

Roles of Culture on the Foundation of European Integration

5 March 2011
Université Libre de Bruxelles

PROGRAMME

Opening address: Takashi OKUNISHI
(Director, Kobe University Brussels European Centre)

Speech: Tomokazu SAKANO
(Dean, Graduate School of Intercultural Studies, Kobe University)

Speech: Paul ARON (Université Libre de Bruxelles)

Gilles FERRAGU (Université Paris Ouest Nanterre la Défense)
"Religious values in the European being"

Isabelle MEURET (Université Libre de Bruxelles)
"Literary journalism in Europe: Alternative voices narrating history"

Satoshi TERAU (Kobe University)
"Freedom of movement and conservation of the diversity of the culture: The principle of territoriality vs. the principle of personality"

Helmut EBERHART (University of Graz)
"Pilgrimage as an event of encounter: Possibilities and chances for an interreligious dialogue and for a new identity construction in Europe"

Discussant: Salvatore SOMMA (University of Naples "L' Orientale")
Discussant: Shinnosuke MATSUI (Kobe University)

Concluding remarks: Kazunari SAKAI (Kobe University)

Résumé

Which role does culture play in the process of European integration? While you can suppose it plays a positive part as the pivot of unification, you can also think it plays a negative one that produces a barrier between the inside and the outside and prompts friction and opposition. Today, we tried to investigate these kinds of culture functions in the development of the European Union.

Contents

Professor Ferragu, specialist on International relations history and roles of Christianity, revealed, at first, the historical fact that the European society banded together just like Christendom through battles against Muslims since the Middle Ages. He also indicated that Christianity has not been the only, but one of several core factors which have unified the European society.

Quoting the Turkish case Professor Ferragu distinguished two categories in Europe concerning the roles that Christianity played in the foundation of European integration: 1) Europe as an "identity", and 2) Europe as a "project". Europe as an identity is the awareness of a community, in which Christianity has played an important role. Europe as a project is based on a political will to establish permanent peace and prosperity overcoming war and conflict, where Europe should be in charge of promoting European common and fundamental values, i.e. human rights, democracy and rule of law, to areas outside Europe as well as inside. Here Christianity doesn't play a major role directly but Europe (especially referring to the EU) functions as a propagator or

mediator of such values in order to overcome or prevent wars and conflicts. Europe has the potential to build a peaceful coexistence with the Muslim world close to and incorporated in the EU.

From the point of view of the transfer of thoughts, of the way of communication, of the diffusion of ideas, the possibilities of "literary journalism" presented by professor Meuret are very stimulating and interesting. She defined it and developed that: "Literary journalists are writing history; not mainstream history; rather, they address the question of the representation of reality from a different perspective. Reportage [which is a typical example of literary journalism] is journalism in action; it implies that writers travel, discover new cultures, observe different mores, and transfer that information to potential readers."

We can recognize that, at the heyday of literary journalism, 1) different traditional ways of journalism converged gradually and many models of "reportage" were produced, which describe important changes of the culture which had made up "Europe". 2) literary journalism contributed to send individuals' voices as alternatives to tell history.

It is difficult to say that literary journalism itself developed European integration but it indicated that intercultural contacts are very productive in Europe where different cultures coexist. Picking up voices in the margin in Europe and sharing values with them, it has attracted considerable public attention, showing the entire and real figure of Europe.

Professor Terao developed the discussion from the point of view of socio-linguistics and history: how the European Union protects minority languages in the situation of a "liquifaction" of an international society i.e. the remarkable increase of migration is evident in a globalized era.

He focuses on "territoriality", which is a political and social principle Europe innovated and diffused all over the world in the process of formation of the modern sovereign state system. Although its deconstruction (free movement of people beyond borders) has been developed only in Europe through the formation of the European Union, in the context of reinforcement of borders between the inside and the outside, territoriality has been strengthened. He criticized that the distinction between "protected minority languages" and "non-protected ones" was made according to the origins of the languages from inside Europe or outside Europe. Indicating the contradiction between "principle of territoriality" and "principle of personality" is caused through language rights and human rights, Prof. Terao analyzed to which degree the territoriality should be relativized in the European integration, in comparison to the situation of the regional integration in Eastern Asia.

Professor Eberhart focused on "pilgrimage" and presented a view to analyze the European integration from the perspective of cultural anthropology. Taking the example of a church of pilgrimage, Mariazell, he analyzed the meanings of the Christian pilgrimage in Europe and also the pilgrimage phenomena around the world.

One can see that the activity of visiting a sacred place has been practiced gradually in the secular context rather than the traditional religious one, i.e. the activity has become worldly and popularized. Many secular elements as well as religious ones have been incorporated into the pilgrimage activity. Here, what is important for the analysis on the foundation of European integration is especially intercultural dialogues beyond difference of religions and new identity formation in Europe through contemporary pilgrimage. It should focus particularly on the movement of people in Eastern Europe in the process of joining the EU. "Practicing the pilgrimage through the routes of the Middle Ages, they have become new citizens of the European Union."

For these 4 lectures, some significant comments and questions were posted to presenters by two discussants, Dr. Matsui and Mr. Somma. Through those questions, to which were added many questions and comments from the floor, discussion was deepened about the session's theme: the roles of culture in the foundation of European integration, its past, present and future.

Finally professor Sakai concluded the session raising some results and future perspectives.

Europe has always had a mainstream culture and minorities, and has suffered from difficulties to harmonize this cleavage, but managed to overcome it. In this context, it has produced several philosophical and/or subjective attachments among them, which must have been cultural (but there could have been negative aspects of culture which made the situation worse). So it is necessary to investigate how they found solutions to these problems, in which the research of both of social sciences (institutional aspects, for example economy and political regime) and humanities (philosophical and contents aspects) has been necessary, as well as the collaboration among them.

This is only the kick-off of the research cooperation about the cultural aspects of the foundational level of the EU between scholars from European universities (who are the parties concerned) and from Kobe University (who can be objective observers from the outside). It is advisable to continue the cooperation and furthermore develop today's discussion from more focused views.

