, even though we have also discovered how difficult and tiring it is. We
continually seek ways to escape this urge. Yet what we are seeking relates to truth –
which has no place in action itself. Europe is the place in which these two issues have
remained alive, but they also can, and do not cease to be, forgotten. For example, the
idea of history is a way of transforming an act we perform freely and independently into a
divine necessity demanding submission. It astonishes me that, today, Europeans no
longer think of themselves as creatures of action, but are convinced that the only thing
required of them is to submit to inevitable processes – such as globalisation, for example.

AL: Pure Hegelianism?

PM: An intentioned submission to necessity.

AL: The end of personal self-government?

PM: We are responsible for setting in motion the mechanism we must obey. Europe is
gradually taking the shape of a frame in which the fulfilment of this necessity is becoming
an imperative.

AL: Is that why you say that we are depriving ourselves of a genuine study of political
science that would help us to resolve our problems?
**PM:** Political science is based on representative government. Today representative government is a game between politics and society in a community that is acquiring a consciousness of itself. The community we have known to date – the national community – has been heavily weakened in recent times. Representation pure and simple will no longer work. Liberalism in an era of globalisation has presented us with the issue of the institutional auto-mechanism. This is turning human life into pure compliance with regulations. It is just that these rules are being imposed by institutions and not by representative government. The decision makers are now not representatives of the community but a team of experts which establishes the rules of hygiene, accounting, banking, all kinds of codes. We have increasing duties and increasingly less representative government.

**AL:** So what are we to teach our children: to trust the rules or to rebel?

**PM:** The issue as regards thinking is exactly the same as the political issue: to establish boundaries for government by rules and regulations, because this approach is inadequate and it is wrong to imagine that we can organise ourselves like this in the long-term. Political necessities still obtain. We must still govern ourselves. Even though we are doing our best to liberate ourselves from this necessity, and though we submit willingly to the processes that steer our lives in our name, we still have a representational system. Though its role is being constantly discredited, especially in relation to all-powerful regulations and institutional principles, in countries such as France or Poland this system works. Members of Parliament still argue, parties function and form alliances. The role of the system is being severely diminished and discredited, but it continues to function, whether in France or in Poland. Thankfully it goes on working.

**AL:** In other words, the greater the *agenda*, the greater the scope for political science?

**PM:** Yes, because there will be more for intellectuals to think about.

**AL:** So who is responsible for religious humanism today?

**PM:** Religious humanism is a very old system of thought. The Enlightenment offered us a vision of humanity without borders. But in the European context this vision was implemented within individual national groups. There was no separation between the two. In France and the USA, human rights were enforced through the mediation of a new political body. Today, as the concept of the nation is eroded, the time-honoured humanist idea is back. It treats humanity as a presence that does not need nation-states, which have in any case discredited themselves in the bloody history of the twentieth century. As nation-states have grown weaker and consequently incapable of mediation, some people have come to believe that humanity no longer needs arbitration between human rights and the world, so long as we remain open enough to other people. It seems to me that this is an outcome of political history typical to Europe. It is exclusive to us. Ours is a very idiosyncratic history, which justifies itself in religious humanism but does not proclaim its experience outside. Europeans have emerged from it in one piece, but they have taken such control over their own history that they no longer have any desire to act. They want innocence. And the only way to achieve innocence is by non-action.

**AL:** *Otium* as opposed to *agenda*?
PM: Yes. Organised immobility. There is nothing left but regulations and, ever since this has been so, we have seen the end of coordinated action because it carries a risk of conflict and war. Only individuals rebel against rules, and if they do not submit to regulations they are punished accordingly, in line with the regulations. Europe wants to find a way out of history because history implies action, at times criminal action, with lasting, irredeemable consequences. We shun possible action as something dangerous, that would weigh us down and burden us with guilt. So we organise ourselves in a way that will allow us to live without the need for coordinated political acts, because these are potentially dangerous. We have decided to choose total innocence in the name of a humanitarian religion based on Enlightenment Humanism. So today we are responsible, above all, for making ourselves aware of this. And for reminding people about the difficult tasks that remain to be performed, despite this desire for innocence, and which represent our real agendum in Europe.

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