



The Idea of Europe: An Essay

George Steiner

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In this remarkable short book, the foremost intellectual of our age brings a lifetime of erudition to bear on a subject that he has grappled with for decades, and whose future is profoundly uncertain.

The Idea of Europe finds George Steiner reckoning with Europe from a number of different angles. “Europe,” he writes, “is the place where Goethe’s garden almost borders on Buchenwald, where the house of Corneille abuts on the market-place in which Joan of Arc was hideously done to death.” It is, in other words, a continent rich with contradiction, whose many tensions—cultural, social, political, economic, and religious—have for centuries conspired to pull it apart, even as it has become more and more unified.

But what lies ahead for a continent whose borders are growing and economic might is strengthening, even as its cultural identity recedes? A continent where, in Steiner’s words, “young Englishmen choose to rank David Beckham high above Shakespeare and Darwin in their list of national treasures”? This is the trajectory that Steiner explores so brilliantly in *The Idea of Europe*.

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