



CHAIR IN
**EUROPEAN
VALUES**

EUROPEAN VALUES AT THE HEART OF CONTRADICTIONARY EMOTIONS

Interdisciplinary perspectives

Report of an international conference organized
on 5 March 2020 in Brussels



Edited by

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Acknowledgements

This report is a summary of an international conference that took place on 5 March 2020 at UCLouvain Saint-Louis in Brussels, just before the Covid-19 pandemic struck. This conference was initiated, planned and conceptualized by Bernard Snoy and Wim Weymans. Its practical organization was in the hands of Sophie Kaisin and Wim Weymans (both at the Chair in European Values at UCLouvain), Bernard Snoy (Paul-Henri Spaak Seminars at UCLouvain) and Denis Duez (Institute for European Studies at Saint-Louis, Brussels) who generously hosted this conference at UCLouvain Saint-Louis in Brussels and who was assisted by Thérèse Davio and her team.

The organizers wish to thank the donors who generously funded the conference, the Baillet Latour Fund, Maurice Velge and the

other sponsors of the Chair in European Values at UCLouvain, the IPLI Foundation, which supports the Paul-Henri Spaak Seminars, as well as UCLouvain Saint-Louis, Brussels for its logistical and financial support. They also want to thank all the speakers, moderators and the audience for their contributions.

This report was written in English by Wim Weymans based on a transcript made by Sophie Kaisin and it was subsequently translated into French by Sophie Kaisin. The pictures in this report were taken by Sophie Kaisin, Victoire Van Houdt and Wim Weymans. Sophie Kaisin and Wim Weymans did the layout. This report was made possible by the Chair in European Values at UCLouvain and its sponsors.

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The limits of constitutional patriotism

In his opening speech, legal scholar (and vice-rector of Université Saint-Louis – Brussels), **Hugues Dumont**, proposed a reflection on the limits of theories that see European citizens as unified by a bond of “constitutional patriotism.” For the philosopher Habermas constitutional patriotism aims at the citizens’ reasonable (rather than emotional) support for common norms and values of the European Union (human rights, democracy and the rule of law) that transcends their belonging to their own nation state.

Regarding constitutional patriotism, Dumont mentioned two hypotheses. According to first hypothesis this theory of constitutional patriotism did not yet succeed in consolidating the European Union because the European Union did not follow through its logic and its implications.

Indeed, constitutional patriotism should refer to that what human rights already established, which includes the indivisible link between social and political or civil rights. Yet, the

“Economic policies (...) show a devastating imbalance, as monetary and economic objectives have largely replaced social rights.”

Hugues Dumont

economic policies that are de facto in place since the profound reorganization of the growth and stability pact show a devastating imbalance, as monetary and economic



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objectives have largely replaced social rights. Following this first hypothesis, once the European Union’s actions are more deeply and largely inspired by constitutional patriotism, the European Union would not need any emotions other than those that are implied in this reasonable form of patriotism.

According to the second hypothesis, the theory of constitutional patriotism is destined to fail because it pushes its distrust (in many respects justified) vis-à-vis political emotions too far. Dumont underlines that “no political community is viable without a desire to deliberate together. Yet this desire is inseparable from an emotional dimension.” Emotions would thus be constitutional patriotism’s blind spot. This blind spot gave rise to two opposing utopias: a backward-looking utopia of a Europe of the nation-

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states that blames the European Union for its alleged hostility towards the nation-states, and then, at the opposite end, the reckless rush towards a federal Europe and the emergence of a European nation that it presupposes. For Dumont, “the question becomes if one can agree on activating certain emotional forces that can help unify the European Union” while avoiding both the first backward utopia as well as the second reckless push ahead. Dumont expressed the hope that the conference would provide some answers to the questions that emerge from these two hypotheses.

European values, conflict and emotions

In his introductory remarks, **Wim Weymans**, who co-organised this conference and holds the Chair in European Values (UCLouvain), observed that recent crises in the European Union have shown that there is no consensus about “European values.” Not only do we emphasise different values, but even one value can be interpreted differently.

At the same time, these abstract values move people, who often protest in the name of values such as equality, justice, freedom or the survival of the planet. Indeed, for him, “values are essentially linked to emotions (...) if one wants to *move* people in favour of the European project one cannot ignore its emotional dimension, including the so-called negative emotions that it sometimes provokes.”

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Wim Weymans

But how to speak about these values and the emotions they provoke in a healthy way? For this, “one needs to find a proper space for emotions in the political realm, so that they are neither excluded from that space,



Wim Weymans

nor overtake it entirely (...). One should neither reject or repress values or emotions (e.g. behind a technocratic discourse) nor allow populist forces to exploit them.”

So, how can European values be mobilised to make the European project both more attractive and more democratic? One suggestion could be to make more room for debate and conflict about Europe, seeing debate as “a precondition for the survival of European democracy rather than as a threat.” Another suggestion would be to increasingly welcome emotions – including negative ones – without being carried away by them (e.g. on social media).

Lastly, Weymans suggested to find and promote new modes of debate that would prevent that debates get overheated. For example, by introducing a principle of self-criticism, whereby each time a member-state accuses another of not living up to a

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value or principle, it would also need to identify a domain where it also falls short in respecting values or principles. Self-righteousness would thus be tempered by modesty and empathy. Not to relativize values and principles, but to show that no-one can fully embody them.

Democracy, conflict and emotions beyond populism

The first panel – which was moderated by Bernard Coulie – focused on the way emotions and values are instrumentalized by populists and how European institutions could respond to this challenge.

Betrayal

The philosopher **Jean-Marc Ferry** noted that the old opposition between left and right has been replaced by new cleavages such as the one between moderates and radicals (who are often called populists). This new cleavage could be explained by globalization that caused an alienation which Europe refused to talk about, thus allowing populists to give it a voice, while invoking values.

Editor-in-chief of the journal *Esprit*, **Anne-Lorraine Bujon** warned against simplifications that oppose “reasonable Europhiles” to “passionate Eurosceptics” or that contrast “useful” positive emotions with dangerous negative ones. Instead, she observed that

“One should not see [European values] as a doctrine that can be established once and for all but rather as a heritage that should be questioned.”

Anne-Lorraine Bujon

the European construction always involved often ambivalent emotions, adding that in European history good things emerged out



Anne-Lorraine Bujon

of terrible events, implying a wide range of emotions. Especially “1989” was ambiguous as it meant not just liberalism’s triumph but also a neglect of the people’s needs, not only the need for equality and solidarity, but also for identity and belonging (as mounting nationalism showed). By reducing democracy to procedures and society to the market, Europe risks betraying its values and ideals.

Ferry agreed that part of people’s anger comes from the feeling that private rights (used by lobbyists) have become more important than (and a danger to) a truly

participatory democracy. For him, “the European Parliament doesn’t have a great significance.” Moreover, “in the European Council, negotiations are diplomatic and secret and the European Commission is essentially about bureaucratic negotiations with lobbyists.” As a result, “the European political project has become a project of privatization of (...) politics itself.” In short, for him, “there is no European politics.” Ferry concludes that, “as long as the European political style is more or less completely private, it is absolutely impossible to stimulate a desire for Europe.”

Remedies

In order to rectify such an imbalance, Ferry proposes to create a European public space by connecting the existing national spaces and parliaments. If one wants to meet today’s transnational challenges, existing national

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Jean-Marc Ferry

parliaments need to be better connected, both with each other (“horizontally”) as well as with the European Parliament (“vertically”). In short, for Ferry one “needs to re-activate European politics.”

Bujon adds that Europe needs a new purpose (*finalité*) like for example the

ecological transition, as the single market itself isn’t sufficient as a goal. She also

“One has the right to disagree with this neoliberal Europe without therefore questioning the European project as such.”

Anne-Lorraine Bujon

stressed the importance (and difficulty) in Europe of education, translation and of teaching languages.

Values, passions and conflict

For Bujon, European values matter but “one should not see them as a doctrine that can be established once and for all but rather as a heritage that should be questioned,”



Jean-Marc Ferry replies to Bernard Coulie

adding that “one should really watch out not to see a European doctrine as immobile as it should continue to change.” In her view, it is essential to have a legitimate space where to discuss about what is legitimate or not. Europe suffers from a culture of consensus and instead needs means to express and channel conflict. For her, “it would be good if within European institutions (and especially inside the European Parliament) people could radically contest the direction the European project is taking today.”

According to her “one has the right to disagree with this neoliberal Europe without therefore questioning the European project as such.” Ferry agreed, stating that “one should certainly not ‘calm passions’ since passions are excellent for the political realm. One should instead create more room for these passions so that they can be expressed, while avoiding physical violence.”

“One needs to reactivate European politics. (...) as long as the European political style is more or less completely private, it is absolutely impossible to stimulate a desire for Europe.”

Jean-Marc Ferry

Neither should one “make a clear and well-defined list of values” as “one needs values to be alive and for this to happen they need to be constantly activated through political debate.”

Representing Europe's past: emotions, trauma and reconciliation

The panel moderated by the historian Vincent Dujardin focused on different ways to represent Europe's past and especially traumatic events in that past that provoke emotional reactions, even in generations that did not directly witness these events.

Divergent histories

Constanze Itzel, the director of the Brussels based museum *The House of European History* started by pointing out that even in the Lisbon treaty, history education is still seen as mainly a task for national or regional governments. As a result, history – for example about the Second World War – is taught in very different ways in Europe's multiple countries and regions (and depending on the narrative, people appear as either victims or perpetrators). For her, Europe thus faces not so much a memory deficit as a lack of knowledge of the variety of different memories. Social psychologist **Olivier Luminet** adds that even in Belgium conflicting perspectives about contested collective memories are avoided rather than discussed.

To fill this gap, a museum such as *the House of European History* and its educational department tries to develop resources that allow teachers to design courses that include other nation's viewpoints. And instead of wanting to write one European narrative, the museum tries to develop and confront various narratives.

Reconciliation-expert **Valérie Rosoux** agrees that one should indeed not aim at one history or narrative, given national and generational differences. Instead, she pleads for a shift from *incompatible* narratives – where the hero in one narrative is a criminal in another – to *divergent* narratives, that offer several voices at once, just as in polyphonic music. She adds that in democracies the political use of the past – through museums



Valérie Rosoux and Olivier Luminet



Constanze Itzel

or schoolbooks – is luckily limited by how the people already experience their past (if not, parallel memories would start developing).

Representing trauma

But how to deal with Europe's many traumatic events in a healthy way? For Luminet, traumatic events are best dealt with through direct testimonies (if possible), which is called "communicative memory." Think of testimonies by Jewish victims of persecution during the war, which has a very strong impact on younger generations. By contrast, sites of trauma such as Auschwitz present a particular challenge as the incomprehensible and unthinkable trauma's they represent make it hard for young people to develop an emotional connection. It also matters to present actors such as Schindler as complex beings rather than as heroes (in this context he refers to the museum in Schindler's former factory in Cracow).

Since it wants to confront Europeans with each other's collective memories, Itzel explains that *The House of European History* choose to represent Verdun, Auschwitz and the Gulag in the same space. This is not easy, given the often-irreconcilable interpretations of the past, and of different ways to represent the past (some emphasise heroism in the past, while others highlight guilt associated with the past's burden). Moreover, in certain parts of Europe – such as the Baltics – the recent past is arguably still more alive and present than in the west. The museum insists that it offers merely an interpretation and it not only confronts its very diverse group of visitors with viewpoints different from their own, but also invites them to take their own viewpoint.

Itzel's museum proposes a sober and critical approach which means that it tries to avoid instrumentalizing emotions or give the illusion of reviving the past. Instead it tries to let the objects speak for themselves in a sober way. Research indeed shows that museums can't have an impact if they play on emotions alone.

"Europe thus faces not so much a memory deficit as a lack of knowledge of the variety of different memories."

Constanze Itzel

As a psychologist, Luminet agrees that museums should neither just play on immediate emotions, nor simply present facts. Instead, they should contextualise emotions. The problem with museums that merely

play on raw or immediate emotions is that “visitors are touched by many emotions that go in all directions.” For him, “by contextualizing them, emotions can then be regulated.”

Trauma, emotions and reconciliation

Rosoux agrees that it is important to explain to the next generations *why* traumatic events happened. If not, strong emotions are transferred between generations and young adults then end up full of guilt, shame, sadness and resentment without knowing why. Of course, explaining traumatic events is not easy, for example in Spain, where families coming from both sides of the Spanish Civil War don't know what to tell their kids (but Rosoux reassures them: it is ok to show them both perspectives).

As a social psychologist, Luminet warns against the risk of disconnecting emotions from specific memories, whereby people experience negative emotions without be-

“Museums should neither just play on immediate emotions, nor simply present facts. Instead, they should contextualise emotions.”

Olivier Luminet

ing able to link them to specific memories. For example, because certain memories are not passed on between generations in families that collaborated during the war, leading to intense and confused raw emotions. A shared history thus matters in order to reconnect emotions to memories.

When it comes to reconciliation following traumatic events, Rosoux emphasizes that while the Franco-German reconciliation remains an inspiring example, there is not one model of reconciliation that one could export. Every case is different. Also, perspectives differ, as it may be easier for a nation that committed atrocities to ask for reconciliation than for the party that suffered, which often needs more time. For Rosoux, “reconciliation should not be seen as a *fait accompli* by Europe's founding fathers, but should rather be seen (...) as something that guides us but that is never attained.” While we can talk about historical *responsibility* in the case of a nation, for Rosoux the term collective *guilt* is not helpful in this context, as only individuals can be guilty.

Emotions and change

Talking about guilt, can emotions help us foster change, for example when it comes to stopping global warming? For Luminet, emotions are generally necessary for change and they only become problematic when they are unregulated. In the case of fighting climate change “what motivates people to change in order to commit themselves to the ecological transition are emotions provided by the prospect of these changes, the way we are perceived by others and being part of a group that goes in the same direction.” For him, psychology has shown that even a certain degree of guilt can help to bring about change, provided that one is open to other viewpoints.

As to the advice a psychologist could give to European politicians regarding the use of emotions, Luminet emphasizes that positive emotions, such as pride or happiness, can help people becoming more open towards others, while negative emotions such as fear risk setting groups up against each

other. Given that personal emotions and memories are quite powerful, especially during adolescence “appealing to individual memories that are linked to world history” – think of the fall of the Berlin Wall – “can be effective as a way to mobilise people from certain generations through emotions linked to their memories.”

“Reconciliation should be seen (...) as something that guides us but that is never attained.”

Valérie Rosoux

European culture and identity

“Can culture help us foster positive emotions towards Europe?” was the question that brought together a musician and an intellectual.

European identity

For musician and opera-director **Bernard Foccroulle**, “Europe did not wait for the European Union to exist.” French intellectual **Antoine Arjakovsky** agreed, and he pointed out that European conscience was first mythological and religious, then cultural (Renaissance humanism) before it finally became political after the Second World War. Europe did not only chronologically precede the European Union but also transcends it geographically. For Foccroulle one does not need to be part of the European Union to feel European, as also the Swiss or Albanians can feel “European.”

For Foccroulle, a European identity, while vague, does exist and it was in part created by education and an exchange of ideals but also by many artists and their work. People outside Europe, Foccroulle notes, often understand that identity more easily than we do ourselves. Europeans are not sufficiently aware of their identity, because it is not taught as such. While it is insufficiently explained and shared, such an identity does exist and we do experience it. Yet, all too often we still use an exclusive concept of national identity. However, in reality our identities are much more complex, as they de facto overlap: one can be Roman, Italian, European and a citizen of the world while being of African descent. Yet, we still lack adequate tools to grasp such complex identities. Arjakovsky agrees with this idea of multiple identities, comparing it with the peels of an onion or the different colours of a painting.



Bernard Foccroulle

According to Foccroulle, Europe should avoid imitating the nation-state at a European level as this would mean becoming a fortress. Instead, Europe should think more globally in terms of solidarity, in contact with its neighbours. Arjakovsky agrees that Europe should avoid being perceived as a danger by others (e.g. by talking about civilizing globalisation, as does Pascal Lamy) and it should instead be open and inclusive. For him we also need to rethink our conception of the nation-state, moving from a solitary state to a community of states that show solidarity.

A European project without culture

For Foccroulle one of the biggest mistakes in the post-war European construction was the idea that culture should not be part of



Antoine Arjakovsky

European integration. Indeed, member-states always wanted to prevent that culture would become a truly European matter. For Foccroulle “the loss of interest towards the European project can in part be explained by the fact that culture was never a true part of European integration.”

Arjakovsky adds that in the small European budget of 1% culture only amounts to 0,001%. Yet he believes that European politicians are wrong to neglect culture, if only because it is often through cultural achievements that politicians leave a legacy. Moreover, Franco-German reconciliation in part involved culture (think only of Barbara’s *Göttingen*) so it could play an important role in Europe as well.

For Foccroulle, all this is because politicians wrongly see culture as entertainment and merely a little extra (*supplément d’âme*) that belongs to individuals. If, by contrast, “we see culture as something that defines us individually and collectively in our diverse ways of being and as humans, then there is no political project that can do without a strong cultural dimension.” For Foccroulle it is telling that while Brussels

is Europe’s political capital, there are hardly any efforts made to also turn it into a cultural capital that would make it more visible to itself and to 500 million Europeans.

Opera as a European art form

Foccroulle emphasises that music, like all arts, has the capacity to transcend cultural barriers. As a francophone musician Foccroulle for example delights in playing music by the German composer Bach. For Foccroulle opera is essentially a European art form and throughout its history opera helped shape European culture.

Moreover, in today’s opera-houses productions involve highly international teams. In the last 20 years, networks of various opera-houses have become extremely important in

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Bernard Foccroulle

the cultural world, and perhaps the 21st century will be the century of networks. There is a risk that Europe loses its connection with a diverse society, which is why he is involved in European initiatives to bring opera closer to various groups in society.

Europeans and their past

Arjakovsky is critical about the way Europeans deal with their past. If one looks at how history is dealt with in Europe one can see that while in central and eastern Europe people insist on their national identity,

western Europe instead appears to distance itself from its past, whereby we risk forgetting from where we came. While western Europe should listen to central and eastern Europe's demand that also crimes committed in the name of communism should be commemorated, central and eastern Europe in turn can learn from how the west practiced reconciliation and forgiveness. In general, he pleads for a common cultural history that goes beyond divisions.

For Arjakovsky, not just our relationship with the past, but also that with the future is jeopardised. Whereas our culture used to concentrate on trying to grasp the *future*, we are now increasingly living in a culture that focusses on the *present*, with an infinite stream of "news."

Remedies

At the same time Arjakovsky identified concrete initiatives to remedy this situation. He drew attention to an initiative by the European Parliament, *my house of European history*, where citizens can tell their own history and exchange with professional historians, thus creating an interactive European history in 24 languages.

Another initiative – *Retrouver le goût de l'aventure européenne* ("regaining the taste for the European adventure") – regrouped various think tanks that came up with proposals such as teaching Europe's history in primary education, alongside national history. And just as historians designed

"European politicians are wrong to neglect culture, if only because it is often through cultural achievements that politicians leave a legacy."

Antoine Arjakovsky

Franco-German history textbooks, today we likewise need a shared narrative between Russia and Ukraine, which Arjakovsky currently helps to establish.

Values and emotions surrounding Europe's migration-crisis

Since 2015 the migration-crisis haunts Europe, challenging its values and provoking strong emotions. Florence Delmotte moderated a panel devoted to this complex topic.

Migration's challenge for Europe

Migration-expert **Denis Duez** began by noting that when political scientists or legal scholars think of European identity they think of positive emotions and of Europeans identifying themselves with Europe's foundational values. However, in the case of the migration crisis an identity is created by uniting Europeans against a common threat (rather than through common values) thus involving negative emotions. In that respect migrants have now replaced communism, which served as a common threat before 1989.

Martin Deleixhe, another expert in migration, points out that there exist alternative ways to define a political community. Instead of defining ourselves against an outside enemy, we can also think of defining ourselves against a past version of our own community from which we wish to distinguish ourselves.

Shifting values and emotions

When it comes to values and norms in Europe's migration crisis, Deleixhe observes a number of problematic shifts over the past decades. First, a shift in what norms we deem unquestionable. Certain values that used to be subject to political debate – e.g. about the sort of economy we want (neoliberal or not) – have now become quasi intangible and enshrined in the European treaties. Yet, norms and values that used to be seen as intangible – such as the right to asylum – have now, conversely, become subject to political debate. As a result, they have become optional rather than essential.

Secondly, there is a shift in Europe's priorities. In 2001 a cosmopolitan Europe still defined its borders in terms of human rights and democracy, whereas now, 20 years later, Europe increasingly sees itself as essentially a geopolitical project that even suspends the right to asylum at its



Denis Duez, Florence Delmotte, Gérard Testard and Martin Deleixhe

borders. Europe tries to make it harder or even impossible for people to apply for asylum, which means that Europe de facto no longer respects its own values and norms.

Duez notes that the migration crisis – that haunts nation-states as much as the European Union as a whole – is saturated with emotions and values, that do have a mobilizing force. Yet, in that migration-crisis some emotions and values appear stronger than others. Solidarity between member-states, for example, proved weaker than the anxiety and fear that drove investment in border control. A negative emotion such as fear thus turns out to have strong political effects.

Fear, ignorance and dialogue

In the debate on emotions towards people who are different, the panel also welcomed a practitioners' perspective offered by **G rard Testard**, who organises meetings between Christians and Muslims in France. He emphasizes the importance of fear, an emotion that can easily lead to violence. For him such fear is fuelled by ignorance, which is why he does "not believe in a clash of civil-

"We need to learn to meet others who are not like us."

G rard Testard

zations, but rather in a clash of ignorance." We create affective bubbles with those who are like us and those who are different are left on their own. To Testard's surprise many French Catholics have never met a Muslim. As a result, people fear being dominated by Muslims, but in reality, the Muslim community in France is weaker than is often thought.

Based on this diagnosis, Testard believes that "we need to learn to meet others who are not like us." This is no easy task. In reality it proves much easier to organize events with large crowds than a small group meeting with people who don't know

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Denis Duez

each other. Such small group meetings are challenging and require respect, listening skills and moderation. Testard observes that often those who are willing to reach out to others "are those who feel most assured in their own identity (...) which allows them to open themselves to others."

But do such meetings between Christians and Muslims not betray the France's secular ideals? For Testard there should be room for diverse religions in civil society ("in reality the state is secular, but society is not neutral") and he feels supported by the French state in his work.

A complex debate

Migration-experts are rather critical about how society looks at migration. For Duez it is frustrating that so many myths about migration continue to exist (no, migration does not impoverish society!) and that politicians do little to dispel these out of fear of populists. Deleixhe wonders if the sums invested in securing the European Union's external border would not be better spent on improving the reception of refugees. He

also questions the idea that repression would bring us together. Moreover, in the refugee-debate he observes a contrast between European institutions and states –

“Europe tries to make it harder or even impossible for people to apply for asylum, which means that Europe de facto no longer respects its own values and norms.”

Martin Deleixhe

who restrict the right to asylum in order to protect citizen’s rights – and civil society organizations that instead defend complex values such as hospitality and solidarity.

Solutions

So, what can we do about the migration-crisis? Duez points out that around 3% of the world’s population lives in a region in which they were not born. Migration will inevitably continue and, unless one lives in a dictatorship, it is impossible to completely close

borders. For Duez, the main solution would be to increase legal migration in Europe. Moreover, one should question the strict distinction between (economic) migrants and (political) refugees as defined in the Geneva Convention, as many people are currently not protected by that convention, such as people who flee war-zones without necessarily being persecuted. Testard adds that migration is not mainly driven by poverty but by war, which means that the European Union could do much more to help countries find peace.

As to the emotional dimension of the migration-crisis, some researchers think it is more efficient to deal with the crisis in a non-emotional way, away from politics or the public gaze. The other ethically superior option which Duez favors, would be to transform the way we represent and thus perceive migrants and thus change the public’s gaze. This should be less about compassion than about seeing migrants as human beings like us (which means not pushing back boats full of refugees including children). We have to somehow recognize other lives as equally valuable without this requiring that they become identical to us.

Understanding central and eastern Europe and its emotions

The panel devoted to the often-emotional responses that Europe provokes in central and eastern Europe benefited from the input from two experts on (and from) that region, Jacques Rupnik and Jarosław Kuisz, with Edoardo Traversa as moderator.

Rupnik began by observing that when it comes to emotions, “the European project is more (...) a rational project, while the emotional side of politics is more attached to the nation.” The flag of a nation-state still touches people, whereas the European flag does not (unless for those hostile to Europe). If Europe provokes emotions at all, these are indeed mostly negative emotions.

No single block

When it comes to central and eastern Europe, both Rupnik and Kuisz stress its diversity and emphasize that we should avoid seeing countries from that region as a “single block.” Even within the central European so-called Viségrad group, important differences remain between the illiberal governments of Poland and Hungary and those of Slovakia and the Czech Republic. While all four governments opposed the European Union’s migration policy, on other issues they disagree. Unlike Poland and Hungary, Slovakia and the Czech Republic for example defend the rule of law and are not opposed to the European Union.

Kuisz agrees and adds that we should also avoid seeing individual countries as a single block as they are often internally divided. He points out that most Polish people are pro-European, and if a Eurosceptic party was still able to win an election this is because the electoral system allows for a party to win the majority without being supported by half of the population. For Kuisz

we should also not forget that in the 2003 accession-referendum 80 % of the Polish population was in favor of joining the European Union. This was also why the rejection of the Constitutional Treaty by the French and the Dutch voters in 2005 was incomprehensible for most eastern Europeans.

“The new member states that joined after 1989 (...) felt excluded and had a hard time identifying with the European project.”

Jacques Rupnik

Resentment and success

All this is not to deny the resentment regarding the enlargement that currently exists in central and eastern Europe. Kuisz describes how the 30 years following 1989 are today often seen as a failure, as the *Trente Honteuses*, and this both by the left as well as by the right. The same people that were often very happy in 1989 even saw the period after 1989 as the worst period in their lives.

At first sight this resentment may come as a surprise. After all, as Rupnik points out, in 1989 the European enlargement was the only possible answer to the challenge back



Jarosław Kuisz

then as the European Union was “the only institution capable of providing a project, an institutional framework, and a shared architecture for the European continent.” This explains why in those years everyone wanted to join the European Union, which we now tend to forget after Brexit.

Rupnik adds that we should not forget that the first 20 years following 1989 represented a remarkably successful transformation, which we could call the “third modernization.” To take the Polish case, this third modernization followed two largely failed attempts to modernize a semi-feudal backward country, first by Prussia and then by communism. The more successful third modernization by the European Union instead represented a spectacular convergence with the west, both economically and in terms of lifestyle. Kuisz agrees that this third modernization was a great success, which improved the quality of life on almost every level. Moreover, a country like Poland was not affected by the crisis of 2008.

Explaining resentment

Given this success, how, then, can we explain the current frustrations with the European Union in parts of central and eastern Europe? Kuisz points out that every success has its dark side: it is precisely because the transformation and the gains after 1989 were so radical and successful that they also provoked a comparable sense of loss, as this transformation also affected family ties and the labor market. Moreover, there is a horrible brain drain in eastern Europe, which even affects life expectancy, as qualified doctors are leaving to work abroad, which is a challenge as Polish society too is aging.

Rupnik tries to explain this resentment by going back in time. The European Union’s founding members began their project in a specific post-war context, overcoming many emotional hurdles, and they thus felt that they owned this project which they started. As a result, the new member states that joined after 1989, and who had not been part of this initial trajectory, felt excluded and had a hard time identifying with the European project. Apart from joining an existing project, new member states also felt that they did not join on an equal footing, which also explains resentment.

“Every success has its dark side: it is precisely because the transformation and the gains after 1989 were so radical and successful that they also provoked a comparable sense of loss.”

Jarosław Kuisz

Rupnik also observes a shift in the debate about Europe in central and eastern Europe. Before 1989, many in eastern Europe were interested in the idea of a European identity, as they defined themselves as being part of a European civilization, as opposed to a Soviet identity which was imposed on them. While Kundera saw European civilization in secular terms, going back to the enlightenment, the then cardinal Wojtyła emphasized its Christian dimension. Kuisz agrees that eastern European countries never felt that they belonged to Russia which was an important motive for them to “Europeanise” in order to escape the east. Rupnik explains that after 1989 these debates on Europe and its identity, culture and civilization became almost a taboo as these debates were eclipsed and replaced by the European Union defined as a market and a normative project. This shift further contributes to the current misunderstanding regarding central Europe.

Kuisz adds that when talking about today’s differences surrounding the so-called “culture wars (...) we should take into account that 30 years are missing from the experience of eastern Europe,” as the profound cultural changes following May 1968 in western Europe could not occur with the same degree of enthusiasm in eastern European countries, given the censorship. Moreover, in the east, Stalinism impacted property, relations, politics and institutions, an impact that in part still lives on today. More generally, for Kuisz “eastern Europeans still have a work in progress [to do] to understand what happened.”

The future

So, what about the future? Rupnik points out that Brexit also affects central and eastern European countries. When these

countries joined 30 years ago, they mostly shared a British idea of Europe, whereby democracy stayed at the level of the nation-state, security depended on NATO and the European Union was seen as mainly a market with its legal norms. Now that their main sponsor and protector has left the European Union, central and eastern European countries realize that the Union is changing and becomes more differentiated. These countries will now have to decide if they want to remain at the core or rather the periphery of the European Union.



Jacques Rupnik

At least historically they did not like being at the periphery out of fear for Russia, which is why they all joined NATO and a great number amongst them also the Eurozone, as a sort of insurance policy. Russia’s proximity also explains why most countries will think twice before undermining the European project.

Conclusions

As co-organizer of the conference, Bernard Snoy drew conclusions on the links between emotions, values and the European integration project.

Values elicit positive emotions, that should arguably foster adhesion to the European project both in the minds as well as in the hearts of its citizens. The problem is that the so-called “European values” are invoked not only by the proponents of the European project but also by its detractors in such a way that this potentially rich theme of European values finds itself kidnapped or instrumentalized, allowing populist or euro-sceptic leaders to turn them against the European integration project. How did we get there (and what can be done about it)?

Diagnosis

Snoy identified several possible explanations. In the eyes of the public opinion, the European Union is seen as primarily a space for business people, lawyers and lobbyists. As it did not live up to its professed values, it caused a profound disillusion, exacerbated by the big upheaval of the economic and financial crisis of 2008, now followed by the fears generated by the digital revolution. Particularly in central and eastern Europe, where dissidents such as Patočka, Havel and Kundera had, at the time of communism, a somewhat idealized vision of Europe, which they understood as a civilizational project. Unfortunately, since 1989, the European Union presented itself mainly as a large market, requiring from countries joining it the wholesale and rapid absorption of a huge “*acquis communautaire*,” involving the most diverse norms and technical rules. The accession of these countries to the European Union resulted also in western foreign investors taking control of their biggest enterprises while an

enormous *brain drain* was depriving them of their most educated manpower. These countries have therefore the impression of having joined a project that was conceived without them and in which they, already located at the geographical periphery, would be second-class members. There has also been a lack of recognition by the western European member states for the important contributions of the central and eastern European countries to European civilization and a



Bernard Snoy

lack of empathy for the succession of historical hardship which they had to go through: hence the depth of the resentment towards the European project in central and eastern Europe.

Remedies

To build its identity, Europe needs positive emotions – such as courage, hope, solidarity and respect – and European values constitute a magnificent heritage which can inspire these emotions. However, we observe that, until now, Europe was not able to take advantage of the emotional potential provided by its values. A greater awareness of the importance of culture is developing: thanks to their strong emotional impact, fine arts and culture in general could become the drivers of common projects around which a collective European identity could coalesce. Snoy invoked Arjakovsky's plea for "a more political vision of the European project." We need an open and democratic dialogue with all the stakeholders, towards a new formulation of the European project, a pragmatic formulation that would appeal to reason but also seize the imagination and generate enthusiasm. It could be articulated around values and emotions relating to the past as much as to the present and the future.

As for the past, Snoy points to the rich cultural, philosophical and artistic heritage coming from the Greeks, the Romans and the Judeo-Christian tradition as well as other sources that have been added to this heritage over the centuries; this leads to see the European project as the safeguard of a civilization, defined by its vision of the dignity of the human person. Concretely, the European Union should involve itself in the teaching of history, next to its member States. But this subject is sensitive and some member states formally opposed it in the past. The reconciliation between former enemies, such as the Germans and the French, now good neighbors, has become a key element of the European identity but repeating this scenario in the Balkans turns out to be more difficult, as resentments

persist, despite commendable efforts towards producing common history handbooks for secondary schools in these countries. For Snoy, one must emphasize European values such as respect for the truth and a sense of responsibility towards neighbors. In Snoy's view one needs to avoid not just a denial of the past but also resentment and excessive feelings of guilt.

"We need (...) a new formulation of the European project, (...) that (...) could be articulated around values and emotions relating to the past as much as to the present and the future."

Bernard Snoy

As to the present, Snoy emphasized the need to defend European interests and European values which are under threat in an increasingly Darwinian world faced by multiple economic, social, ecological, migratory, geopolitical and security challenges. These challenges translate into a number of emergencies, in particular climate change, a dramatic loss of biodiversity, migratory pressures at European borders and the disarray caused by the digital revolution, which disrupts everything but which Europeans would like to make compatible with their values. In isolation, individual European countries feel powerless while the European Union could "make the difference" thanks to its multiplier effect. Furthermore, the geopolitical challenges for Europe embodied by political leaders Trump, Putin, Xi, Erdoğan and Johnson, should reinforce the awareness that nation states alone are no more up to the job and that only the European Union would be capable to defend our interests and to promote their values.

Regarding the future, the task that Europe could set for itself would be to “civilize globalization” in a number of areas where it represents its humanist vision and an awareness of the urgent necessity to act that other continents do not necessarily share. This matters especially in the case of climate-change and of ecological challenges, where Europe could exercise a genuine leadership but it could also apply to the management of migrations and the treatment of refugees, making the digital revolution more humane, fighting unsustainable inequalities, and so on. In these domains, Europe can build on its democratic tradition, aiming at getting the widest possible participation of citizens in the definition of the “common good” at all levels, including that of the whole of our planet.

As for the specific capacity of the European Union to execute a policy that would treat refugees and migrants in conformity with its values, Gérard Testard, President of the Association Efesia, brought a more optimistic perspective. Testard explained how Efesia organizes throughout France numerous fraternal meetings between Christians and Moslems, overcoming their mutual fears and stimulating their capacity to live together around a shared humanity. There is no solution outside of a dialogue at a popular level,

“Patočka, who proclaimed the necessity to unify Europe by reconnecting with its spiritual dimension (...) this capacity, which is ours, of opening up to the world in a manner that is not only utilitarian.”

Bernard Snoy

incorporating the religious dimension with peace as its objective. Last but not least, for Snoy Europe has to seriously develop a strategy of co-development with Africa.

Snoy ended his conclusions with a reference to the Czech dissident Jan Patočka, who proclaimed the necessity to unify Europe by reconnecting with its spiritual dimension, more specifically “the care for the soul (*cura animi*),” “this capacity, which is ours, of opening up to the world in a manner that is not only utilitarian.” It is such an ethical project, the project of a “Europe of the Spirit,” based on the European values and eliciting beautiful emotions, that Snoy calls for.

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L'EUROPE ET SES VALEURS AU CŒUR D'ÉMOTIONS CONTRADICTOIRES

Jeudi 5 mars 2020, 9h-18h



sur les thèmes de
la DÉMOCRATIE
l'HISTOIRE
les INTELLECTUELS et les ARTS
la MIGRATION
l'EUROPE CENTRALE ET ORIENTALE

avec
Jean-Marc Ferry et Anne-Lorraine Bujon de l'Etang
Constanze Itzel, Olivier Luminet et Valérie Rosoux
Antoine Arjakovsky et Bernard Focroulle
Martin Deleixhe, Denis Duez et Gérard Testard
Jacques Rupnik et Jarosław Kuisz (en anglais)

Conference poster designed by Sophie Kaisin and a picture of the conference room by Victoire Van Houdt

