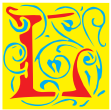


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WELCOME SPEECH AT
WHAT'S NEW IN THE NEW EUROPE?
REDEFINING CULTURE, POLITICS, IDENTITY
2016 ISSEI CONFERENCE
AT THE UNIVERSITY OF ŁÓDŹ, POLAND
(11 JULY 2016–15 JULY 2016)



adies and gentlemen!

It is a pleasure for me to welcome you all to Poland, to Łódź (*The Promised Land*), to Łódź University and to the 15th ISSEI Conference. My name is Stefan Höjelid and I am Swedish (and European) even though married Polish. Actually I met my wife in September 1999 in conjunction with an EU Tempus project-conference in Łódź (*Sic!*). Then I also got to know Professor Krystyna Kujawińska Courtney, one of the two co-chairs of this conference, and a lot of other Polish colleagues who have over the years become close friends to me. So this background was maybe one of the reasons why Dr. Edna Rosenthal as a co-chair asked me to introduce this conference. I will do so by saying a few words about *the theme* of this conference and about ISSEI and its journal *The European Legacy* and finally by briefly reflecting upon *Europe as a concept* and what is happening right now with our old dear Europe.

Conference theme

The changes that have occurred in Europe in the past quarter-century were dramatic, rapid and unforeseeable. These changes – from the rise of the Solidarity Movement in Poland in the early 1980s to the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989 and the unification of Germany, the dissolution of the Soviet Bloc, thro-

ugh the creation of the Eurozone, to the enlargement of the Union to 28 states (soon 27 after the British referendum) – seemed to reaffirm the spirit of Europe, the cradle and carrier of Western civilization. They also seemed to amply justify the ideal of the New Europe as defined by the European Union: *to create a peaceful and prosperous Europe*. This vision, it was hoped, would heal the continent, torn and destroyed by two world wars, and consolidate its central role in the global arena of world politics. Recent events, however, have seriously undermined this vision of peace and prosperity, including the global financial crisis, the political crisis in Ukraine, the humanitarian crisis of immigration, and the repercussions of the political upheavals across the Middle East, Europe's geographical neighbour, as well as the outcome of the Brexit-referendum in June in Great Britain.

It would seem that Europe, that symbol of a united and peaceful Europe, cannot be upheld without examining what Europe is today, without, that is, attending to Europe's own self-understanding alongside how it is seen by non-Europeans, from east to west. Since ideals and realities have a history, often a very long history, and since our terms of reference are determined by particular methodologies and disciplines, the attempt to examine the ideal in light of the real, to assess *what is new in the New Europe*, calls for multiple perspectives on the ever changing faces of Europe.

ISSEI (The International Society for the Study of European Ideas)

In 1984, the Rockefeller Foundation invited the Editorial Board of *The European Legacy* to hold its first conference on "Europe in a Changing World," in Bellagio, Italy, and it was there that the Talmors decided to found the International Society for the Study of European Ideas. The ISSEI conferences offer a forum for academics from different countries, backgrounds, and disciplines to share the fruits of their work and to keep track of new intellectual trends and research in areas of study other than their own; they enable participants to keep abreast with new developments in current-day Europe where the forces of nationalism, unification, globalism, and the impact of a rapidly changing world shape and reshape academic practices. From 1988, ISSEI has organized biennial international conferences on a variety of themes:

1988

Turning Points in History

University of Amsterdam, the Netherlands

200 Participants

1990

European Nationalism

Catholic University of Leuven, Belgium

300 Participants

1992

European Integration and the European Mind

University of Aalborg, Denmark

400 Participants

1994

The European Legacy: Toward New Paradigms

University of Graz, Austria

900 Participants

1996

Memory, History and Critique: Identity and the Millennium

University of Humanist Studies, Utrecht, the Netherlands

1 500 Participants

1998

Twentieth Century European Narratives: Tradition and Innovation

University of Haifa, Israel

700 Participants

2000

Approaching a New Millennium: Lessons from the Past: Prospects for the Future

University of Bergen, Norway

650 Participants

2002

European Nationalism in a Changing World: Between Nationalism and Globalism

University of Aberystwyth, Wales, UK

430 Participants

2004

The Narrative of Modernity: The Co-existence of Differences

University of Navarra, Pamplona, Spain

390 Participants

2006

The European Mind: Narrative and Identity

University of Malta, Malta

380 Participants

2008

Language and the Scientific Imagination

Language Center, University of Helsinki, Finland

480 Participants

2010

Thought in Science and Fiction

University of Chankaya, Ankara, Turkey

150 Participants

2012

*The Ethical Challenge of Multidisciplinarity: Reconciling "The Three Narratives":
Art, Science, and Philosophy*

University of Cyprus, Nicosia

350 participants

2014

Images of Europe: Past, Present, Future

Catholic University of Portugal, Porto

280 Participants

*The European Legacy: Toward New Paradigms. Journal of the International Society
for the Study of European Ideas (ISSEI)*

Editors: Ezra Talmor, David W. Lovell and Edna Rosenthal

Editorial Assistants: Rachel Ben-David and Neri Sevenier

Published by Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group (UK). www.tandf.co.uk/journals.

The European Legacy: Toward New Paradigms (formerly *History of European Ideas*) is an international, multidisciplinary, peer-reviewed journal devoted to the study of European ideas. Founded in 1979 by Sascha Talmor and Ezra Talmor (Israel), the journal was first published by Pergamon Press (UK). In 1995 it was transferred to MIT Press (USA) and was renamed *The European Legacy*, although the Board of Advisory Editors remained unchanged. From 2000 to the present *The European Legacy* has been published by Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group (UK).

Aims and scope

The European Legacy is devoted to the study of European intellectual and cultural history but is equally concerned with the emerging paradigms of thought in the making of the New Europe. The editors believe the journal's multidisciplinary scope and appeal is immensely important with the ever-increasing level of specialization in all spheres of knowledge. The journal publishes articles, review essays and book reviews on a broad range of disciplines – philosophy, language, art and literary studies, political science, the social and human sciences, and non-technical science, including their various sub-disciplines. Special issues devoted to particular themes are edited by expert guest editors.

What is Europe? Was ist Europa? L'Europe – c'est quoi? Czym jest Europa?

To say something well thought out about Europe may seem rather pretentious. Its essence is elusive and its charm discrete, the saying goes. Moreover, its diversity is often underlined, as well as its frequent quest for unity. Likewise, its permeable boundaries are typical. And of course each European country has its own honour: Goethe, Shakespeare, Voltaire, Cervantes, Dante, Tolstoy, Mickiewicz, Strindberg and so on.

But we can also recognize a European canon that includes philosophers, artists, and composers among others – emphasizing “the supranational” and thereby representing the common European cultural heritage. But we have to be careful. How uniform is this heritage? Which are the underlying values?

So, what do we mean when talking about Europe? Was ist Europa? Well, there is no black box, in other words no absolute answer, where to find Europe.

We should rather realize that Europe has to be discovered and rediscovered, to be discussed, to be invented and reinvented and to be negotiated and renegotiated over and over again.

Why so? Because there are so many pictures and understandings of Europe, as well as of the European Union. As a concept and as a project Europe can never be completed. It will always need to be remade and at least partly emancipated from the past.

According to Zygmunt Bauman, a famous Polish sociologist, the European culture can be measured by its ambitions and horizons, allergic to borders and to all finitude and fixity. He argues that Europe is an unfinished adventure. Stefan Zweig, Austrian (with Jewish roots) novelist, playwright, journalist and biographer who at the height of his literary career, in the 1920s and 1930s, was one of the most popular writers in the world, constituted doubt a typically European characteristic. Let us turn to the famous Polish Nobel Prize Laureate, Czesław Miłosz. In his autobiographic book “My Europe” stands his longing for a habitable living space free from nationalist hysteria and state terror. In his notes from the war period he writes: “The European inhabitant continued long to say *My Lord!* Later he gloomily noted and said *My religion!* Much later he began with excitement to roar: *My country, my nation!* And now he screams fanatically *My race!* In the same moment he ceases to be European!” (My translation).

Where on earth is Europe and the European Union heading these days? Who knows! We can however agree on the fact that Europe and the EU have some problems! Looking back it is obvious that our continent has been benign to establish the national, the religious, ethnicity... In other words, it has acted in a rather divisive way, and not always unifying and bonding.

Some people say that there are too many homes in too small an area! Is this the case? I think not, even though one of course could explain the many European wars in relation to this argument.

But those arguing this way, saying that they have a problem with too many people of different kind, too many different languages, as well as religions nearby and around – they have an obvious problem with Europe by the simple reason that multiculturalism and diversity is the fate of Europe! We must realize

that this dimension is present in the heated discussions, as well as in the more low key and quiet conversations.

Let me finish by turning to the Polish poet Adam Zagajewski and his picture of the European citizen, “migrating” between nation and integration:

He has a good memory and remembers very well the bright side, as well as the dark side of Europe. He cannot be arrogant because the amount of evil prohibits all kinds of presumption. He respects the achievements of Enlightenment but does not despise Middle Ages and its faith. He knows that Europe has place for both analytical thinking and for prayer; for physics and for music. He hopes that the taste of his favorite cheese will not be decided by the wise men and women in Brussels...

Even though he does not believe in CSFP, he believes in Europe... without forgetting though that Europe is an admirable fiction. And it helps us to live our lives. He must read poetry as the democratic system in Europe does not provide sufficient spiritual nourishment and is intellectually clear...

He must therefore also read poetry to wrap the unfinished democratic system. (My translation)

Thank you so much for listening! I wish you all, colleagues and friends, interested in the discussion of European ideas, a fruitful and enjoyable conference this week, and I do hope that you will find out “what’s new in this new Europe.”