

Extract from:  
Gérard Bouchard, "Europe in search of Europeans: The road of identity and myth", *Studies & Reports No. 113*, Jacques Delors Institute, December 2016.

## FOREWORD

by Pascal Lamy

Perhaps we at the Jacques Delors Institute, which at the time was called "Notre Europe", had realised earlier than others that the dream of the founding fathers of the 1950s would not come true, at least not as they had envisaged it. They had placed too much hope on alchemy, as if the leaden process of economic integration based on enlightened self-interest could magically be transformed into the golden promise of a political union that would give rise to a European demos.

The apocryphal quip often attributed to Monnet needs to be placed in that context. "If I had to do it again, I would begin with culture." *Se non è vero è ben trovato!*

For until now, an essential ingredient of European integration has been missing: a symbolic and cultural dimension capable of consolidating a sense of belonging. There is, to use the simultaneously grand and technical terms employed by the social sciences, an emotional deficit that originates in a lack of fictional powers.

This insight provided the starting point for a research project begun in the early 2000s by Aziliz Gouez and continued by Gérard Bouchard and others. Bouchard presents some of the results of this work in the present study. Drawing on anthropological approaches, he sheds light on the difficult question of European identity or rather, the identity of Europeans. It is often in the border regions or "limes" where many influences intersect that cultural mores and habits but also the dreams and nightmares of Europeans take shape.

I entirely agree with Bouchard's emphatic call for a myth that would rouse the imagination of Europeans, bringing together reason and emotion to rally public opinion behind the project of European unification. With some aspects

of his argument, however, I would not concur. In his description of the founding “mythology” of Europe, he overemphasises the importance of anti-national discourse. In my opinion, it was above all the anti-war story that focused minds at the time.

But the principal merit of his research is to have demonstrated just how empty the anthropological slogan “unity in diversity” is. Bouchard is at his strongest when he invites the reader to follow him on his painstaking quest for a European story – about the necessity of which he has no doubt – that does not take umbrage at discourses of national belonging but on the contrary considers these as powerful resources to be tapped into.

What we need now is a user manual that would show how to apply Bouchard’s approach to domains and values (such as dignity or equality). And what better place to start than an initiative providing Europeans with greater knowledge about the mythologies making up their constituent parts. It would mark a step towards a European identity founded on the principle of knowing, understanding and appreciating the identity of others, which seems to me the most promising way to make sense of differences. This is why the Jacques Delors Institute campaigns for the creation, in Europe and elsewhere, of chairs in European Anthropology. The work of Gérard Bouchard, like that of Stanley Hoffmann and Elie Barnavy before him, is proof that non-European perspectives on the European project are often more penetrating and lucid than our own.

Pascal Lamy  
*President Emeritus of the Jacques Delors Institute*