

WHERE IS EUROPE ?

Opening Lecture
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Christian AUBIN
(*University of Poitiers*)

Because it is in the field of economics that European integration has most obviously progressed, our course will principally deal with economic integration, whether it is a question of the integration of markets or of the integration of policies which one seeks to coordinate, in truth to unify. However, our vision of Europe under construction does not have to be limited to its economy. Putting its history into perspective will help us to take the step back which is necessary to get a wider view. Besides, we will have the opportunity, at the end of the intensive course to prolong our reflection on the institutional and political aspects of European integration.

During this introduction, I will discuss the theme of the course from a very different angle. I will step down for a moment from my position as an economist and propose a mythological perspective. On the map of an Europe situated somewhere between myth and reality, the legend may be useful to find the roads taken by those who have been, and still are, in search of Europe.

A long time ago, in Phoenicia, there lived a princess whose looks were admired by all. The sparkle of her large eyes was worthy of the name which Homer reserved to Zeus : "*europos*", that is to say "large eyed" or, in a figurative sense, "far seeing". The rest is well known. Zeus "*europos*" transformed himself into a bull to capture the princess Europe. He brought her to Crete and, as a result of their union, one of the founding dynasties of western civilization was born. Such is the myth and such is the etymology which I am pleased to interpret from the name of Europe.

But the legend does not end here. After Europe was captured by Zeus, her five brothers went to search for her. They left and as they travelled the world, they asked everyone they met : "Where is Europe ?".

"Where is Europe ?" ; the question is still asked today. Between myth and reality, in the light of the past and of the present, through historical experience and theoretical knowledge, the answer, perhaps, remains uncertain, but reflecting on its importance remains necessary.

"Where is Europe ?". The easiest answer could perhaps be found by considering geography. Then, we might be tempted to reconsider the words of Paul Valéry when he said : "*cette étroite presqu'île, qui ne figure sur le globe que comme appendice de l'Asie*". That is : "this narrow peninsula which, on the globe, figures solely as an appendix to Asia". How can we imagine that a pitiful Europe could arouse the Master of Olympus' emotions ? Without a doubt, Zeus "*europos*" could see far further. As did Paul Valéry when he prompted to add that it has become : "*la métropole du genre humain (...) la partie précieuse de l'univers terrestre, la perle de la sphère, le cerveau d'un vaste corps*". That is "the mother country of mankind (...) the precious part of the terrestrial universe, the pearl of our sphere, the brain of a vast body of land".

In fact, it is permissible to think that, beyond a geographical proximity, it is a community of civilisation that contributes a solid base to the European idea. Both the respective heritages of humanism and of christianity are responsible for the shaping of the community of civilisation in question. As well, they shaped its diversity through oppositions, through the battles and divisions between reason and faith, between the pope and the emperor. Politicians established diversity by putting up interior barriers in which their sovereignty could be exercised. The intelligentsia perpetuated the community.

Europe has been and remains, in all the fields of mental, artistic, scientific and technical activity, a community in which exchanges have never ceased to increase. Erasmus, who symbolises the Europe of our universities, gives us the example. Dutch by birth, he lived in Brussels and Paris, in England and Switzerland, and visited Italy and Germany. He was the incarnation of all the European culture of his era, the classic example even of European humanism.

Throughout the ages, Europe inspired philosophers, poets or historians. Let us mention, among many others and in any order, Dante, Montesquieu, Bentham, Voltaire, Heine, Lamartine, Michelet, Nietzsche or Victor Hugo. It is therefore not surprising that, for a long time, European projects have remained the work of philosophers or intellectuals. Whether it is a question of assuring perpetual peace or of building an ideal society, from Pierre Dubois to Saint-Simon and Proudhon, passing by the Abbé de Saint-Pierre and Emmanuel Kant, we do not lack noble motives for these projects.

This quest for a utopian Europe is not without remembering that of the brothers of mythical Europe who travelled throughout the world without ever finding their sister. Legend tells us, however, that their wanderings were not totally in vain since one founded Carthage and others discovered the shores of the continent, from Spain to Caucasus.

Likewise, the modern quest for Europe has not always been just the dreams of intellectuals. The European idea has left the books to enter the dossiers of political decision makers. However, the matter was long from being won as this was evidenced, in 1929, by the fate of the Briand project which was the first project officially

presented by the representative of a country, France, during the course of the international proceedings of the League of Nations. Obviously, politicians have some difficulty in deciding on the fundamental choice which could lead to changes in national sovereignty.

It must be stated that, during all eras, from the project of the king of Bohemia, Georges Podiebrad, in the fifteenth century to the project of political community which was to accompany the European Community of Defense, the choice of a European political integration was the stumbling block of the building of Europe. Whether we regret or rejoice, it is certainly apparent today that we cannot easily erase the political divisions and the many centuries of nationalism which have developed. In certain respects, the search for political union may remind us of the myth.

"Where is Europe?" asked her brothers with the hope of finding the sister they knew from their childhood years. Their question echoes the voices of those who wish for a return to a unity similar to that of the Carolingian or Roman empires. Europe's brothers did not find their sister. Must we then fear that those who promote the European idea will be condemned to an eternal utopic search?

The myth, once again, deserves our attention. One of Europe's brothers, Cadmos, arrived in Delphi one day. He asked the oracle: "Where is Europe?". "You will not find her", answered Pythia. Then she added: "Follow a cow, rather, and push her without rest. Wherever she stops, build a city". Cadmos did as he was told. He founded Thebes and the legend celebrated his role in establishing civilisation.

To be sure, this is a myth. But rarely has there been an adaptation of myth as relevant as the one in question. By the importance of its teaching, it becomes a premonition. Searching for Europe is, in part, creating Europe, but not finding it such as one had represented it. On the contrary, we need to renounce the idea of discovering what we already knew in order to find what we are aspiring towards.

Pythia addressed herself to Cadmos. The fathers of modern Europe heard her. They understood that it was illusory to attempt to discover a unified Europe based on a model of a traditional institutional structure. In a certain way, by adopting a functionalist strategy, they have accepted to renounce political Europe in order to help the progress of integration. In this respect, Jean Monnet's commitment was exemplary. Thus, following the failure of the European Defense Community, he resolutely undertook the role to help promote the construction of Europe concerning a more economic than political foundation. Let me quote his opinion: *"Je n'ai jamais douté que ce processus d'unification européenne nous mène un jour à de États-Unis d'Europe, mais je ne cherche pas à en imaginer le cadre politique, si imprécis sont les mots à propos desquels on se dispute : confédération ou fédération. Ce que nous préparons, à travers l'action de la Communauté, n'a probablement pas de précédent"*. That is: "I never once doubted that this European unification process will one day bring us to a type of European United-States, but I do not wish to imagine a political structure, so imprecise are the words of which we are disputing: confederation or

federation. What we are preparing, through the action of the Community, probably does not have a precedent".

The functionalist strategy concerns a form of pragmatism. Taking note of the opposition to a formal political union, it proposes the communal treatment of technical dossiers on which possibly constraining decisions will be able to be taken.

As the field of application of this strategy widens, its efficacy grows and, at the same time, so does the risk of the integration being blocked. Such is the case of a common market, that is a zone for the free circulation of goods and of production factors. In front of the growth of interdependence between economies which are submitted to public intervention, the coordination of economic policies, or at least a minimal cooperation at the time of their definition, often appears as the indispensable complement of the integration of the markets. The multiplication of the opportunities for economic cooperation can turn out to be favourable to a more political rapprochement between the countries. It can also make a certain abandonment of national sovereignty more obvious and, as a result, arouse some movements of defiance.

It should not be doubted that the functionalist strategy has allowed remarkable progress to be made in building Europe. Today, however, it touches upon some particularly sensitive areas, such as currency or taxation. It then becomes difficult to detach this from the political dimension of decisions and stakes. That does not necessarily mean that the functionalist strategy should be given up. but that greater attention should be brought to the decision of how to put it into operation. The matter of such worry can be traced in the appearance of the concepts of mutual recognition and subsidiarity in the language of the Community.

In a general manner, two principles can guide the action. On one hand, a principle which I will qualify as the principle of centralisation, favours more or less institutionalised action by the Community, organised coordination before the activation of policies. On the other hand, a principle of competition favours leaving more freedom of action to the member states and anticipates that harmonisation will, in fact, result from the confrontation of national policies.

The choice of one principle or another need not be dogmatic. Both tactics have their advantages and, most often, the advantages of one are the disadvantages of the other. It therefore matters to evaluate and compare the possible solutions case by case. At this stage, the contribution of the economist is invaluable. That is the case, all the more so because it is on this that the pragmatism of the functionalist strategy can lean in the absence of political unity.

"Where is Europe ?", Cadmos asked. "Renounce the idea that you had of her", Pythia answered him, "a bull has taken her away, so follow a cow and push her ahead of you until, through exhaustion, she can go no further. Then, your wanderings will end".

The legend does not tell us about the road of Cadmos, from Delphi to what was to become Thebes. It is permitted to imagine that, between renouncing the pursuit of an ancient dream and promising to build an unknown land, there was a time of incertitude.

This is also the time which, it seems to me, modern Europe is going through. It has not yet exhausted the functionalist strategy and it is too soon to settle the plans for the definitive building of Europe. What matters is to pursue without respite the open road and to accept the cost of a long forced march towards a still imprecise goal. Whether it is a matter of abolishing taxation barriers or of arriving at monetary union, of coordinating sector-based action or of reducing regional disparities, there is still plenty to do towards the completion of economic integration.

Pursuing this road opened by the fathers of Europe as a Community, is to accept that the most rapid progress is shown on technical fields. In some ways, it means accepting that, for some time at least, the economy stays a step ahead of politics. Thus, a certain democratic deficit may seem to be the price to pay to not return to the wanderings of the mythical quest for a utopian Europe. Of course, it is still necessary that this price may not be too high.

Between the will to make Europe progress towards its unification and the worry of treating with care the sensitive points of its members, between the definition of harmonised policies and the respect of national autonomy, between interventionism on the part of the Community and decentralising liberalism, arbitration is the rule. The choice of the means of integration appears crucial, and we may remember the words of General de Gaulle proclaiming that jumping on his chair like a kid while crying "*L'Europe ! L'Europe ! L'Europe !*" was not enough, but that it was necessary to define the means of putting it into action.

It is not the job of the economist to decide what these means should be. But it is part of his mission to participate in the considerations necessary to clarify this type of decision. It is in this spirit that our meeting takes all its interest.

"Where is Europe ?", demanded her brothers. They did not find her. They founded it.

"Where is Europe ?". Perhaps we will not find her, but I am sure that, together during this course, we will make it take a step in the right direction.