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History

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Friday,
8 December, 2006

A European Cultural Canon to Unify European Politics: *The Inspiration*

Report of Part I

SICA & Eunic

Literature

Film

This conference is a cooperation between:

SICA, Service centre for International Cultural Activities

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***The Inspiration of a European
Cultural Canon and a Unifying
European Political Policy***

Part I

Conference, 8/12/2006 Felix Meritis

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Arthur Sonnen

A European Cultural Canon, Determination of concepts

The concept "cultural canon" stems from nineteenth century nationalism which arised when small countries merged into large nations. Running alongside this expansion was the growing migration from the countryside to the city. Both transformations explain the need for a new national identity. Cultural history, amongst others, was used to realize this identity.

After WWII nationalism fell into disrepute and with it the canon.

The emancipation-movements of the sixties criticised the one-sided portrayal of men as well. This led to a multiplicity of canons due to the individualistic (post-modern) development of society. It is because of this relativization that the dignity was lost to the canon-concept; which led to the demise of the canon as a means of communication.

As we now live in times of de-bordering and globalisation the national identity no longer suffices in order to function within that world. At the same time we can detect a nostalgic longing for the past national identity (e.g. sport-matches). However, this form of national identity is rather artificial. There is a need for an identity that exceeds the national one. A cultural canon has to be the theme of such a border-crossing identity; the international as an extension of the national. The building blocks which are needed for the border-crossing cultural canon have to be found within the coherence (history) of the mutual influence of the arts. One builds a new house with bricks, not with other houses. That is precisely why this European canon will have to be a cultural canon which is more than just a sum of the national canons combined.

1st observation: The function of the canon used to consist in promoting national identity; it was a constitutional-tool. This constitutional-tool has to be converted into a mechanism of society.

How can political and cultural objectives relate optimally towards one another?

European Culture and European politics

Background

In the last couple of years the topical question has been in which manner other considerations could play a part within the process of expansion of the European Union and resolving the integration issues that comes with it, besides the purely economical.

An increasingly important role is given to the cultural component. For too long it was thought that the necessity for the European Union was primarily determined by economical interests. But, as Robert Schuman stated back in 1954, he would – if the Union would be set-up anew – start with culture. The capability to turn the cooperation between countries to a success is determined by the degree of political, i.e. cultural, agreement that is reached. Political problems mostly stem from misconceptions about national and local traditions, in other words from culture. With the Maastricht Treaty in 1991 Helmut Kohl too regarded a political union as a condition for the economic unity of Europe. However, on that occasion Ruud Lubbers pointed out that the political Union “already existed implicitly”. Thus paving the way for what is now known as the Euro, but all old and new members of the European Union alike are still waiting for a political Union.

The problems surrounding the progress of the European (Economic) Union, stem (amongst others) from the lack of a political union which could occupy itself in-depth with the cultural opinions and differences between the member-states. National identities play an important part within the construction of a cultural community. In aiming for a more coherent future for the Union, many contradictory tendencies can be noticed: on the one hand the diversity of cultures is seen as a wealth of variety, on the other hand this same diversity blocks the way to a more European centred

identity. The link between culture and international politics has gained more momentum ever since the Netherlands and France both said NO to the European constitution. The growing attention to culture can be interpreted as a significant attempt to include this cultural component in the discussions surrounding the European community.

Meanwhile, apart from the process of economical and political integration, a new assignment for the European Union-in waiting has emerged: the EU as a social and cultural project. Cultural components should play a prominent role in the integration of new member-states. In this manner the judicial systems and cultural traditions, as are common within the borders of each separate European country, will stand a chance thus being exchanged in a convincing way with other member-states. It is imperative to encourage this coordinated attempt for intercultural dialogue, attempts which can complement the national endeavours of the individual member-states.

The rise of contemplation concerning the importance of a national canon.

How do other countries deal with the canon-concept?

In most countries there is an implicit agreement about the definition of a national cultural canon; a frame of reference for shared cultural values in the fields of arts and history. Nobody actually doubts those points of reference, although the content changes regularly due to fashion and advancing perceptions. There is agreement in principal within the national borders, even though the importance of such a frame of reference is valued vastly different within the individual countries. In the Quicksan about Europe, which was commissioned by the Ministry of Culture in 2005, those differences can be detected distinctly. The design of the Dutch canon-committee puts great emphasis on the pedagogic behind the canon. The mechanisms behind the considerations for the decree of a canon are instrumental to its functioning and influence.

2nd observation: A unifying process has high priority within the EU. For which purpose a European pedagogic instrument has to be developed. This pedagogy could entail a European Canon.

Government policy and choices of content. What kind of functions does a Canon have?

I Introduction

Back in 1756 Voltaire wrote in his *Essai sur les mœurs et l'esprit des nations* [...] that art and science were the basis of the eminent place Europe had won itself in the world. In the recently published (2006) *The Curtain* (about the history of the novel) Milan Kundera points out that the history of mankind is a chronicle of victors and losers, but art-history knows only victors. Art reflects what is going on in society. Whereas politics vanishes, art lives on forever. The outcome of these artistic reflections on society can be seen in museums; can be read over and over again; can forever be heard or experienced on the stage. Art is always relevant. The history of mankind survives in art, which has long ago discovered the key to immortality. Despite this the economic, territorial and political interests have prevailed over the cultural forces which form the cement or the divisive element between nations.

If Europe attaches any importance to cultural diversity, as proposed in the Maastricht Treaty (art. 128) and the Treaty of Amsterdam (art. 151) amongst others, than it is important that the Europeans are informed about each other's cultures and that the different cultures – and languages being the important bearers of culture – are confronted with each other.

II The Netherlands and cultural awareness

As in the other countries of the European Union a need has arisen within the Netherlands to give more attention to cultural affairs. The identity-issue within the multi-cultural society demanded a totally different approach from the usual

tolerant behaviour. A committee was appointed to give new meaning to the concept Cultural Canon in the Netherlands too.

Roughly twenty years ago there was hardly any awareness that art plays an important part in the conceptions about cultural identity. Since olden days art was considered to be - according to Dutch conceptions - a kind of luxury which could be regarded as – within the limits of good taste - interesting goods (fine arts), moralistic thoughts (literature), pleasurable repose (music) or frivolous past-time (the theatre). The phrasing is somewhat caricature, but it does explain Dutch culture having developed with its back turned to Europe which led to mainly utilitarian reasons to be instrumental for its encouragement.

-The Netherlands within Europe

In the Netherlands there was little need for governmental approval in the shape of a highly regarded cultural status. The Dutch (cultural) identity was/is highly determined by its lack thereof. This onlookers-mentality has gained the Dutch much profit. Although the importance of culture, historically speaking, was not regarded highly, the announcement in 1991 of the creation of one coin for Europe in 2001 has awoken the realisation/fear that there had to be a link between the national identity and culture which lies at the root of our wealth.

- The Netherlands and the ever changing society

Due to the growth of new Dutch citizens confusion has arisen about cultural identity. The autonomous concept of culture that was grounded in nationality was no longer viable. Traditions and self-evident opinions about conventions and moral categories had lost their trusted character. As did the more or less hierarchic well-ordered concepts about the importance of art and culture change under the influence of socio-economic developments. The tendency for renewal is the most important cause for the re-grouping of relations within the arts. Whenever the cultural canon is discussed the hierarchic relations within culture pops up.

To summarize: Due to the growing diversity amongst the population references to our surrounding similar cultures are distorted and because of social emancipation trusted hierarchic relations are affected.

- Renewed attention for the Dutch Cultural Identity

The conclusion seems to be justified in that more attention is given to Dutch identity, through a mix of fear and understandable self-interest. Keeping your back towards Europe has become unrealistic. This gave the cultural development the opportunity to grow on rather improper grounds: for the improvement of the quality of life, but also as a mental instructor against a too overwhelming European integration. The committee Development Dutch Canon published her report *andthen.now* (entoen.nu) as an important expression of cultural self-awareness. It is true that therein a collection was recorded of possible parts of a cultural canon, but in the reflections about this a lot of attention was given to education and pedagogic. "As the only legal form of indoctrination that any civilized country knows."¹

3rd observation: Coming from an EU point of view the governmental approval of the national State has become somewhat obsolete, now that we share the awareness of solidarity with other member-states.

III. Is there a need for a European Canon Concept

Is there a link (and what is its importance) between a national canon and a European identity?

There are a few necessary issues in order for a democracy to function properly: journalism, culture, science and religion. To put it into one term: a (national and universal) resonance. All is studied at national level and there is no central steering, no central feeling. Within European politics there is a lack of a European

¹ Oostrom, F. *Entoen.nu* report of the Dutch Canon Commission, 2006

“pedagogic”. One should search for the resonance of European politics. This resonance may be found in a European canon, it should be the result of a study into the history of diplomacy and the mentality-history and these are always supra-national.

- The European component, the debate on identity

This conference, which will study what inspiration a European Cultural Canon can bring to the political concept, stems from the attention given to the cultural canon in the Netherlands. This appears not to be a unique development. Their international (European) dimensions are becoming increasingly clear, even though the reasons for searching for a canon are rather diverse. In Denmark a canon-committee published a report last September and in France a committee concluded back in 2004 what belonged to a *Socle culturel*. The appreciation for this specific part of the culture points to the increasing attention given to the national interest and not to the European culture as such. There is an additional complicating factor: the relationship Europe – USA. The French for instance, occupy themselves mostly with arming themselves against the Anglo-Saxon influence. They regard their own culture at almost level pegging to that of the European culture. At any rate there is no significant difference and certainly no source of conflict.

- The Transatlantic component/the origin of cultural studies

Another aspect of the canon discussion stems from the USA in the there originated discussion about “high and low” culture. In the sixties a wave emerged of culture-relativism at the American universities, where “high arts” especially were under fire. The cultural canon was regarded a symbol of “dominant, white, male, Western values”, that did not do any justice to the vast diversity of cultures (mostly of non-Western origin) which in the United States had gained equal status within the curricula of the universities. In this same period women’s lib and gender-studies emerged. Out of these developments the subject *Cultural Studies* was developed, which tried to join high and low culture together, through which the concept of Cultural Canon became a symbol of a too narrow and one-sided interpreted past.

- The Eastern European component/the return of the suppressed

Ever since about ten countries from the former Russian sphere of influence have joined the European Union a new aspect has been added to the canon discussion. These new member-states want to find a renewed connection to the (political and cultural) history of Western Europe. After all, until 1945 they were a part of it as Middle Europe; even though only their grandparents can remember anything about "the old Europe". The problem is that they do not feel "new" but rather neglected. At secondary level "European" literature was taught next to the national and Russian literature, a subject that ever since the entry to the EU has slowly but surely disappeared from the syllabus. One of the problems that need to be overcome with the entry of Eastern European countries to the EU is that they, after Vienna and Moscow have come to regard Brussels as the new central power, to which they are unwilling to "subject themselves to".

The "return of the suppressed" is a movement which plays an important role in the discussion about the redefinition of culture. "We find ourselves in a cultural juncture wherein the future presents itself as something that we have overlooked in the past. We are offered a second chance, but in different (more difficult?) circumstances. [...] an element in the process of evolution on the look-out for quality."²

² Jans, E. , *Intercultural Intoxications*, Antwerp 2006, p. 172

4th observation: A properly functioning democracy needs a (national) resonance. This resonance is compounded by a mixture of journalism, culture, science and religion. The canon can be a powerful focal point around which such a resonance could be developed.

Arthur Sonnen
November 2006

Translated by Martha M. Otten & Marcel Otten

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Notes: Ton Bevers, Paul Kuijpers, Cas Smithuijsen, Kees Vuijk, Michaël Zeeman

George Lawson

Opening speech



Ladies and gentlemen,

Good evening and welcome, on behalf of the foreign cultural institutes sharing the organization of this conference and on behalf of our partner Felix Meritis, as well as myself and SICA. A special welcome is extended to our foreign guests, who will later be introduced by Michael Zeeman.

If you look around in the Great Hall of the Amsterdam Concertgebouw, you will observe the names of all the great European composers. Now if you move to Paris and look around in the Palais Garnier, you will see only the names of French composers. This might take you to draw the conclusion that the Netherlands is a country that holds the European cultural canon in high regard, whereas France seems to focus more on a national cultural canon. However, this is not the case. Granted, together with France, the Netherlands was one of the founding members

of the EU. But it was also happy, again together with France, to be the first to say, 'NO' to the European Constitutional Treaty, much to the astonishment of many, including this Dutch politician.

Fragment: Hans van Mierlo, in his home IN FRANCE, watching the results of the referendum on the European Constitution: The vote was 'NO'.

As I already mentioned, not only Hans van Mierlo was surprised by the 'no-vote' from the Dutch and French. Because of these constitutional debates, more and more European and national politicians have become convinced that we have seriously neglected the cultural dimension of Europe; that despite the enormous increase of cultural mobility and exchange across Europe in the last ten years, an alarming number of European citizens still seem to experience Europe as a threat to their national cultural identity. And, that we have failed, as Wim Wenders stated two weeks ago in Berlin, at the conference entitled, 'A SOUL FOR EUROPE', "to articulate and visualize the essence of our European cultural strength in the way that the American myth conquered the world through the American film".

And only last week, President Barroso gave a speech in which he stated that the future of Europe depends to a large extent on culture. "Identities become blurred, he said, and a sense of belonging needs new concepts of (multiple) citizenship and identity, which are not spelled out in terms of being *against* something." So for the near future, the question of cultural identities seems to be a key issue.

At the same time, this question is one of the most sensitive, paradoxical and confusing dilemmas of our time. On the one hand, citizens hear their own politicians reassuringly talk about the Europe of cultural diversity, about the sacredness of the right of every member state to shape and preserve its own culture and cultural identity. On the other hand, it is becoming clearer and clearer to everyone that in order to turn a collaborative association between countries into a success, (to turn it into "a political union", as Helmut Kohl already advocated in the 1991 talks on the

Maastricht Treaty), we badly need something like a European cultural identity, or at least a strong common desire to share the same values.

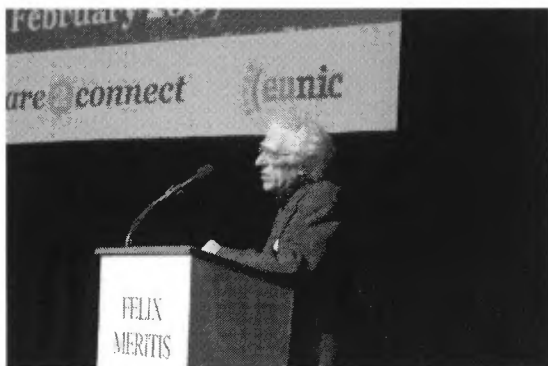
Recently, the Dutch Commission on the Dutch Canon delivered its report. In the Netherlands, the debates about the canon evolved from the feeling – justified or otherwise – that somehow, we had lost the perception of what it was that made us Dutch, that it had been blurred, perhaps even repressed. And out of a great unresolved integration problem evolved the necessity, and even the urgency, to do something about that deficiency. The canon was made to identify the historical and cultural events that have made the Netherlands what it is today, and its purpose is to add this collection of common events through education and culture to the divided spiritual luggage of the different groups in Dutch society.

In the same way that a national canon can provide an answer to national discord, a European canon can formulate conditions for a cultural solidarity for Europe.

SICA and the foreign cultural institutes based in Amsterdam have therefore taken the report of the Dutch commission to heart, in order to introduce the idea of a European Canon as a complement to the national canon. It is in this context that I now present Michaël Zeeman.

Tzvetan Todorov

European Identity



The European Union of today is an economic and administrative reality. Nevertheless, we all know that this group of nations lacks a strong identity of a kind comparable to the identities of its constituent parts. From all sides, calls have been heard for the assertion of a certain spiritual identity. To this end, it has also been suggested that culture should be the vehicle for the deficit in matters of the soul which characterises other domains of our lives. Culture is something we can at least be proud of! Indeed, consensus is much easier to achieve when one refers to Montaigne and Da Vinci, Shakespeare and Cervantes, or Mozart and Goethe than when remembering the great warriors or political leaders who have, after all, left their mark just as much on the history of Europe.

What purpose would the assertion of that spiritual identity achieve? It would make the Union stronger. Successful political activity requires the commitment of the men and women involved: because of it, they will be prepared to accept the hardships and sacrifices that it may involve. At the national level, we are familiar with this dependency: in times of peace, everyone pays premiums now in the expectation of assistance in the future; in times of war, some people risk their lives for the liberty of all. One does not willingly sacrifice oneself for the abolition of excise duties. One

does not willingly give up a part of one's income without feeling that one has something in common with those who benefit. In order to have a sense of European solidarity, we must also feel that we share a European identity.

Obviously, I am not the first person to ask questions about the characteristic features of European identity. In the aftermath of the First World War, the French poet and essayist Paul Valéry put forward an interpretation which has become very well known. The essence of Valéry's argument was that Europeans are people who, during the course of their history, have undergone three major influences: those that can be symbolised by the names of Rome, Jerusalem, and Athens. From Rome, we have the empire, with organised state power, law and institutions, and the role of the citizen. From Jerusalem, or rather Christianity, Europeans have inherited subjective morality, the examination of conscience, and universal justice. Finally, Athens has given them a taste for knowledge and rational argumentation, the ideal of harmony, and the concept of man as the measure of all things. Whoever lays claim to this triple inheritance, concluded Valéry, can rightly be described as a European. Valéry's interpretation is more elegant than it is original and it has, in turn, been a subject of numerous commentaries. I will concentrate in particular on one from a fervent European, the Swiss intellectual Denis de Rougemont. In numerous writings, most of them dating from the 1950s and 1960s, he argued for the European cause, and he also brought up the issue of our identity. The qualifications he advanced with respect to Valéry's thesis were of two kinds. On the one hand, the legacies identified by Valéry are richer and more complex than he suggested. On the other, Rougemont reminds us that these three influences were not the only ones to mark our history. European doctrines relating to good and evil come from the Iranian tradition; Europeans' idea of love comes from Arabic poetry; their mysticism is a legacy of the Celtic people who inhabited the continent at the same time as the Greeks and Romans.

We could also follow the road taken by Rougemont and add new elements to the model put forward by Valéry. We could place particular emphasis on the contributions made by the modern era, which seem to us to be equally essential for the cultural identity of our continent. The Age of Enlightenment, which brought

together and systematised European thought of the preceding centuries, would be centre-stage in that respect. The idea of autonomy, to which Kant paid such tribute, consists of the assertion that all human beings are capable of knowing the world on their own account and of deciding about their own destiny. Just as the people are sovereign in the democratic system, so can individuals become so in the personal domain; as a consequence, the very idea of democracy is transformed since it now guarantees the liberty of individuals, including liberty with respect to the power of the people. Furthermore, the 18th century saw the emergence of humanism, in other words the decision to consider man as the final goal of human action. The purpose of human existence on earth is no longer the search for the salvation of the soul in the world to come, but to attain happiness in this one. The acceptance of the legitimacy of plurality, whether in terms of religion, culture or of powers at the heart of a State, is another legacy left by the Enlightenment to European identity: and the latter has integrated the concept of pluralism. For all these reasons, the names of Athens, Rome and Jerusalem, when proclaimed as symbols of European identity, should be joined by those of London and Paris, Amsterdam and Geneva, Berlin and Vienna, Milan and Venice.

Having reached this point, it is inevitable that we should also feel a certain sense of pride at the beauty of Europe, and at the fortunate merger it has achieved with values that currently enjoy universal approval! At the same time, we feel a certain uneasiness: the very satisfaction that this picture gives us puts us on our guard. What if it is the present that determines this benevolent reading of the past? Are we not reiterating our contemporary ideal by settling for a search of how it has been prefigured by history? Prefiguration of this kind is certainly a reality, but it is far from being the whole picture. Placing the emphasis on it in preference to other elements results in a highly selective reading of the past. The idea of the equality of all human beings comes to us from European history. However, the idea of slavery is far from being a stranger to us. Tolerance is a European ideal, but fanaticism and religious wars are equally familiar. The respect for the autonomy of all is a European victory. However, much more prominent victories, the submission of foreign peoples to the will of the strongest, and even imperialism, are also part of the European

inheritance. In the rich and long history of Europe, every doctrine has provoked a backlash, and this does not make it any easier to decide what is truly European. Indeed, if the truth be told, those who call on Europe to repent for its shameful past of slavery and colonialism currently outnumber those who focus exclusively on the positive side. By selecting from the past only what suits the present, we betray the reality of history, replacing it by a pious history that complies with the demands of current political correctness.

The overly selective nature of this reading of history, reduced to the collection of "highlights" that one can gather from it, is not the only weak point to be found in the image with which we started. The very idea of basing a European identity exclusively on the past of this continent could be called into question. Should a collective identity be founded on a loyalty to the past or on plans for the future? If it is our current ideal that leads us to read the past selectively, why should we worry about this search, and why should we not be happy to just assert clearly our current vision of the world? A sharp awareness of the past is, admittedly, a characteristic of the European peoples, who live among immemorial traditions and the glorious vestiges of their history. However, taken to the extreme, this awareness results in a commemorative frenzy, an obsessive preoccupation with the past, and in an artificial "duty to remember". In those circumstances, history becomes a screen hiding the present rather than a light illuminating it.

And identity based exclusively on a European past is problematic because the peoples of the world do not have a mission to stay in the same place forever. In this way, they are just like ideas, which are hardly respecters of national boundaries. At present, the characteristics of European culture are also to be found outside Europe. Equally, non-European inventions can be found throughout Europe. For example, it is sometimes said that the novel is a specifically European genre. Although this was so in the past, it is no longer the case. Today, it is impossible to think about the novel without referring to its representatives in Russia, Latin America, North America or, more recently, Asia and Africa. The same thing applies to painting, philosophy, religion and all the other ingredients of culture: what was born in Europe returns to it, transformed by its stay elsewhere. At the same time,

Europe is eager to absorb foreign influences, from African masks to Chinese calligraphy, and from Buddhist traditions to the magic realism of the Caribbean. In a simultaneous development, people are more mobile today than they ever were, and it is difficult to see how one can exclude the contributions made to European identity by groups of recent emigrants.

In order to escape from the difficulty in which we find ourselves, I feel obliged to question the conceptual framework in which I operate. To begin with, it should be remembered that the collective identity in which individuals participate is never unique. Human beings have no difficulty in assuming several identities at the same time, and therefore in having multiple loyalties. Plurality of this kind is the rule, not the exception. At the same time as I am, for example, "French", I can also think of myself as the inhabitant of a particular region, as a man or woman, a teenager or a senior citizen, belonging to this or that class, exercising this or that profession, or as a practitioner of this or that religion. Fortunately, we do not need to worry about teaching individuals how to live with several identities: everybody manages this plurality of identities, juggling them in the air with the greatest of ease! Here, I will leave to one side my sexual, professional, and generational identity to focus on the relatively complex domain of a collective spiritual or cultural identity. For, once again, this is not a unique identity but a system of several overlapping loyalties.

An initial identity is forced upon us when we are incapable of making any decision for ourselves: during our infancy. The most obvious factor, but also the one that is probably the most decisive, is that we are inevitably born into a particular language, the one spoken by our parents or the people who take their place, and not into a sort of universal language. Well, language is not a neutral instrument; it is impregnated with thoughts, action, and judgements inherited from the past. It breaks down the world in a particular way and passes on this vision to us imperceptibly. Children cannot avoid picking it up, and this way of conceiving the world is passed on from generation to generation.

The spread of traits inherited during the course of infancy can vary widely. A language is shared by millions, tens of millions, or even hundreds of millions of people, but we also inherit other legacies of a more restricted kind from the group of

people with whom we grow up: modes of transport, ways of organising time and space, interpersonal relationships, relationships with the universe as a whole and with time, relationships covered by religions... In short, lifestyles. During infancy, we also adopt the dietary habits that will stay with us throughout our lives, we internalise certain landscapes, and we memorise the nursery rhymes, songs and melodies which will decorate our mental universe. This local sense of belonging is the "warmest", the most emotional of all, and we all draw on it for a precious part of our identity. A little later, the circle widens as children go to school, where they learn parts of the history of the country where they live, a number of major events from the past, the names of important figures and the most common symbols. They learn about the literature that is taught there, with the names of the scholars and artists who have been admitted to the collective memory.

Family, regional, linguistic and religious bonds, and bonds of memory do not overlap, but they have in common the fact that they have been forced on us during infancy rather than being chosen. How should one designate the entity characterised by this first collection of traits particular to the individual? In the past, the term used in these circumstances was "custom"; the preferred term these days is culture. It is used in a neutral anthropological sense, in other words one in which there is no value judgement. Every human group has a culture. In essence, this means a shared language and a collection of shared references. These elements make up what has been called an "essential culture", in other words the mastery of shared codes which allow people to understand the world and to enter into relationships with others. This is a basic culture on which we graft our own knowledge in the different domains of the mind: art or science, religion or philosophy. Individuals who are required to live in this group but who fail to master the culture are handicapped and, as a result, marginalised.

A second type of integration is the one that corresponds to the country where we live, in other words to our identity as citizens. An overlap between these first two relationships is possible but certainly not inevitable. When it is present, we speak of a national identity. Nevertheless, there are numerous countries where people speak more than one language, even putting aside the practices of immigrants. And there

are also the countries where people from the South act differently – have a different culture – from people in the North. It should be added that the sense of nationality in Europe has undergone a clear transformation compared to the 19th and early 20th centuries. The reasons for this are well known: one of them is the result of the catastrophes to which nationalism led during that same period, the other consists of the steps taken to prevent the repetition of those catastrophes, in other words the very creation of the European Union. That does not mean that the national level has been eliminated. However, the content is no longer the same. These days, when one refers to one's sense of national belonging, one is thinking primarily about a wider sense of social solidarity. The premiums paid by all citizens make medical assistance available to those without the necessary means; the work done by active citizens allows senior citizens to receive a pension, and it is their salary deductions that are used to establish a fund for helping the unemployed. Attachment to a country of which one is a citizen is a civic matter rather than the emotional bond that it was in the original culture. One sees the difference between the two in the case of emigration: I can change country, become a citizen of another country, and therefore transfer my solidarity; on the other hand, my childhood will always be the same.

Let us turn now to a third type of collective identity, where we will find that, as a general rule, we adhere to a set of moral and political values. Here, we rediscover some of the elements referred to above in the restatement of the European legacy, but now separated from their original context. And for a reason: it is not important to us where these values come from; what counts is their validity. We are supporters of a democratic regime, universal suffrage, equal rights for all individuals, the rule of law, the separation of Church and State, the protection of minorities, the freedom to search for truth and to aspire to happiness, and to human rights. We support these values because we believe they are good, not because they are our exclusive property. Incidentally, they are not. All these values have universal application. Indeed, people lay claim to them, in various combinations, across the globe. Rather than an identity (the word refers to something that already exists), one should be talking here about principles or shared intentions.

This set of values is particularly precious to us: protecting it is probably the only cause that would justify risking our lives. Nobody can take from us the legacy we have been given in our infancy. Our public loyalties as citizens can change without necessarily leading to suffering. By contrast, the moral and political principles that we support are both fragile and irreplaceable. These principles can be shared by all peoples but are proper to some of them only. They are independent of our private culture, and of the State of which we are the citizens. It is in the name of these principles that, to take a few examples from the present, that we now vigorously defend the freedom of women to organise their private lives as they see fit; or the principle of secularism, understood as the separation of Church and State, as the exclusive restriction of religious faith to the private domain, and therefore also as the freedom to criticise religions; or the prohibition of physical violence, whether domestic or in the name of the State, as well as torture. It will be clear that, on occasion, this set of values conflicts with certain elements of the traditional culture. For example, the principle of the physical integrity of the individual is violated by the practice of female circumcision. It will also be clear that, in cases such as these, laws based on moral and political values should take precedence over the claims of culture.

These various identities – and others – generally co-exist without too many difficulties. The question that needs to be addressed now is: what place is there for a European spiritual identity in the face of these cultural, civic and universal identities? Is there a place for that identity? For there is no question of relinquishing the identities described here. Just as the European Union does not intend to become a new nation state replacing the old nations, but presents itself as an alliance to which the existing nations consent freely, the spiritual identity of Europe will not efface specific cultures or local memories. So what significance will it have? The unity of European culture can be found, I believe, in its capacity to manage the different regional, national, religious, and cultural identities that make it up, by granting them a new status and by benefiting from this very plurality. It will consist, not of a list of proper names, but of the adoption of a single attitude towards diversity.

We can now return to the issue of the cultural heritage of Europe, no longer to read anything specific into it, but to insist on its diversity. From the outset, it can be seen that our ancestors soon mastered the art of confrontation between different systems of thought. Christianity is a religion grafted onto a previous religion – Judaism – which it adopted, and adapted, for its own purposes. Greek thought, for its part, has come down to us through the intermediary of Roman civilisation, which also undergoes a process of reinterpretation. With the Renaissance, there was a proliferation of attempts to amalgamate and harmonise these two major traditions with their hybrid backgrounds. This was a new move in the history of conceptual conversion and adaptation that nevertheless failed to disguise the multiplicity of the sources involved. This learning process taught Europeans to understand how other cultures are organised and to complete successfully their plans of conquest and colonisation. And also, in their own back yard, to adapt rapidly to changing circumstances.

The plurality in question is not solely a historical process; it is also a synchronic phenomenon. It must be pointed out that, compared to other parts of the world, Europe stands out as a result of the multiplicity of states it contains. Comparing it to China, which occupies approximately the same surface area, one cannot but be struck by the contrast: a single state on one side currently faces about forty independent states on the other. It is this multiplicity, that might have been thought a handicap, that the thinkers of the Enlightenment saw as one of Europe's advantages. It was precisely the comparison with China that they thought was most illustrative. In an essay published in 1742 under the title *Of the Rise and Progress of the Arts and Sciences*, the Scottish philosopher David Hume explains that a fund of inventiveness and creativity that was originally present in China was stifled by the presence of an immense united empire, where the uncontested domination of authority, tradition and established reputations led to intellectual stagnation. Contrary to received wisdom, strength here is not to be found in unity! Hume is perhaps the first thinker who sees the identity of Europe as being characterised, not so much by a trait shared by all (the legacy of the Roman empire, the Christian

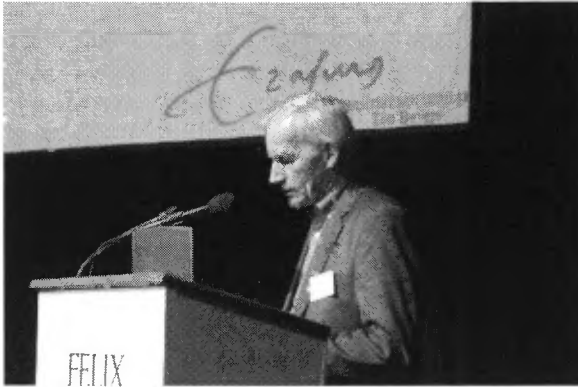
religion), but by its very plurality, not of individuals, but of the countries making up the continent.

We still need to identify the alchemy with which we can transform, not lead into gold, but a feature that in itself is negative (difference), into a positive quality. And we still need to understand how plurality can give birth to unity. Because, however paradoxical this may seem, unity, a single way of granting the same status to differences, is the key issue. That is why the European model cannot in any way be reduced to what is known as multi-culturalism or communitarism, in other words to the simple cohabitation, albeit peaceful, of different identities. Learning tolerance, the observation of a difference which does not generate hostility, is only the first step in this direction. Secularism, which I mentioned above, is already a more elaborate form since it provides everyone with a personal domain that is subject neither to the power of churches or that of states, and organises the co-existence of the different religions in the heart of a single framework.

The next step, which is even more difficult, is to learn a critical attitude: not belonging to this or that national community frees us from the illusion that the choices made by those communities are "natural" and allows us to establish a certain distance with respect to them. The Europeans worthy of Hume would be those who are not content to tolerate the differences with others, but who establish a presence on the basis of this absence of identity: that of a vigilant critical mind that is not daunted by any taboo but allows itself to conduct an impartial examination of all traditions based on what all men share, in other words reason. The outcome of this process would be the acquisition of the ability to see things provisionally from the point of view of one's neighbour, whose opinions are different from one's own. This allows one to adopt a position that takes into account the difference between one person and another. Kant has suggested that this is not a superhuman task: "In itself, there is nothing more natural", he asserted, than "thinking while seeing things from the point of view of every human being". In this way, one manages to integrate differences in a superior type of unity.

Today, the European Union has turned its back on attempts to achieve unity by force, as in the days of Charlemagne and Charles the Fifth, of Napoleon and of

Hitler, and is now inspired by the pluralist model that the Enlightenment has left to us. The unique road that has led to the establishment of the European Union based on a plurality of autonomous and consenting States has also produced an identity that is both unique and complex. It is a political entity among others, with stable borders, and not a substitute for the United Nations, destined to acquire its neighbours one after the other until it becomes a universal State. The European Union is comparable in that respect to other large entities active at the global scale such as China, India, Russia or the United States. Nevertheless, its distinguishing feature is that it brings together extremely diverse individuals at the heart of a single nation. Europe recognises not only the rights of individuals but also those of the historical, cultural and political communities that are the member states of the Union. Its spiritual identity, in turn, cannot be reduced to the sum of its parts any more than it can be defined in a purely negative way on the basis of their variety or the differences between them. This identity is derived from the fact that it has learnt to convert the negative into a positive and plurality into unity.

Cultural education and the Canon in European Countries

An important field of study in the sociology of culture of today is labelled as transnational cultural exchange. In this field of study I would also locate my research question: What happened with the cultural canon in the educational system – in particular in the subjects of music and art at secondary schools - in a period in which national cultures in many fields were confronted with the blurring and crossing of boundaries?

The term 'canon' relates to historical facts and cultural products in words, images, and sounds, selected by experts, that together constitute a framework of what is called a common culture. Although canons are tenacious, they do change over time, mostly in slow motion. A canon functions as a standard in education and other fields, and determines what it is necessary to teach, to learn, and to know. The latest demonstration of a periodical revival of the discussion about the canon demonstrates the current reflection in Europe on the role of educational institutions in maintaining and reinforcing the national cultural identity. A national historical and cultural canon is supposed to strengthen the awareness of belonging to the same community, see for instance the present efforts of the Dutch and Danish

governments to favour the re-canonization of the curricula in the educational system.

What happens to the cultural canons of different nations in times of change depends highly on the social, economic, and cultural history of each country. All the different national flagships and standard bearers have shaped and polished the cultural repertoires of these countries and have found their place in the national cultural canon. They have played their role in the canon construction and they will play their role in the canon de-construction, too. In addition to this line of reasoning, I decided also to use a formal sociological perspective. A country's size and centrality in the core-periphery structure are two of these formal sociological elements. I expected that larger countries that once had or still have a dominant position in their region or even in the world are more conscious of their cultural role and reputation and, therefore, adhere more to their national cultural canon, although larger countries also undergo the influences of globalisation. As net exporters in the field of culture, however, they are less inclined to absorb art and culture of the periphery in the curricula of their educational systems. I expected that a small country would be more inclined to de-canonize its educational program than larger countries, for two reasons. First, a small country is in many ways, including culturally, strongly dependent on other countries, and, secondly, the cultural heritage of a small country seldom has an exemplary role for other countries, which means that small countries lack centrality. Three large European countries and two small countries were chosen to explore further these sociological expectations: Germany, France, England, and Denmark and the Netherlands.

The three main research questions are:

- 1) How much attention is given to own national culture versus the culture of others in cultural education?
- 2) How much attention is given to art and music from the past versus that of the present?
- 3) How much attention is given to classical art and music versus popular art and music?

I decided to choose for the final exams as the best indicators of what pupils have to know. Inspection of the exams between 1990 and 2005/6 will show us the extent to which emphasis is put on a country's own culture or the culture of others, on the past or on the present, on high or popular culture. In addition to these research questions another element of the canon will be discussed, the hierarchy of reputations. How much attention is given to which composers and artists in each of the five countries? The answer to this question will show us the national rankings. A comparison of these ranking lists makes it possible to create a new one: A European hierarchy of canonized composers and artists, at least in the exams of secondary schools in the five countries involved in this research.

Attention given to country's own culture versus the culture of others

The first question to be answered was the following: How much attention is given to own national culture? The main findings in the exams of music are the following (see Table 1):

Table 1: Percentage of items devoted to own and each other's national music in the examination papers on music for secondary schools in five European countries from 1990 – 2005/6 (percentages in red are references to own national music)

Items on own and each other's national music in exams 1990-2005/6

<i>References to nationality</i>	Germany %	England %	France %	Denmark %	Netherlands %
Germany	37.3	18.3	13.2	5.0	11.5
England	5.2	20.3	2.9	13.5	15.6
France	5.0	8.8	20.6	0.8	8.9
Netherlands	-	1.0	-	-	9.3
Denmark	0.4	0.1	-	5.4	0.3
Austria	27.4	18.7	30.9	23.8	15.2
Italy	6.2	10.9	5.9	4.4	4.1
Spain	-	0.3	1.5	-	0.4
Russia	4.5	6.3	2.9	-	4.4
USA	2.5	7.5	5.1	41.0	17.0
Others	11.5	7.8	17.0	6.1	13.3
Total N items	402	1560	136	480	270

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Please, look at the bold figures in the table: these are the percentages of items devoted to own national music. The three large countries differ substantially from the two small countries in attention given to own national music. Denmark and the Netherlands are much more devoted to music from other countries. There is a total or nearly total lack of references to Dutch and Danish music in the exams of the three large countries. Danish and Dutch composers apparently contributed little to the musical heritage in the view of the examining bodies of these countries. Denmark and the Netherlands have the same opinions about each other's music.

Table 1 presents also the amount of reciprocity of attention among the five countries. The German contribution to the great tradition of western music is recognized in England, France, Denmark and the Netherlands, yet their appreciation of the Austrian composers is higher still. Only Germany put its own composers before the Austrians. The a-symmetry between the English emphasis on English music (20.5%) with the German (5.2%) and French (2.9%) devotion to English

music demonstrates, obviously, strong nation's tendency to overestimate its own national culture as seen through the eyes of the others.

In the Netherlands and Denmark, the percentages of items devoted to English and American music are substantially higher than in Germany and France, but only with regard to jazz and pop music.

France and England showed a preference for their own musical traditions by devoting many more items to these than to German music. Germany and Austria together accounted for as much as 64.7 % of all items on music in the German exams, 44.1 % in France, and 26.7 % (the lowest percentage) in the Netherlands.

Table 2: Percentage of items devoted to own and each other's national art in the examination papers on art for secondary schools in five European countries from 1990 – 2005/6 (percentages in red are references to own national art)

<i>References to nationality</i>	Germany %	England %	France %	Denmark %	Netherlands %
Germany	39.2	7.1	8.7	7.1	8.0
England	4.6	29.2	3.7	2.5	6.8
France	17.7	15.6	43.2	14.1	15.4
Denmark	-	-	-	46.5	0.4
Netherlands	5.5	3.8	3.3	3.0	32.5
Italy	6.8	16.9	4.6	2.4	10.8
Spain	4.0	3.4	7.1	6.1	2.8
USA	8.9	7.1	19.9	6.6	9.5
Others	13.3	16.9	9.6	12.2	13.2
Total N items	474	3220	241	1883	779

Table 2 shows us the results of the exams in visual arts.

It is striking that all countries are strongly focused on national art. Nearly 50% of the examination questions in Denmark refer to Danish art, while the other countries do not even spend one question on Danish art, except the Netherlands. If the Dutch society did not have its Golden Age it would be as much invisible in the exams of the other countries as Denmark.

With regard to the national dimension in the exams on art, it was clear from the French examinations that, from the French point of view, there are only two centers of art in the world: the French and the American art worlds. Germany gave relatively more attention to its own art than might be expected considering its contribution to the history of art in a broader perspective. In any case, England, France, Denmark and the Netherlands devoted a considerably smaller number of items to German art than did Germany itself.

Another aspect of the first research question was the role of non-Western items in the national exams. Western culture includes art and music from European countries, the United States, Canada, and Australia. Apart from some general questions about differences between Western and non-Western art and music or the influences of non-Western cultures on Western culture - remarkably, always this one-way approach - very few items were found in the papers which referred to a particular artist or work of art from non-Western areas, as Table 3 shows.

Table 3: Percentage of items devoted to Western and non-Western art and music in the papers on art and music for secondary schools in five European countries from 1990-2005/6.

Items devoted to Western and non-Western art and music					
<i>Reference to</i>	Germany	England	France	Denmark	Netherlands
	%	%	%	%	%
The West	99.4	94.2	98.9	98.7	98.2
The Rest	0.6	5.7	1.1	1.3	1.8
Total N items	867	4780	377	2569	1049

The relatively high number of items on non-Western culture found in the English examinations concerned for 75% items on archaeological and ancient art (and architecture).

From these findings it may be concluded, on the one hand, that those who are concerned about the declining position of Western culture in the national examinations are too pessimistic and, on the other, that the protagonists and propagandists of cultural relativism up until now have been less influential in reforming the content of the exams than might generally be thought. A second conclusion is that throughout the period 1990 – 2005/6, in which the debates on multiculturalism in the five countries were intensified and expanded, the content of the papers remained much the same.

The past and the present in the question papers

My second question concerned the balance between the past and the present in the papers.

Table 4: Percentage of items on art and music related to historical periods in the papers on art and music for secondary schools in five European countries from 1990 – 2005/6.(the highest percentages are in red)

Reference to period	Germany		England		France		Denmark		Netherlands	
	Music	Art	Music	Art	Music	Art	Music	Art	Music	Art
>1500	7.5	21.9	6.6	31.8	2.9	2.1	1.7	1.1	4.8	8.6
1500-1700	4.5	5.1	11.9	8.9	3.7	1.2	1.5	1.6	4.1	5.1
1700-1850	46.8	3.8	35.9	11.9	55.2	2.9	35.0	5.6	25.9	6.7
1850-1950	28.6	45.4	32.1	32.9	24.3	44.0	21.3	55.1	20.4	35.0
1950-2006	12.7	23.8	13.5	14.5	16.9	49.8	40.6	36.4	44.8	44.5
Total N items	402	474	1560	3220	136	241	480	1883	270	779

Table 4 shows that, with respect to music, the period 1700-1850 - that is, the canon of Western music with Bach, Haydn, Mozart, Beethoven, Schubert, and Schumann as leading composers - held a dominant position in the papers in Germany, England, and France, but a much weaker and no longer dominant position in the

Netherlands and Denmark. The high percentages of items devoted to music composed after 1950 in the Dutch and Danish exams concern pop music. With respect to art, the highest percentages of items (for Germany and England) were concentrated in the period 1850 – 1950, when France was the centre of European art, and very high percentages in the period 1950 - 2004 for France, the Netherlands and Denmark, three countries with a strong cultural policy of supporting contemporary visual artists.

Taken both subjects of art and music together, the cultural past was given the least attention in the Dutch and Danish exams compared to the exams of the other countries. Is it typically Dutch and Danish or a characteristic of small countries to demonstrate a lower interest in canonized art and music?

High versus popular culture in the question papers

My third question was connected with the discussion about the role of popular culture in the curriculum and the exams on music and art in secondary schools. An answer only for the subject music is reported. What is the proportion of attention given in the papers to classical versus popular music?

Considering the enormous expansion of music in the second half of the 20th century, especially in the field of entertainment, jazz, popular music, and world music, it is reasonable to expect to find a reflection of this development in the exams throughout the period 1990 – 2005/6.

Table 5: Percentage of items devoted to musical styles after 1950 in the examination papers on music for secondary schools in five European countries from 1990-2005/6. (highest percentages are in red)

<i>Reference to styles</i>	Germany	England	France	Denmark	Netherlands
Classical	66.7	46.4	82.6	9.2	14.0
Jazz	-	4.3	4.3	21.5	3.3
Entertainment	7.8	19.0	4.3	2.6	26.4
Pop	25.5	13.3	-	66.2	47.9
World music	-	14.7	8.7	-	8.3
Total N items	51	211	23	195	121

The analysis of items on music after 1950 presented in Table 5 shows that in Germany and France, the lion's share of all items devoted to music after 1950 was reserved for classical music, from time immemorial the canonized music. The process of de-canonization of classical music was less visible in the exams in these countries than in England, the Netherlands and Denmark. Items on popular music in the German exams turned up only in the papers of the former East German federal state of Mecklenburg-Vorpommern, the most Anglo-Saxon-oriented state of Germany. England and the USA are the cradles of many popular music varieties that were proliferated worldwide during the 20th century. In the transnational exchange of cultural products, the Netherlands was found to be the most receptive of the four countries of Anglo-Saxon popular music. In the Dutch and Danish exams, the highest proportion of items on music after 1950 proved to be dedicated to popular music. These countries are probably the first in Europe that have

implemented such significant changes in the content of the national exams on music. Although the canon of classical music is still present in the exams of both countries, the balance has been changed in favor of popular music. Is this an isolated phenomenon or are the Dutch and Danish exams the heralds of a creeping process of de-canonization of classical music that is already taking place in many countries in and outside Europe? The latter assumption is more plausible. First, in many countries, including France, Germany, and England, the canon is controversial, not only because of its present content, but also because of the idea of having a canon as such. Second, popular music has long been accepted as part of the music curriculum in many countries worldwide. Third, in the exams in France, Germany, and England, while the number of items devoted to popular music is modest, some questions on the subject are, nevertheless, posed. Therefore, the conclusion is justified that the process of de-canonization of classical music will continue at a varying pace within and between countries. In other words, the cultural classification systems, and the canons as an example of these, will become more democratic, more market-oriented, and more differentiated.

Table 6: Top-10 of composers after 1950 in the examination papers on music for secondary schools in five European countries from 1990-2005/6.

Top-10 of composers after 1950				
Germany	England	France	Denmark	Netherlands
Ligeti	Bernstein	Ligeti	The Beatles	Sting/Webber
Penderecki	Walton	Berio	Parker	Parsons/
Webber	Tippett	Cage	Queen/ Rolling Stones	Elton John/ Schonberg, C./ Brubeck/
Rihm	The Beatles	Pärt	Pink Floyd	Ramirez/10cc/
Lennon	Messiaen/Berio		Sting/ Franklin	Copland/ Andriessen, L./
Reich	Cage/Pheloung/		Pärt/Presley/ Webber	Simon/Queen
Messiaen	Red Stripe Ebony Steelband			
Jenkins	Oasis		Supremes Stan Getz	
49.0%	43.2%	47.8%	41.2%	21.4%

Table 6 gives us the names of the composers **after 1950** in the exams. Denmark and the Netherlands show us the dominant role of popular music in the top-10 of composers referred to in the exams.

A canonical hierarchy of composers

We now want to know more about the persons involved in the question papers. This is another element of the canon, the rank positions of composers and artists in the exams. Who are chosen and how frequently? The answer to these questions will show us the national rankings, the top ten lists.

The ranking positions were based on the percentages of items devoted to a composer/artist in the exams. The criterion was: at least 2% of all items should be dedicated to a composer in order to become part of the top 10 ranking list.

The composers in the top tens of the exams of the five countries were found to be mainly the same as shown in the next table.

Table 7: Rank positions of composers in the examination papers on music for secondary schools in five European countries from 1990 – 2005/6. (National composers in bold)

Germany	England	France	Denmark	Netherlands
Bach	Bach	Mozart	Mozart	Mozart
Beethoven	Haydn	Haydn/Schubert/ Schumann	Ellington	Bach
Mozart	Beethoven	Chopin	Parker	Haydn
Schubert	Mozart	Beethoven	Baie/ Beethoven	Schubert/Beethoven
Schumann	Händel	Bach/Ravel	Vivaldi/ Schubert	
Brahms	Schubert	Debussy/Händel/ Brahms/Cage/ Berlioz/Ligeti	Bach	
Haydn/Debussy	Strawinsky		Haydn	
Mendelssohn	Brahms		Armstrong	
Wagner/ Strawinsky	Schumann		Händel/ The Beatles	
	Debussy		Queen	
48.8%	33.9%	56.3%	58.6%	18.9%

These are the Austrian and German composers of the 18th century and the early 19th century: Bach, Beethoven, Mozart, Haydn, and Schubert. Even in the exams of Denmark, although on different ranking positions, because of the examination rule in this country that a balanced attention should be given to composers of classical, jazz and pop music.

A remarkable finding was that the 2% criterion was achieved very quickly in the five countries. That means that the total ranking list looks like a landscape with few

peaks, no plateaus, and vast lowland. Denmark, France and Germany show the highest peaks, suggesting greater dedication to the canonical composers in the music exams than England and the Netherlands. (See in the last row the percentages of all items devoted to the top 10-composers in the different countries). This high concentration of items dedicated to a few composers support the theory of 'winner gets all'.

The making of a European canonical hierarchy of composers

Table 8 shows us the European top ten, deduced from the national ranking lists of the previous table.

Table 8: European Top-10 of composers, deduced from the national rankings of composers in the examination questions on music for secondary schools in five European countries from 1990-2005/6.

European University of Music, Berlin

European Top-10 of composers

- 1. Bach/Mozart
- 2. Beethoven
- 3. Haydn
- 4. Schubert
- 5. Schumann
- 6. Brahms/Händel
- 7. Strawinsky
- 8. Mendelssohn/Debussy
- 9. Bartok
- 10. Ravel



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A measure of how much attention was given to this group of highly ranked composers in each of the five countries showed that more than one third of all items in the German and French exams was dedicated to Bach, Mozart, Beethoven, Haydn, Schubert, and Schumann . Such a concentration of only six composers who determine such a substantial part of the content of the papers justifies the conclusion that a canon still functions in the music education of these countries, more strongly than in England (25%), Denmark (27%) and the Netherlands (19%). Four composers of the first half of the 20th century succeeded in getting a position in the European top ten: Strawinsky, Debussy, Ravel, and Bartok. The dominant role of Germany and Austria was lost in this period. Not England nor the USA, but France seems to have taken over this position from Germany and Austria with Debussy, Ravel, and the Paris-based Strawinsky.

A canonical hierarchy of visual artists

The top ten of visual artists mentioned in the exams of the five countries was as follows:

Table 9: Rank position of visual artists in the examination papers on art for secondary schools in five European countries from 1990-2005/6. (National artists in bold)

Germany	England	France	Denmark	Netherlands
Dürer	Michelangelo	Picasso	Munch	Picasso
Picasso	Le Corbusier	Le Corbusier	Kvium	Bernini
Gropius	Frank Loyd Wright	Matisse	Picasso	Rodin
Moore	Picasso	Segal	Krøyer	Boccioni
Matisse	Mackintosh	De Kooning	Monet	Michelangelo
Le Corbusier	Rodin	Schwitters	Dali/Magritte	Ingres
	Van Gogh	Lichtenstein	Matisse	Matisse
	Bernini	Giacometti	Van Gogh	
	Gainsborough	Warhol	Renoir	
	Gaudi	Léger	Strøbek	
22.5%	10.9%	27.7%	28.8%	9%

It is remarkable that only 6 out of the 36 artists mentioned above belong to a period before 1900. The complete top ten of the French exams proved to be artists of the 20th century. These results are in sharp contrast with the findings in the music exams. Another point of difference is that the consensus on the top-ranking positions was much weaker in the field of the visual arts. Furthermore, the top ten of the visual artists in each of the countries accounted for a much lower percentage of the total number of items in the exams than did the top ten of the composers, which means: less concentration. (The percentages in the last row are much lower in this table than in the table of the composers) This could be interpreted as a signal of a weaker canon in the exams on visual arts, one that is, again, weaker in England, Denmark and the Netherlands than in Germany and France.

The making of a European canonical hierarchy of visual artists

The European canon of visual artists in the exams, deduced from the national hierarchies in the same way as was done for the composers, was found to be as follows:

Table 10: European Top-10 of visual artists, deduced from the national rankings of artists in the examination questions on art for secondary schools in five European countries from 1990-2005/6.

<p>Examined University: Rotterdam, Reimbursement of travel</p>	<div data-bbox="239 619 814 662" data-label="Section-Header"> <h2>European Top-10 of visual artists</h2> </div> <div data-bbox="194 735 524 1134" data-label="List-Group"> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1. Picasso • 2. Le Corbusier • 3. Matisse • 4. Michelangelo • 5. Rodin • 6. Van Gogh • 7. Kirchner • 8. Cézanne/Rembrandt • 9. Giacometti • 10. Brancusi/Mondriaan </div> <div data-bbox="614 1066 920 1145" data-label="Text"> <p><i>Cézanne</i> <small>PROFESSOR OF ART HISTORY</small></p> </div>
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The representation of the Netherlands, with three artists in the European top ten, is remarkable at first sight. How is it possible that a small country with a relatively modest position in the global cultural exchange is more visible in the top ten than artists from culturally dominant countries like Germany and England? One of the conditions for establishing a reputation is recognition by significant others. Van

Gogh and Mondriaan owed their international reputations more to their decision to leave the Netherlands than to their Dutch origin. This aspect of transnational cultural exchange – the emigration of composers and artists – is a relatively new and promising field of research, called the geography of art.

Germany and France are better represented in both canons than are England, Denmark and the Netherlands. England and Denmark are invisible in the European canon of the visual arts and Danish and Dutch composers are absent in the canon of music.

A striking difference between the two canons was found to be the focus on the past. While the musical canon relies heavily on the musical heritage of the 18th century and the early 19th century, the canon of the visual arts is almost completely focused on 20th-century art.

5. Conclusion

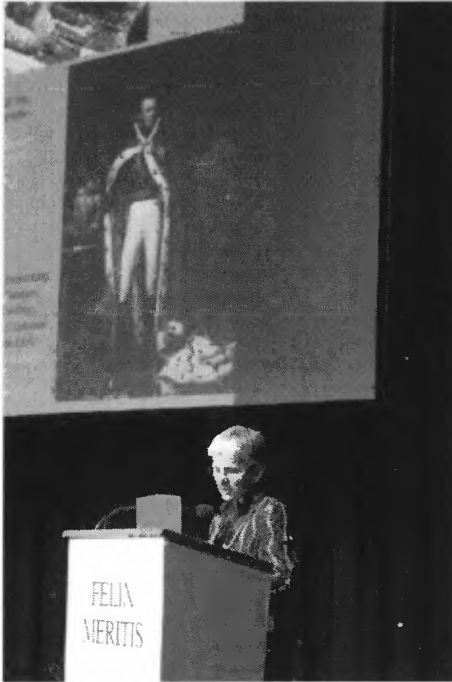
The presence of a cultural canon can be interpreted as the extent to which in the exam papers emphasis is put on the country's own culture or the culture of others, on the past or on the present, on high or popular culture.

Content analysis of the exam papers showed that Germany, France, and England give the most attention to their own culture, to the culture of the past, and to high culture. Germany and France do this to a greater extent than England and Denmark. The Netherlands deviates in all three respects. Unlike large countries with a strong cultural past and a dominant position in transnational cultural relations, a small country is inclined to watch and to follow the cultural centers in the world, and to emphasize and to join what is new instead of nourishing its own cultural past. Because of their position in the transnational cultural world, small countries are more flexible, adaptable, and globally oriented.

The canon is adrift in each of the five countries, but in different tempi, *adagio* and *andante* in large countries, and *'allegro ma non troppo'* in small countries, but nowhere *ad libitum*. And with respect to the European cultural canon? Look and listen, and you will see and hear the canonized artist and composers everywhere, even in the school exams.

Susan Legêne

The Dutch canon and Europe



Please see for references and examples on the Dutch European Canon
www.entoen.nu

1 The Münster Treaty of 1648 and the idea of global history

Let me start with a painting by the Dutch artist Rob Scholte. In 1998 the Dutch celebrated the peace treaty which 350 years earlier had been signed between the seven United Provinces of the Dutch Republic, and Spain. Rob Scholte had been

commissioned to make a painting about this theme for the Princes' Court, *het Prinsenhof*, in Delft. This is where William the Silent, the first leader of the Dutch rebellion against the King of Spain, had been killed in 1584. This Princes' Court is a museum today, and its main focus in the permanent exhibitions is on Dutch golden age history and culture. The wall carpets, oil paintings, Delft Blue and Chinaware, the creaking flooring, the supposed bullet hole in the wall near the staircase that reminds of the assault; in short the entire location presents a beautiful chromo tope for a historical narrative. This is strengthened by life performances of chamber music; mainly Renaissance and Baroque early music.

Rob Scholte provided the museum with a contrapuntal image of Dutch Golden Age history and culture. The immediate cause for Scholte's painting was the commemoration of the Münster Treaty. However, and I quote an interview from 1998, Scholte decided 'to depict Peace in more general terms.' Only the Dutch and Spanish flag, as well as the Prince Maurits hat from the Prinsenhof collection, which you can see here being carried by Gandhi on a spear, directly refer to the 1648 peace between the Netherlands and Spain.

When we now reread Scholte's own explanation of the painting, it becomes clear that the celebration, only eight years ago, already has become something of the recent past. While explaining all the elements of the painting, Scholte also mentioned the prominent European lock. It was open, he said, as a reference to Dutch tolerance. However, he stated: 'Europe is becoming more and more a Fortress. As the 80 years war also was a war between Catholics and protestants, and between the broad minded people and the strict ones, so soon the broad minded Netherlands will get in trouble in Europe, because of its tolerant policies.' (*NRC-Handelsblad* 8-10-1998) This was his idea about the position of the Netherlands in Europe, eight years ago.

Last year while participating in the Committee for the Development of a Dutch culture and history canon, Scholte's multi-layered pictorial approach of the past

came in my mind as well. Scholte approaches Dutch history as an aspect of global history. We see this in some of his other works as well, like the mural in the unhappy Holland Village of Nagasaki. I mean the series *Point of no return*, from 1996, about the Dutch colonial and slave trade. In each of these works significant images of the Dutch past are placed in a global, even in a planetary context.

We considered that approach (not exactly these images, but this approach) in our deliberations, because the *visualization* of a 'Dutch canon' formed a crucial element in our idea of a canon. So let me first briefly explain how we conceptualized this canon.

Basically the canon we designed, exists in a tableau with 50 so-called windows that are supposed to open up at 50 telling aspects of Dutch history, culture, landscape and society. These are presented next to each other on a poster designed for children aged 10 to 12 in primary school as the first target group. The term "windows" of course hints at the role of ICT, and next to the poster we published two books and an interactive website, for teachers, parents and cultural institutions.

Together, the books, poster and website of this canon suggest topics for lessons in history, language and literature, religion and philosophy of life, science, constitutional history, geography, environmental issues, art, and/or economy. The theme's on the poster do not offer a concise art or history curriculum, although a historical chronology forms their frame. Basically, however, the themes are placed in the framework of contemporary Dutch society, where each window can be approached in a diachronic way.

2 King William I and the idea of European history

As such, this canon aims in the first place to help structure a debate *about* Dutch history, culture and society. It is meant to be a point of contact between teachers and parents, between school and academia, the education system and the politics. And besides it intends to function as a cross media concept, which offers an

organized place for experiments in ICT for education where teachers instead of the commercial firms, are in control of content.

In this approach of the canon as “a structure of windows”, Scholte's pictorial strategy of historicized statements loaded with interpretation, would not have worked. The topics mentioned in the canon stand next to each other, and how and what story they tell as an ensemble, depends on the story teller and his or her interaction with the listeners. When I now will illustrate this here with some examples, I would like to stress that these are *my* examples, my European reading of this poster, and not an ‘official explanation’ of it.

Europe is present in the poster, it is visualized not as Rob Scholte's opened lock, but as a Euro. It provides a window view on the history of the European Union and the Dutch: from the European Coal and Steel Community and the Rome Treaties, until the recent referendum on the draft European Constitution. But of course, Europe is also visible behind almost each other window: the book printing and cartography, the wars on land and sea or the peace keeping missions, colonialism and slavery, the economic developments from the so-called Hanseatic League to the Port of Rotterdam, the railway, social security, archaeology, philosophy, art, law, and a lot more could be mentioned, related to almost all 50 windows. All these elements of a *Dutch* story developed in the context of *European* developments. They refer to what has been labelled as the spiritual and moral heritage of the Union in one of the first clauses of the Charter of fundamental rights of the European Union that was signed in 2000. Other windows, like the archaeological ones, illustrate what the draft European constitution describes as Europe's cultural heritage.

In this European *Dutch* story one window deserves a special mentioning in my view: the window on William I, almost in the middle of the poster. After the Congress of Vienna, which settled the post-Napoleon European affairs in 1815, William was appointed King of the Netherlands (which at that time included Belgium). As such he

became an exponent of the process of European nation building which is relevant until today. The current discussions about Turkey and Europe, or about the NATO, the not-so-easy relationships between the Mediterranean Countries of Europe, North Africa and the Middle East, the recent wars in the Balkans, the political changes in the European part of the former Soviet Union: all these tensions in one way or another have roots in this 'turn of the eighteenth and nineteenth century history'.

Relevant in this European story are, in the Dutch case not only the split up of the Kingdom after 1831, when Belgium quitted, the development of constitutional monarchy, and the industrialization. Relevant as well, and maybe even more so, is the change in colonial policies which took place from 1815 onwards.

Let me elaborate somewhat on this theme. With the emergence of the Kingdom of the Netherlands, the days of Dutch trade colonialism in the East and the West, were over. In stead, the Dutch developed clear cut expansionist policies which by force and by treaty brought the various regions and islands of the Indonesian Archipelago under Dutch colonial rule. During the most part of the nineteenth century extensive use was made of various systems of forced labour: from the cultivation system in the East to slavery in the West. All these developments are represented in the proposed Dutch canon, because both from a Dutch and a European perspective, understanding the nature of the many connections between modern nation building and colonialism is crucial to any approach of today's postcolonial societies. The colonial past of the nineteenth and twentieth century and our reflections on that past today, form a crucial historical influence on ideas about self and other, about citizenship, belonging, inclusion and exclusion with which we try to come to terms today, and which play a role in the canon debate as well. Chirac's recent remarks about the French colonial past, Blair's expression of sorrow about the slave trade, Ben Bot's public acknowledgment that the Dutch in 1945 had placed themselves at the wrong side of history by not accepting Indonesian independence – these statements by political leaders confirm that the colonial past is something to be

faced. Colonialism has contributed to undisputed highlights of our culture, like the famous *Max Havelaar* by Multatuli (1864), and it has caused disasters and disruption; it has supported and biased Western scholarship and science, contributed to the wealth of our countries, informed both our knowledge and misconceptions about non-western culture and religions like the Islam, and many more could be added to this.

In short, colonialism is an inherent part of Dutch and other national histories as part of a European history and this is not something of the past. It has contributed among a major part of the population to long lasting personal historical bonds which are located in other places than the nation where one lives. We still lack a common understanding of the public meaning of what I would call this personal “transnational past-awareness” among our citizens. It exists in many private homes, both among descendants of former colonials and among postcolonial migrants, and it also creates new transnational links within Europe that not uniquely are related to national histories. Think of the relationship of Dutch youngster of Berber descent to France, or Hindustani youngsters to England. I am convinced that addressing this transnationalism which is rooted in past colonial experiences that are not exclusively linked to postcolonial immigrants, is important to understand the mechanisms of inclusion and exclusion that we witness in today's society.

In the Dutch canon we placed colonialism as a theme behind various windows. Besides, we have tried to touch on this contemporary issue by directly addressing the young children to whom this canon is meant in a window on Cultural Diversity. I will not explain how exactly we did so. For now it may suffice to point out that we deliberately tried both to historicize the various immigrant experiences in today's society, linking them to other national histories as well as avoiding easy oppositions between bright and dark sites of Dutch national history.

3 National canons and European civilization

Through this approach, we made quite other choices than did the Danish, who some months before us had published both a *Kulturkanon* with twelve significant works in eight cultural domains, and a *Historikanon* which listed historical facts that everyone should know. The two approaches differ fundamentally. To put it strongly, the Danes presented a list, whereas we presented a structure with windows, the Danes intend to teach an understanding of essential meaning and selection criteria for quality, we stress the context of creative processes and generalize on this. And the most important difference between the two approaches, concerns the interaction proposed for the workings of the canon, and the implicit concept of the Danish or Dutch national framework that defines the arena for these two canon debates.

This brings me to the question as to whether the Dutch national canon has any meaning in a European canon discourse. Can we just turn our framework; can we imagine that the same structure with 50 windows, that from a Dutch perspective offers a view on Europe, at the same time offers a starting point to look at Dutch history and culture from a European perspective? I would say that this is not the case. Europe is not, or not yet understood as a scenic view point which offers a common ground to all its inhabitants for a diachronic view on culture, history and society. Yes indeed, the Charter of fundamental rights of the European Union quoted before refers to common values and to 'the diversity of the cultures and traditions of the peoples of Europe as well as the national identities of the Member States ...' Note, however, all the plurals: peoples, cultures, traditions, identities. Nowhere is it made explicit what this pluralism means. It will be difficult to raise a common awareness of the European spiritual, moral and cultural heritage celebrated in our European charters and treaties, as long as in fact this heritage basically is perceived as the sum total of national histories.

One Dutch *Rietveld chair* and one *Danish PH-lamp* do not form a start for a European design history. *Kierkegaard*, *Erasmus* and *Spinoza*, mentioned in the different context of the two respective national canons, do not offer a starting point

for an understanding of Europe's spiritual and moral heritage to which the Charter refers.

The same is true for even more complex issues like the colonialism mentioned before. Some years ago, the Dutch historian Wesseling compiled an extensive comparative history of European colonialism in the nineteenth century. It provided a wealth of information about the various colonial strategies and regimes exerted by European nation states in the East and the West. However, it did not reach a conclusion about what was "European" about this history. What was European colonialism, for instance, as compared to Ottoman, or to Russian colonialism; or what is European with regards to the colonial political ideas of nation and citizenship; to mention just two issues that still have a deep impact on society.

4 Locating the canon

And this brings me to the last issue which I would like to just briefly mention: the very location of the national or European canon. Where should we develop the debate on Europe's cultural canon: in books, in schools, in art, in museums? Where do we address the community that we want to involve in this debate? And who are we?

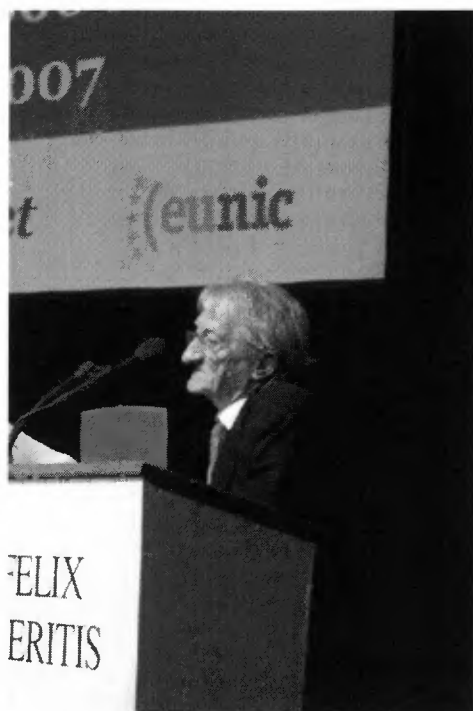
When I showed you Rob Scholte's painting, I introduced it as a counterpoint to a canonized *lieu de mémoire*, as an individual interpretation of history within a so-called site-museum – which as a site location in itself has meaning as an expression of history. It is remarkable that some three months before we published the Dutch canon, a majority in the Dutch Parliament voted for a new national history museum, where the expected Dutch canon should be put on display in a spectacular architectural design, with the aim to engage visitors and school children in active citizenship. It will be clear to you that these 50 windows do not offer a very good starting point for such a new museum, but this is not the point I want to make here. My concern here, is the political urgency that was expressed in the wish to present a

national history in a new museum as a means to strengthen social coherence in postcolonial society.

There are many more examples of such political initiatives in the cultural realm, national, and European as well, like the Bauhaus Europa in Aachen, Germany, the Musée des Civilisations de l'Europe et de la Méditerranée in Marseilles, France, or the Belgian initiative for a Musée de l'Europe. This last museum has been conceptualized by Krzysztof Pomian and others. The fate of the museum still is somewhat unclear, if I am well informed. I mention it, because I am not sure what all these museums mean, in the context of this canon debate. Working myself in a museum, I know that an exhibition is not a debate. And of course, modern technology allows for a lot of innovative ways to turn museums into debate arena's. Let us check, however, whether we are talking about something new, or just restore elite confirming strategies of self expression and mass education that are rooted in the very same process of nineteenth century nation building that we now evaluate in the light of a European canon.

Edoardo Sanguineti

Language and the European Canon



1.

In my opinion, language is the first problem. So I'm going to start with that. Europe doesn't have a language. In other words, we're missing a linguistic canon in Europe. In reality, this problem translates into the Europe Union, bureaucracy and the activities of people who are actively working on the problems of Europe's economic and military unity. A problem of language hierarchy. It would be extremely costly to communicate with all the different nationalities in Europe by going from one

language to another in all the languages spoken in Europe. But actually daring to consider these differences brings its own highly complex set of problems. Each language demands its own respectability - sometimes priority - over other languages. So I think we need to start by tackling this problem as a linguistic canon for Europe. In everyday speech - not just in cultural circles - we could theoretically start to speak about a European musical canon or a figurative canon in our time, right now. But for a literary canon, on the other hand, this would have to be a canon largely constructed from translations. Naturally there are very few polyglots speaking all European languages and in earlier times this would have constituted its own distinct set of hierarchies in refinement, knowledge and worth.

Here, I would like to briefly consider the Italian language. Italian is arguably one of the oldest languages in Europe. In terms of continuity, Italian was being written at least as early as the 13th century. Having said that, this image is not realistic, as Italian was only written but not spoken. The Italian language is a source of constant debate among Italians as to what the Italian language actually is. So there have been some quite conflicting theses propounded by writers who didn't generally speak Italian. And because of that, it was very difficult to record spoken Italian as a written language. Manzoni was the most famous person to tackle this problem, and he happened to be living at the time when the Italian nation was being formed as a political unit after so many centuries of regional division. The novelty of the Italian language is the very quick progression in recent years from a written cultural language and a sort of Esperanto in the different autonomous regions in the Italian peninsula, to a spoken language. This has been assisted by the advent of television and other new technologies. And this is the first point that I'd like to stress.

2

Now to my second point, which is looking at the canon itself. It is possible for a cultural canon to exist in a coherent environment. In reality, we should always speak of canons in the plural in the sense that within every community there are several canons tussling amongst themselves. The idea of one dominant canon is accurate if we view as symbolic a type of canon that can dominate over other canons which are

less representative of the various social groups. So in that struggle, the underlying conflict between social groups is itself a struggle between the classes which can evolve into a battle for cultural hegemony. This idea is particularly striking in the writings of Gramsci – perhaps the greatest Italian thinker of the last century – this idea of hegemony linked directly to the ongoing class struggle. But to speak of an Italian canon per se is asking for trouble. Even in literature it is clear that Italy began with writers such as Dante, Petrarca and Boccaccio. But Dante's success, for example, between the 17th and 18th centuries, was hard-won. A similar thing happened in England with Shakespeare. But it was Romanticism which restored the greatness of both Shakespeare in England and Dante in Italy, with a complete overhaul of cultural ideas and the Bourgeois revolution. Or to put it more precisely, Bourgeois hegemony revolutionised – aggressively corrected – society's traditional canons under the old system. In this perspective, the French Revolution, to take a very obvious example, constituted a complete upheaval of aesthetic canons across the whole of Europe and across the different cultural levels. I was very interested to see some of the statistics presented this evening. They largely testify to the conflicts still raging – even among a certain generation today – between the different positions on problems concerning objects which are almost universally represented as innocent examples of music or figurative art, but which in reality are the embodiment of extreme ideas. The fact is that apart from the various standpoints of both economic and political hegemony in the struggles and conflicts as revealed in historical research, we can actually pinpoint the oscillating canons and – if we focus purely on the West - we might be able to use these to piece together a complete history, beginning with the Greek canons and struggles within the different cultural hegemonies in Ancient Greece and Latin literature. For example, if we speak with a man of letters, these letters are largely based on Latin literature – we should point out that the Greeks never translated texts that weren't Greek. The Greeks, who were very familiar with their own culture across the various traditions in their history, were good readers, but they were still Barbarians. They weren't cosmopolitan, as they were so introverted and focused on their own archaic standpoints. But the Romans fundamentally embraced their aboriginal culture and assumed the entire

Greek cultural canon by taking Greek models and examples and incorporating them into their own writings. This revolutionary attitude was subsequently repeated to a greater or lesser extent throughout history in Europe and even in the West as a whole. Finally, I'd like to offer a third point.

3

If I had to talk about European literature, the first name on my lips would be Ernst Robert Curtius. His very famous book: *Europäische Literatur und Lateinisches Mittelalter* proposed the idea of continuity in European literature starting with the Greeks and progressing right through to 20th century authors. He went from Homer through to Joyce. The heart of the book, quite deliberately, is the Middle Ages. Whichever country had the greatest culture in Europe, according to Curtius, would set the pace and establish the cultural direction to forge European unity. Having said that, it should be pointed out that Curtius' idea did not enjoy widespread popularity. In fact, it constitutes an attempt to circumvent or even obliterate history in order to inflict a sort of ideal eternal European literature. More than a European canon, in reality Curtius was talking about what I would describe as a "western" canon – which is a totally different thing. Believe it or not, it is far easier to speak about a western canon than a European canon. At its heart, Europe is the Bourgeoisie in the eyes of contemporary history. In this sense we are the Bourgeois who have inherited a certain notion of European continuity, with its own set image. I like to say that today's brandy is good because Napoleon existed: similarly, we are all the beneficiaries of the Civil Code, again thanks to Napoleon, but perhaps this is more a Champagne Code. So today we eat "American" almost everywhere and not just in Europe, but throughout the West and in the world: the gastronomic canon has changed and thanks to American imperialism, it's not a question of taste. You could say that tastes follow from economic hegemonies and prevail accordingly. But Curtius again focuses too much on the fact that all of Bourgeois Europe, increasingly embracing the modern nation concept, is established on elitist national colleges. National colleges aren't just literary schools: they are the musicians who comprise the French School. There are painters comprising the English or Spanish

Schools and in Finland there is a national music tradition. While it's good for the Finns to have national musicians, it's something quite new in the history of Europe which reacts nervously to nationalism, bearing in mind the supreme example of the Fascists / the Nazis who wanted to establish an area ensuring national and symbolic purity over other nations.

Last and not least, I would say that today the government is imposing compulsory cultural canons with programmes which don't leave much room for development or criticism, as it were, and this harks back to the Fascist/Nazi era.

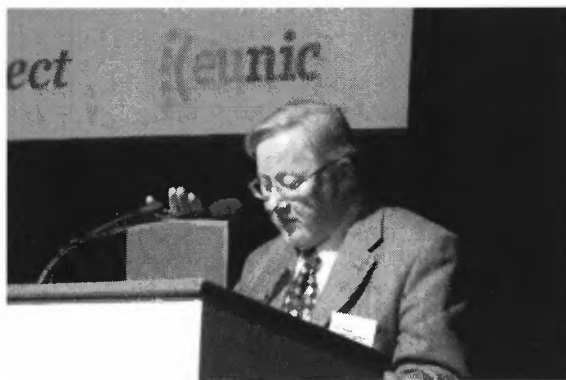
A literary canon can only exist if there is a certain amount of disagreement among authors.

Some authors draw on the classics and others don't. In literature, some authors or poets are referred to frequently and others aren't. There are encyclopaedias which happily document the presence or existence today of such and such an author.

Finally, I remember that in the 1950's, straight after the war, I attended the *Literarisches Kolloquium* in Berlin, where they had gathered together a sort of complete collection of anthologies of German poetry from the 10th century right through to modern times. The scenery has changed since the 1950's with monumental upheavals, and these are the on-going discoveries which God has given us: these are our canons.

Vytautas Landsbergis

***The political meaning of the Cultural Canon
for Europe's future***



Ladies and Gentlemen,

Let me take the concept of canon as identity, especially, as it has been suggested by the initiators of this symposium as well.

Be it a national identity or the supra-national - European one, the case of identity was very well known for the representatives, like myself, of a nation, to which the identity and self-determination was equal to the case of survival. "We have been born Lithuanians, we must stay Lithuanians!" - that was one of the important anthem-like songs at the end of 19th century in my country with both parts of it under German and Russian rule, and it reminds us now of the danger and determination of those days. There were the times, throughout the 19th century, when three neighbouring nations, two of them using governmental means, were busy with remaking Lithuanians into Germans, Poles and Russians. Their aim was to have no more problems with that stubborn and rebellious folk.

The fight for national identity was then the fight against disappearance and annihilation. Not "a merge", as it has been described somewhere. That fight was

waged over all Central and Eastern Europe calling to life the idea of the fundamental right of a nation to live and self-determine. It appeared also helpful later, during the second wave of decolonization, that after World War II, when the actors of the first wave were re-colonized back in a new, communist, fashion. The sense of national - also European! - identity was then once again helpful in resisting captivity and sovietisation.

Therefore I am critical of one more of initiating remarks to this symposium. National identity and nationalism are not identical. Those who value national identity should not be called nationalists. Those who defend national identity are serving good services for the world's cultural heritage. An individual, exceptional language, when dying after being created during the dozens of millennia (at least), is worthy to be saved no less than one of the pyramids so similar to each other.

Of course, these greatest human creations which enable to communicate and to become entities - the European languages - do belong to the European canon by internal ties and relations and are the canons each in itself. They reflect and respond to the canons of thinking.

As a musician, I now wish shift to music. The word "canon" does possess a special sense there. It is a type of creation - before to become creation. It is the rule and procedure how to build the musical form which presents the initial call and framework for inventiveness and beauty shaped in some special strong way *lege artis*. For what sake? - to make us responding joyfully to both - form and spirit.

If somebody wants, you can transfer that sense of canon (of voices) to all other possible canons, and you will not be wrong, I guess. Music is a world of universal senses being itself a model of Universe.

To finish with me as musician, I was educated in European classical (including modern) music, therefore should consider myself an European first of all in music, which was more or less canonized centuries before. Anyway, the times came for me to get a little bit acknowledged with other canons of the beauty of the great Asian musical cultures. Moreover, an understanding came about the wrongness of imagination entitled "eurocentrism in music". This misleading picture is still alive and

in line with the rules of marketing and sell-out is destructively damaging non-European cultures.

The canons of beauty in form and expression are not those higher or lower, despite any temporarily actual canon of the mode.

Probably, the same is with all canons, including that general one - the European canon.

I do prefer to think here about the European identity embodied in the European cultural heritage and based on European behaviour as well. There you may probably find some clearer distinctions from Asian and African civilizations. The European one was built, during the last two millennia, on Christianity. Those, who denied saying this in the Preamble to the Constitution for Europe, behaved as barbarians of animosity to that historical truth and fact that all European philosophy, ethics, arts, music, architecture, literature and politics had grown and had been inspired mostly by the Christianity. In this way the so-wished European canon emerged to give us the sense of distinction - not superiority! - and a strange desire to disregard ourselves.

I prefer to agree with Robert Schuman (not the musician!) who noticed that even the Enlightenment, despite its problems with religion and Church, has also grown up from Christianity. We can see: from there arose the concepts of human personal dignity (to be the child of God was something more than a humiliated property of another human being or only a creature of Nature) - so, from there came the sense of civic responsibility to assist and serve our brothers, and about equal human rights. First of all, to be valued according to merits as a person who is born in freedom.

Some years ago I heard a lecture of one European philosopher of Chinese origin and noticed for myself the notion, that the concept of human rights is truly European one, since nothing of the kind was born in Asia. In this way, I afterwards argues somewhere that Russian canon, so deeply irrespective of human rights, is indeed more Asian than European.

What was the European belief and action based on that belief? All we can state now is historical devaluation. The canon is weakened more and more.

The sense of brotherhood was excluded, as well as the word itself, from the European Constitution as drafted. The sense of the state as a social concord and a common good? Well, it also degraded to the state of welfare, which turns out to be a misleading illusion itself. What future can we see in welfare, when less and less European people wish to work and raise children?

There are many options how to lose the European canon. Let us look at least three of them.

Relativism of moral foundation as equal to erosion of the very foundation of all the culture including politics, makes the building of Europe waving.

Consumerism leaves no place for concern about the future – what will be after us. Without such concern and valuation, not to speak about the devaluation of love, - the canon will die together with us, in line of social solidarity with the crazy master.

The last and (not the?) least. **Postmodernism** in the arts is loose canon. It works, indeed. That is the picture of current process, to be true.

On the contrary, if the above is not true, if we have still unshattered (to the end) system of values and virtues **as European canon**, if there does exist yet the line dividing good and evil, truth and lie, liberty and captivity - the latter one so simply caused by the lack of human responsibility to oneself or your brother, - if all that has a chance to endure in distinctions and discourses, then we can still speak about European canon in present and future time.

If not, let historians work then on these times, when former Europe had its own canon.

Interview Michaël Zeeman with Asli Erdogan**Turkey's contribution to the European Cultural Canon**

MZ. You must be with mixed feelings, being invited to something as self-assured as a conference on A European Cultural Canon and its possibilities. On the one hand a philosophical, on the other hand a fierce political reality in your country. How mixed is that feeling?

AE. Last time when I was asked a question like this I answered that I am actually more skeptical towards Europe than my contemporaries, meaning Turkish intelligentsia. That answer ended up in accusations of pure paranoia. So in fact my feelings are very mixed, I think I probably do not represent the majority in Turkey. There are two main views, one is the more pragmatic view which consists of wanting to be a part of Europe and consequently getting the money, and the second one (which I am much closer to) is the viewpoint of the European Union being some sort of automatic democratization. This latter viewpoint means improvement of living conditions in terms of human rights and better conditions for minorities about which we have a great internal conflict going on for more than ten years.

MZ. It looks like all of Turkish ambivalence where Europe is concerned has been remade in a sort of concentrated form. If we look to the history we see exactly e.g. what Pope Benedikt XVI said: "two tracks: sometimes closer to Europe, sometimes taking a certain distance". Sometimes identifying with the mainstream of European culture and on the other hand going back to its own traditions. At present it is as if there is a sort of intensified reliving of that ambiguous mentality.

AE. What I used to fear about two or three years ago are the nationalistic tendencies in Turkey. All sorts of defensive tendencies are getting stronger. That is actually one of the criticisms I have towards European policy. People were falsely made too optimistic: human rights issues will be solved, even if Europe just keeps up this bribe, it will end this war with 'the carrot and the stick', Turkey will get in line and Turkey will be democratic. But it is not turning out this way and I fear that all factions will become more extreme. The Muslims becoming more fundamentalist, the secularists becoming fundamental secularist, coalition Turkish issues falling into deeper and deeper splits. Nothing seems to be able to conquer the broadening gap. Why do we have to discuss everything in terms of Europe? To be European or not to be, that seems to be the whole issue.

I'm more skeptical, not to the European Union but to the idea of Europe as a myth. A myth in the deepest sense, which meant reality in the past, but through the historical times, which started with the Greeks, the myth has been turning in the meaning it has today. Something to look in your past and not in the future

MZ. Since its foundation in the Twenties, The Turkish Republic has always had a strong idea in what direction its own history was developing. Kemal Atatürk had an idea about Turkey 'Un certain idée de la Turkey'. Is it because of that idea -a strong vision about Turkey (which to a certain extend is propaganda)- being no longer energetic or viable enough, that various parties are 'hijacking' the Turkish identity?

AE. The term Canon could be used in fact. The Kemalist idea was actually building up a Turkish Canon and it was more or less what I meant with the word 'myth'. It

was a myth created in fact. And a myth is always created at the expense of someone else. Europe is created at the expense of whatever is not Europe. This is comparable to Turkey. The idea of Turkey was created saying: 'we are one nation', 'we speak one language' 'we have one common idea' and this was a very, very selective history. And until now Turkey is refusing to face the issues of the Ottoman past. Either qualifying it or completely rejecting it, when it comes to the Armenian issue for example. People don't want to hear and talk about it. Until the very recent years when this debate was almost forced. Another example: the Muslim minorities, Kurds, Sirkasjem. This Turkey, this Kemalist Turkey was created at the expense of these people losing their identities.

MZ. But also in order to arrive somewhere

AE. Yes it was like a ship supposedly turned towards Europe, or whatever the idea of Europe was. And of course Turkish constitution was also very much based on the European constitutions of that time, the Italian. It was like complete rejection in a way of the Ottoman, which actually goes further back into the Byzantine and Persian past and I think that these traces became too tight. You cannot just simply come and say: "No, we are turning our back to this" and in fact making up a fictional perception of another fiction

MZ. I do not want to use the word paradoxical, but there is a contradiction when one for instance goes to Istanbul, one sees a city that during the last ten years has increased in its skyline, in its street picture, in its social economy and in its culture has become what one could call a "European Metropolis". You see an economic elite that in its values and ideas is – if not cosmopolitan – strongly European. And at the same time (this very moment in history) one hears that same elite saying Turkish history is not European history. So what happened there is on the one hand a social and economic development, that almost in a Kemalistic sense points towards European values and ideas, and on the other hand an idea of itself that utterly differs with the previous viewpoint.

AE. First, I am not that comfortable with this term European. I mean Istanbul is a metropolis, of course, but I suppose you can find something similar also in Mexico City. Djakarta has skyscrapers as well and that means only that we are getting a portraiture of a capitalistic country and we are suffering from its effects and also getting its advantages. I do not know when the term Western is used and when European comes, and the difference between these two terms. Same goes for the Eastern values. I was born in Istanbul. From where I was born it is not so easy in my mind to say what is the real Turkish root. What is west and what is east? What interests me more is how it is split, what was created and actually for what purpose. If you look deep back in the past everything is so mixed. The bible as the root of Christianity is very much based in the Sumerian myth. Like the biblical flood, even up to the symbol of the pigeon, has been borrowed from Sumerian myth. It is comparable to what Mr Todorov mentioned earlier during this conference, that good and evil come from the Iranian culture and Zarathustra and all this. And Turkey has been there (for Turkey is the name given to this piece of land for the last 100 years or not even that) in the very centre of all these exchanges and swaps of culture. Even if we look at just only the last 200 years, these lands, the Balkans, Anatolia, Caucasus and the upper Black Sea people have been constantly switching.

MZ. And that is what you do because it always has descriptions like 'in between worlds' 'partner of various worlds', etc. Is that attitude, just to clarify, the end of the Kemalist ideology, just worn out, sort of fresh realization of the position in the world, or is that the post-modern attitude that you can choose from history whatever you wish to take and whatever you like?

AE. Well I cannot project anything into the future because it is extremely difficult to clarify what would happen to Turkey in, let us say two or three years. But my feeling is that Kemalist ideology (as any ideology) is becoming so ossified and so strict, that the reality of life or the reality of humanity (as you name it) is going to break it. And this is what is happening, it was just a too tight dress, a uniform put on people and

just call it globalization or postmodern age, it just does not work anymore. But what will come out of that I think is a very, very difficult issue, at least for me to make any judgments towards the future, but I might talk about my fears: during the last four, five years I have seen a sharp increase in nationalism, anti-Semitism anti-whatever. It is really frightening to observe. Changes are so slowly you do not notice them in everyday life. But in Turkey I have started to notice these things.

MZ. There comes exactly the canonical aspect of European integration at steak. The European Union as an organization which is supranational has a history of the 'headmaster' of school. When Spain joined the Union it had a very feeble democratic tradition. And like a good didactic schoolmaster the European Union came in. When Portugal joined the Union, same story. When Greece joined the Union, the colonels were still alive. The Union worked often as that schoolmaster. This element also to be seen in the conversations with Turkey. The European Union as some sort of a headmaster stick for the nationalist and fundamentalist movements and a support for the secular democratic, European minded movements. That clearly has not worked.

AE I do agree. In fact the students rebelled against the headmaster. We are going to fight. You see that is why my feelings are so mixed as coming from a country that is very often treated as a student, or as a naughty child. They have an incontrollable reflex. They say "no, I can make my own decisions, I can see what is right and wrong". And at the same time you see that what Europe is asking from Turkey, most of the time is the right thing. But it is quite remarkable that it is not getting any better. That is actually the argument with the European parliament: we asked them to eliminate article 301, where so many writers where taken to court for. But there are so many different articles that people are taken to court for at the moment. In fact sometimes taking a very famous writer to court and then freeing him can serve as a very good mask. At the same time 20 journalists are put in jail for anti-terrorist law, with the same legal basis and on just the same article. In the meantime Europe thinks she is gaining victory over Turkey's undemocratic law by banning article 301.

MZ. The other side: the rebelling students. Napoleon once said: rebellion is an idea with a bayonet. We do not talk about the bayonet, we talk about the idea. What is the idea?

AE. Well, I do not know either. If we look piece by piece at this question there is one strong traditional force in Turkey, which doesn't want to loose his power: the army, the military, more or less centered around Kemalism. But sometimes you see certain generals giving statements, much more democratic, than the leftists. Or you see women walking out on the street demonstrating for their rights. So these things are not so clear cut. The Muslims, in the Islam based AKP government, did most of the changes in the law to make it more European, or more democratic. Which none of the other more liberal governments had even suggested before. So the leftist are accusing the AKP government that this is just a game. They are playing this European game so that they will have more power which I think is untrue. Did they make the changes? Yes, they did. I feel Turkey is like the chariot with the four horses of the Apocalypse. Just like in the Apocalypse they are going in different directions and so it is not going anywhere. I am actually always by nature pessimist.

MZ. You know what happened to the horses of the Apocalypse (although we are still waiting for the final effect)? Joseph Brodsky once said: "May the geographical faith of a country – in this case that it lays between Europe and Asia, or even IN Europe and Asia – may that ever become a historic fatality". If you describe the present situation – as four horses of the Apocalypse pulling the wooden chariot into pieces, because they run in various directions – it is almost as if modern 21st century Turkey pays a fatal price for something as helpless as the place where the country is.

AE. Perhaps it is a gift of God to us to live in such an era. There is a Chinese saying: "I which you are living in interesting times". I think from this chaos is coming some good. Probably, hopefully. At least Art is coming from chaos and chaos is putting into Cosmos. But I also see some sort of vitality in today's Turkey, some

soul, some fighting spirit. But, in fact I'm only 39 and I have seen three military regimes so far, and I have a feeling that it will not come again, I think there are things that are irreversible changing.

MZ. Let us continue that point in the final discussion later on.

Panel discussion

Michaël Zeeman (NL) – chairman.

Susan Legène (NL), Tzvetan Todorov (Fr), Asli Erdoğan (TR), Vytautas Landsbergis (Lit)



MZ. The main questions raised during this first part of the conference about a European Canon will be the basis of the follow up conference in February. A more practical approach in workshops about the relation between culture and politics. But one important issue should be discussed now: The level of a critical attitude and whether abstraction is an escape.

Tzvetan Todorov: It's hard to establish a unique historical view from a European perspective. For example the Battle of Waterloo has a totally different connotation for the French compared to the English. This discrepancy is also observed in a manual for high school students written by both French and German teachers where two views of the same history are integrated. For example, the role of the USA

during the Cold War was viewed differently by the French and German history teachers. The different perspectives may be complementary to each other. But the discussion about their different views on history were clarifying a lot about the concept of history as such.

MZ. What do you think about the grouping of the European history by themes the way it was done several years ago by people of different European nationalities.

Mr. Landsbergis: This system would only be acceptable if Europeans are regarded with their own peculiarities. The European canon should also include the differences. 'Rather than beating the enemy, one should embrace him'.

MZ. What are the didactic possibilities to canonize an attitude, both in the museum field and in the academic field.

Susan Legène: We are talking about educational systems. The example given by Mr. Todorov about the collaborating history teachers of French and German nationalities on one book is therefore a very good and inspiring case. The canon focuses on the educational system, on what teachers choose to teach. But this does not answer the question whether the European canon should be formulated and, if so, what themes ought to be included. It is important to create a place where these matters can be discussed. Conferences like the one organised today are very good attempts to try to encourage discussions about these matters. The possibilities for people to choose their own attitude are very broad and are enhanced thanks to the internet.

MZ. The metaphor of the Horses of the Apocalypse you used in the previous discussion, is that metaphor illustrating your pessimism on the relationship between Turkey and the EU.

Asli Erdogan: I have to agree and I wonder if the example given by Mr. Todorov of German and French teachers collaborating could also be put in practice by, for example, French and Algerian teachers. In other words, is the European Union choosing its diversities at an equal level? I think the only answer is dialogue.

Michaël Zeeman concludes by formulating two questions for the follow up conference:

1. How can we teach a critical attitude?
2. How can we create/continue the dialogue?

Biographies

Prof. dr. Ton Bevers (1948) is a sociologist. He has worked at the universities of Nijmegen and Tilburg. He was staff member cultural affairs at the ministry. Since 1990, he has taught history of culture and arts at the Erasmus university of Rotterdam. He publishes in the field of cultural sociology, cultural transfer, cultural politics and policy.

Pieter de Buysser (1972) has studied philosophy in Paris and holds a unique place in the Flemish theatre field. He is one of the founders of the Lampe collective, for which he wrote nine theatre texts and five essays on the theatre world. He has written and produced two films. For his essay, *Tijdpraktijken, een aangeklede rede* (Time Practices, a dressed up speech), he has received the Emile Zola Price. The author describes his *Het Litteken Lip* (The Scar Lip) as "a metaphysical thriller".

Aslı Erdoğan (1967) holds an Master of Science degree in physics from Boğaziçi University in Istanbul. Anthropology and Indian American culture are among her areas of interest. A widely-traveled writer, Erdoğan published her first novel *Kabuk Adam* (Crust Man) in 1994. *Mucizevi Mandarin* (Miraculous Mandarin/1996) is a series of interconnected short stories. Set in Rio, *Kırmızı Pelerinli Kent* (City in a Red Cape/1998) is her second novel. Erdoğan's short story "Wooden Birds" received first prize in a competition opened by Deutsche Welle Radio in 1997.

Professor Vytautas Landsbergis (1932) is a Lithuanian conservative politician and member of the European Parliament. He was the first head of state of Lithuania after its declaration of independence from the Soviet Union and has served as the Head of the Lithuanian Parliament. Professor Landsbergis is an intellectual who has been active in Lithuania's political arena for almost two decades and is a world established politician who has gone down in history as a contributor to the demise of the Soviet Union. Also he is a renowned musicologist. He has written twenty books

on a variety of topics, including a biography of Mikalojus Konstantinas Čiurlionis, politics, and music.

Susan Legène (1955) is the Head of the Museum at the Royal Tropical Institute. She is also extraordinary professor for Dutch cultural history, specializing in the study of objects, on the part of the Koninklijk Oudheidkundig Genootschap. Additionally, she is a member of the National Unesco Commission. She has published numerous articles, among others about the interface between (colonial) history and museology. In 1998 she completed her PhD *De bagage van Blomhoff en Van Breughel - Japan, Java, Tripoli en Suriname in de negentiende-eeuwse Nederlandse cultuur van het imperialisme*. (The luggage of Blomhoff and Van Breughel - Japan, Java, Tripoli and Surinam in the nineteenth century culture of imperialism)

Edoardo Sanguineti (1930, Genoa) Writer, poet, literary critic and university professor. A founder of the avant-garde movement Group 63, his work combines formal experimentalism and ideological commitment. His first works, *Laborinthus* (1956) and *Triperuno* (1964), are characterized by dislocated language, while his later work, *Stracciafoglio* (1980) and *Bisbidis* (1987), is more accessible. His criticism, *Il realismo di Dante* (1966) and *Guido Gozzano* (1966), embraced various tendencies, including structuralism. Sanguineti's collaboration with the composer Luciano Berio has been very important in the development of his creative work.

Tzvetan Todorov (1939, Sofia) is a distinguished novelist of Bulgarian descent. He has published a total of 21 books, that have been distributed in many different languages all over the world. Todorov's historical interests have focused on such crucial issues as the conquest of The Americas and the Nazi and Stalinist concentration camps. Todorov has been a visiting professor at several universities, including Harvard, Yale, Columbia and the University of California, Berkeley. Today, he lives in Paris.

Michaël Zeeman (1958) is a journalist, poet and literary critic. He has written for NRC Handelsblad, Vrij Nederland, De Groene Amsterdammer en de Volkskrant. He was head of the cultural supplement of the Volkskrant from 1991 to 1996. For a number of years he also did a literary television show on national television. His poems have been very successful and have been awarded several prizes. At the moment, he is correspondent for de Volkskrant in Rome.



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