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## The Euro and European Identity

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# The Euro and European Identity

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## **Abstract**

*With the euro, european citizens have a concrete symbol of their belonging to a same community. But Europe always belongs to the field of resources, for most of the political authorities, national interest. This article contains some thoughts and answers to the following questions: can a euro contribute to the building of a european identity?*

Since the first of January 2002, citizens of twelve Member States of the European Union (EU) use the same currency in their daily lives. At that time, around 56 billion coins and 13 billion euro banknotes were ready to circulate. At the same time political challenge, economic challenge and social challenge, the euro alone represents a double revolution. First, it implies, for countries that are part of the euro area, the disappearance of the largest symbols of national sovereignty, currencies, as well as the transfer of national monetary sovereignties to a European Central Bank. The euro is also a big change for citizens. By nature, monetary instruments are social bonds, symbols of unity and assembly. In addition to the concrete interest of consumers in the concrete effects of the single currency on their financial situation, the introduction of the euro upsets the monetary references that they have built up in their currencies of education.

This article aims to provide some insights and answers to the following question: can the euro contribute, as a symbol, to the construction of a "European identity"? The "proclamation of identity" is one of the privileged means of mobilizing and channeling the passions or political emotions that are set in motion in the name of a project, and this is often done through culture<sup>1</sup>. In the official Community discourse, the euro is supposed to reinforce "the unity of the European Union" and "the sense of European identity," and become "a symbol of European identity." However, the challenge is to both build momentum and adapt to very different national realities, because changing money can be seen as a change of identity. We do believe that the euro is a concrete symbol of belonging to the same community, but that European identity will not easily result, at least in the immediate future. It will take time, a lot of willingness and a greater openness.

I - "European identity": the false trail of a notion and its derivatives

A - The notion of identity

In practice, "identity is played out in variation". Identity is a state, a construction that depends on the context; it is not immutable, it can disappear and reappear. It is "an evolutionary construct that gives meaning and value (positive or negative) to a relationship or a set of relationships."

Identity comes under three types of reports. The first is the relation to the past, which consists of showing the roots of the community, of proving its permanence in time, of inventing traditions, in short to confer a perenniality. The second is the relationship to space and sociality in which it is a question of establishing a sense of ownership, a place where power is exercised. The third is

the relation to culture: it is the most complex relationship, which consists of modifying values and erecting cultural traits as emblems of identity.

The identity of a group or society is what ensures its continuity and cohesion. On the one hand, it determines how a society stands out from its natural environment; on the other hand, it establishes the mode of belonging of individuals to their society, at the same time fixing the conditions of their exclusion. Identity expresses the values of a given society, and it is in it that individuals derive their own qualities, as members of the community. These qualities are modes of being and are manifested by actions.

Individual identity is complementary to the collective identity. Whereas in the individual identity the individual perceives himself in relation to the others ("I" in relation to "Others"), in the case of the collective identity he identifies himself with a collectivity or a community, which itself identifies with the outside world ("We" versus "Others").

In all cases, the identity assumed the Other to exist and develop: an identity is define themselves in relation to others is to have its own perception of self and others.

We must not deduce the existence of a common memory when there has been common experience. Membership does not necessarily lead to the formation of an organized group. The boundaries of identity are fuzzy and fluid, so fluid. Identity must be articulated according to oppositions and differences. It must accept the existence of a plurality of voices that are not necessarily immediately harmonizable, but are able, in principle, to communicate and dialogue by exchanging experiences. "Do I really have an identity? Alfred Grosser wonders. My identity is "the sum of my belongings (...) plus, I hope, something that synthesizes and dominates them." Most identities are "locked".

The collective identity of a people is never simple and spontaneous. Bertrand Badie speaks of "identity volatility" in the sense that individuals are no longer just citizens of a nation state, but also belong to a set of networks. Since the latter generally deny any territorial logic, the individual is doubly situated in the contemporary political world: on the one hand, it is situated territorially by virtue of its citizen relation; on the other hand, it is socially located because of its membership of multiple networks. The individual modifies the hierarchy of his belongings and his identity references according to the situations and the stakes. This "volatility" strongly relativises the notion of territory and territorial belonging.

Identity is inseparable from power relations, whether state or not: it is according to systems of power that meaning and value are conferred on relations between groups. The fact that a political power is equipped with institutions gives a particular dimension to identity. The process of identity construction certainly imposes a certain harmonization around a core of feelings shared by a large part of the population: it aims at harmonizing, and not at uniformizing, the diversity inherent in any community, and does not should in no way be akin to manipulation. But for Alfred Grosser, it's almost impossible. For him, the notion of "collective memory" is "doubly contestable": on the one hand, the number of my social belongings carries particular memories, and on the other hand, the number of my own leaves, it is not a question of memory since "I do not remember taking the Bastille". The "collective memory" is an acquired, a transmitted, which implies both selection and distortion.

B - Europe faces its identities

The formation of an identity is generally perceived as a real stake for the future of Europe. Identity itself implies "special solidarity". It is a complex feeling, a set of representations

referring to a history (with roots, permanence in time, traditions, in short, durability), to a place where power is exercised, to practices, and a collective project. It involves both ideal and real, emotional and rational elements; it requires the little "something" of which Alfred Grosser spoke above.

Far from being fixed and static, "European identity" appears as a constant effort of unification, integration and harmonization by and between European countries in different fields. It is constructed in the confrontation of the identical and the otherness, the similarity and the differences between the European peoples and the other peoples (see Kirrane [2003]).

In a report presented to the European Council in Lisbon in June 1992, the European Commission, in order to clarify the contours of Europe in the perspective of enlargement, explicitly recognized that it was "neither possible nor appropriate" to define the borders of the European Union whose contours will be built "over time". It has just confirmed the diversity, richness, and importance of geographical, historical, and cultural elements, ideas, and values.

Europe is an "uncertain notion", so that of "European identity" is too! Perhaps we should evoke the "European spirit" or the "European civilization": the unity of this continent would exist underlying, because there would be a European civilization, successively transcending feudalism, the system of states, the system of nations. The idea is seductive, but discouraging. Edgar Morin speaks of "metamorphic identity" in the sense that modern Europe is the fruit of a metamorphosis, she herself lived metamorphoses, and that his identity is defined in metamorphoses. Born of the "historical whirlwind" of the fifteenth century, Europe has forged itself from opposition, and is built "in organizing anarchy". At the same time, it presents "the two faces of the most welcoming universalism and the most narrow-minded individualism". Its richness lies in its variety.

Should we rather speak of "European citizenship"? Cynthia Jean also notes that in this area the historical, social and cultural realities of states are deeply rooted in their political behavior, and make the triumph of a minimalist approach that combines slowness and prudence. States also continue to believe that strengthening the rights of European citizenship can threaten national identity, which undermines the scope and meaning of Union citizenship. States jealously defend their sovereign powers, they owe their differences, even more than to their common points, they do not seem ready to abandon themselves to the construction of a European collective identity.

Europe does not have an identity that is deeply and uniformly rooted: this memory is divided and confrontational, and the sovereignty of the nation-states that compose it is both a force and a weakness. "The European will inevitably be less attached to Europe than the French to France, than Germany to Germany."

"The nation is first an idea, not a reality as can be family, tribe, or clan. It presupposes a high stage of conceptual elaboration, with the assimilation of a common history, the acquisition of a heritage of memories organized in collective memory, and the submission of this memory to a work of symbolization which gives it meaning, around places of memory and symbols.

The national conscience is the fruit of a long historical elaboration, it is not innate. There is no nation without conscience to be one; there is no national consciousness that is not the result of a common past integrated in the present, that is, a common way of life, and the possibility of joint action. In reality, the problem is not to create a fictitious identity, but to preserve its own heritage (its memory) in its own identity.

Europe, like the nation, is not only a political and economic construct, but also a mental construct. It requires a story, a memory, symbols, myths, places of memory. Europe is not a nation, but nations.

The notion of "European identity" is, in our opinion, inappropriate. "Europe does not exist", but "Europeans exist". They do not know who they are, but they know that they are not the others, and others also recognize them.

As Jean-Baptiste Duroselle would say, "If I happen to be in the Midwestern United States, meeting a Hungarian or a Spaniard gives me a meeting with compatriots in a foreign country. . . But at Harvard I find myself less abroad than in the Flemish or Bavarian countryside. In many ways, I feel culturally and intellectually closer to Leopold Senghor than to my best English or Dutch friend, which does not detract from friendship. And when I am told that Europe is the country of law, I think of arbitrariness; that it is the country of human dignity, I think of racism; that it is that of reason, I think of romantic dreaming. And I find justice in Pennsylvania, human dignity among Arab nationalists, reason everywhere in the universe. "Europe is not incompatible with maintaining elements of cultural diversity. Cultural homogeneity is not required, and even undesirable, and in any case impossible. In France, the Group of People's Banks wanted to prepare for the changeover to the euro by training its staff and informing the interested public outside. The "training suitcase" which included two separate versions, one for external communication and the other for the internal training of the group's banks, became a problem when the group wanted to carry out a translation material for its Spanish subsidiaries: a literal transposition proved impossible for questions of language, culture, and too different networks, and an adaptation was necessary.

We are dealing more with "a vast multicultural DIY" than with the emergence of a "European identity". It is a "cultural universe of compromise" that involves the bringing together of different national cultures, including the combination does not rest on any relationship of subordination, but combines unity and diversity, the homogeneous and the different, the universal and the relative. This is the specificity of the community political configuration: no culture claims to impose its hegemony on others; contact is part of a process defined as voluntarist, concerted and irreversible: it is inseparable from a historical project.

Cultural differences are one of Europe's strengths. It is even better to speak of "cultural coexistence" rather than "multiculturalism". This expression has the advantages of being modest (it recalls that the relationship between European cultural forms is not resolved) and dynamic (it implies permanent adjustments, therefore an open situation, and not an organization of relations between cultures). It means that neither the problem of identity, nor that of the management of differences are solved. To speak of cultural cohabitation has the advantage of pointing out, unlike multiculturalism, that "everything has to be done". What is at stake is the political and cultural awareness of a community belonging to Europe.

Max Weber would then speak of "communalisation". It is a social relationship characterized by the disposition of social activity that is based on the "subjective" feeling (traditional or emotional) of participants belonging to the same community. To share certain qualities, to know the same situation or to have the same behavior, does not necessarily constitute a communalisation. It is only when, because of a "common feeling", individuals mutually orient one another in one way or another that a social relation is born between them.

The difficulty for the EU lies in two characteristics that distinguish it from traditional community groups. Unlike nation-states with well-defined territories, Europe defines itself as an open space: we cannot set the final limits; it is a large-scale community, encompassing a multiplicity of different populations and traditions. Moreover, it is a community under construction, continually planned. The difficulty comes from the fact that one proceeds in anticipation, in the name of a project to build, tending towards an ideal whose realization is always postponed in an ill-determined future.

There is a real gap between the discourse of the Community and the social and cultural reality of citizens who do not recognize themselves in this discourse. Community discourse is dominated by universalising values, with no European specificities. A differentiated approach adapted to the national context is essential to the success of the approach. It is therefore the responsibility of the Member States and opinion leaders to remedy the situation. Information and communication play their role of integration only within nation-states or sufficiently constituted communities, possessing the social and cultural substitute that grounds the symbolic and cultural space of politics. Otherwise, they are not enough to create a cultural dynamic and may, on the contrary, have a destabilizing effect.

## II - The euro, symbol of Europeans

### A - The concept of symbol

The symbol is a means of identification, a sign of recognition and rallying between members of the same community. Transmitted to the generations through folklore, tales, myths and legends, it is part of a collective and cultural inheritance.

Symbols are indispensable to the construction of any lasting identity, whether individual or collective. By identifying with symbols, the individual or group acquires a personality that allows him to fit into the social order: symbolism puts an end to the crisis of identity and the floating of opinion.

In order to ensure its reproduction, modern society temporarily invests objects, characters, events, or any other form of social discourse, and confers on them an interface value between meanings (borrowed from a corpus of truths, mythical or religious) and their real function, which is thus masked, and thus makes it possible to legitimize, by association or by analogy, new practices, supposed to be carriers of the future, that is to say of an unavoidable program.

We necessarily combine memory and program, the memory of an event or a founding person, and the prescription of practices associated with it. These practices must be anchored in a mythological fund old or traditional. A shared belief inherited from tradition may account for the compulsory adherence to certain practices that are otherwise necessary for the reproduction of the social system. The myth legitimizes the rite: the second cannot exist without the first. Life in society cannot, therefore, not meet legal or moral rules, or reciprocal commitments or organized constraint: it must be based on deeply held beliefs, on a set of principles that are going to say, compliance with which ensures the accomplishment by all common practices.

The usefulness of symbols for political power is undeniable. The symbol is mediator and unifying. As a concrete representative of the community, he affirms, maintains and strengthens membership and adherence to a common system of values and actions; it mobilizes and brings people together, and thus facilitates consensus. On the other hand, the symbol encourages respect for social norms and models, and promotes the maintenance of order and solidarity. Thus the

scepter and the crown, besides signaling the power, invite to respect it. Symbols not only reflect authority, they reinforce it.

The symbol has the great advantage of being imprecise and subjective, but without being arbitrary; he always responds to a social and political necessity. It appeals to emotion, to our creative mind and to our imagination. We do not understand it, we interpret it. As a result, it can be shared by many people, but not necessarily interpreted by all in the same way.

#### B - Currency as a symbol

Belonging to a payment community in which the means of payment are established, the currency is a sign of social recognition. Since the symbol itself is a sign of social recognition, money is therefore a symbol. It is a symbol by its nature of instrument, and by its iconography. It is at the same time one of the manifestations and one of the instruments of a strong process of symbolic and affective identification, constituting the group. A relationship is created when the goods and services are transferred, and this transfer must balance the relationship.

The first monetary instruments were already symbols. Some peoples have indeed ignored the intrinsic value and the weight of the standard to consider only the symbol. For example, several tons of "bush axes" were found in an area from northern Scotland to southern France, and from Ireland to eastern Poland, with high concentrations along the roads - commercial ones. The delicate nature, and the small size of the decorated bronze axes, of different sizes, which can be dated around 1000 BC, excluded all utilitarian use: the tranquil form symbolically expressed the settlement of debts and the rebalancing of social relations. We find this type of objects on different continents at about the same time. The oldest known mint coins in China belonged to the Zhou kings of the late sixth century BC. The Chinese traders also used knives, consisting of a ring attached to a handle; with time, successive disappearance of the blade and the handle led in the third century BC to keep only the ring, that is to say a coin with holes. Africa also used such exchange instruments, such as the iron anvil in Congo, or the copper cross of Katanga.

In antiquity, the pieces were symbols, signs of recognition. They first allowed the distribution of a symbol of power among the members of the city. When the warriors were reviewed by the king, a coin was distributed to each of them so that the relation to the king was direct and a unit was created: it was the census. By this gesture, the king gave a pledge of his confidence and of his sacred and protective authority. The warrior then held a sign of the king's recognition and a mark of belonging to the royal army. It was a question of counting the soldiers, of affirming the social unity of the royal authority and of keeping the troops loyal.

Jean-Michel Servet shows that the coins appeared in Greece before the commercial development, not directly as a means of payment, but as a need to standardize, to codify social relations troubled in particular by the extension of so-called commercial transactions. They have gradually defined a new political equilibrium in a growing number of cities. These, as political institutions, have played a key role in their use and propagation.

For Michel Pastoureau, historian of symbols, money is the sign of cohesion between those who use these same objects. Moreover, not only do these users see the symbols, but they touch them: to touch the portrait of the King or his motto was, according to him, "a symbolic act, not neutral."

Money is above all one of the forms of the social relation, characterized by the acceptance of a specific object as a means of exchange of goods, services or immaterial possessions. Even the

relationship between creditors and debtors, lenders and borrowers is a social bond. The act of lending and borrowing is not only an exchange of money, but also a cultural exchange that varies according to the social groups.

Money is a "total social fact". It symbolizes political sovereignty, at the same time as it constitutes the nutritive liquid essential for all economic activity, as well as a powerful social bond. Money is a human and social phenomenon, in that it incorporates all the components of life into society (cultural, political, social, economic) and ensures the regulation of all social relations.

The changeover to the euro with the introduction of coins and notes is a total change in consumer habits. This Grand Passage is not only a technical and economic operation, but also a historical, political, social and cultural innovation. The euro has revolutionized everyday life, and inevitably encountered resistance (interests, habits, fear). Money is not only an instrument at the service of power, but also an instrument at the service of the citizens, of which the success of the currency depends. Although it is still too early to say, the emergence of the euro should improve citizens' sense of belonging to the EU and help to forge a sense of European identity. But this notion of "European identity" is in our opinion inadequate; it is very likely that the euro favors a sense of belonging, a social bond between Europeans. In this sense, with the euro, we prefer to speak of a "symbol of belonging" rather than a "factor of European identity".

#### C - The euro, a symbol of belonging

Symbols are essential for the construction of any sustainable collective identity. A community of states such as the EU also needs such symbols, as they are expected to play an important role in the process of legitimation. For the time being, the symbolism of European integration is weak. Admittedly, there are, among others, the European flag, the European anthem, the European passport and the Community driving license. But it is the euro that is the last and true big European symbol. We have seen that money has a very strong relationship with political power, and that it is a factor of unity and a means of social integration. To perceive too much the economic and technical dimensions of money leads to forgetting its great power of political and cultural integration. The euro will have this power because money is certainly the symbol of a community of individuals.

The euro was coined on Friday, 13 December 1996 at the seat of the Irish Bank for banknotes and on 16 June 1997 at the Amsterdam European Council for coins. The process of printing and issuing coins and notes had to answer many questions about the number of cuts and coins, their face value, their sequence, the range of options for graphics, legal-institutional and logistical problems, choice of graphic themes, safety signs, practical aspects of launching (time, technical feasibility, costs, public acceptance, political considerations, prevention of counterfeiting).

A currency is a factor of identity; the euro should therefore be one of them. But changing money is difficult because we are all suspicious of the unknown. Uncertainty is the first and most important of all transition costs, and the first technical risk factor. Founder of the social bond in its principle, by the common reference that it institutes, money is also disruptive in its practice.

The changeover to the euro has not been a monetary reform or a devaluation. Concretely, it was a change of unit of account in full respect of the continuity of values and of all private or public contractual relations, implying for citizens to divide prices and units of values expressed in their national currency by a constant factor. The conversion rates were fixed on 1 January 1999 and



corresponded to the equilibrium exchange rates of each of the national currency units vis-à-vis the other euro area monetary units and vis-à-vis of the euro.

In practice, the changeover to the euro has been an "intellectual leap" depending on the behavior of the general public, but also on the possibilities of the various stakeholders and the existing infrastructure. The organization of the transition was the responsibility of the Member States. The situation in each of them varied according to the currency in circulation and the logistical infrastructure of the money supply (eg the value of banknotes and coins in circulation in relation to the GDP, the importance of the network of respective national central banks, the density of the network of ATMs distributing banknotes and the capacity to convert them rapidly to the euro).

A society is not a fixed whole, it is always evolving, but not at a uniform pace. Several groups, each with its own system of representation (beliefs, values, models), coexist or enter into the world in conflict (families, ethnic groups, classes). This complexity is reinforced when there is coexistence, generally conflictual systems of representations and beliefs heterogeneous, because it is a question of reconciling these systems and establishing a unity of meaning. Europe is precisely a "polycentric cultural reality".

Currency is such a close and common good that we sometimes forget the importance and the intimacy of the relationship that is established between the citizen and himself. The introduction of the euro is not just a set of technical rules. Money, according to Member States and individuals, conveys a set of values and ideals; the preparation of economic agents and the general public for its introduction could not be confined to practical arrangements, in this case the physical characteristics of coins and notes denominated in euro, which should be as easy to use as possible. It was necessary to take into account the questions of public opinion, its reactions of mistrust and its concerns. Different approaches existed to represent and explain the euro to European citizens, they varied according to national cultures and practices; they required a great deal of caution because the evocation of money could provoke emotional reactions. Thus, it was first necessary to convince a large part of Deutsche Bank's staff of the advantages brought by the euro so that it could then "sell" the euro to the customer.

The currency has an undeniable symbolic content. But every symbol is based on an affective dimension. Changing money involves rebuilding all its benchmarks, its value scales, its memory of prices and courses. Adopting the euro is indeed a big break with the past, in terms of name, value and form. In fact, the consumer has acquired some knowledge from experience and, faced with this loss of monetary references, he must build new ones. We also believe that this new acquisition and the confidence associated with it has not been fully manifested before the daily and manual use of money. Institutional guarantee elements are not the only ones to build confidence in money: the symbolism linked to money, as well as the daily monetary practice of the players also play a big role.

Emma Bonino, former European Commissioner responsible for Consumer Policy and Protection of Health, made the point very clearly of the need to take into account the symbolic dimension of money in order to draw the appropriate consequences for it building confidence in the euro. It speaks of "mother money" or "currency of education", that is, the currency in which one has learned to count, in which one has been educated, in which one appreciates the value things. This currency constitutes the great challenge of the introduction of the euro. The consumer must learn the euro, rebuild his value scales and his memory of prices, in short learn a new "monetary language". Coexistence between different denominations produces a long period of time when

users are asked, in a way, to become bilingual. "It's a bit like learning a language, it takes time and practice before you can 'think' in the new unit.

"The dollar is a good example of a vector information on relative price, that is to say, it performs a similar function to that of an international language" understood "by all, for example by a Saudi exporter who sells oil to an Italian importer. "Thus, the use of the dollar, as well as the use of English, saves the means of communication necessary to transmit the information. "EMU has political, economic and cultural implications that go well beyond the traditional concerns of consumer policy as such. It is easy to explain the benefits of the euro to consumers, most of them can see it first as a "problem", and especially at the time of transition. They could, and still can, feel like "strangers in their own country". That is why it is essential to pay attention not only to the economic, physical or logistical problems, but also to the psychological and social aspects of the transition. These aspects are essentially about what we call "the weight of habit". A good is defined as a monetary instrument in relation to a network of uses in which groups, individuals and institutions participate.

Money is the vehicle of particularly durable traditions, sometimes more resistant to the onslaught of time than the metal from which it is made. The weight of habits is expressed essentially in three ways: by the psychological price, by the handling of coins and notes, and by the immobilization of monetary types.

An identical sum appears to awaken, in this form, other affective reactions than under another. France is a typical example of a habit linked to the psychological price: the "heavy franc" may well go back more than forty years, many French have long spoken of "new francs" that they converted into "old francs" Which of us, aid a Frenchman before the arrival of the euro, resists the urge to "inflate" a sum to better dream of the winnings of the Lotto, to deplore the price of a little expensive car or denounce a scandalous situation (on a salary of 13 000 francs, I pay more than 300 000 francs of taxes per month)? .

In most countries, the euro amount is lower than its equivalent in national currency, and gives the impression that the salary was reduced. A German monthly wage of around EUR 1 500 replaces eg a salary of 3,000 marks, and citizens are necessarily wondering if their salary has not been halved ... The level of incomes seems to be decreasing, but so is the level of prices, hence the impression of losing wages, but of winning over the prices and the amount of taxes, in fact it is "just" a change of scale. in Ireland, the higher nominal values make the conversion appear to be inflationary.

The handling of the euro is carried out with a range of eight coins and seven banknotes. The range of national banknotes that circulated in the fifteen EU included four to eight coupures. The number issued annually per capita varied from 1 (Finland) to 84 (France) in 1994. Some countries use more cash than others, for example Germany compared to France. The biggest euro banknote is 500 euros, which corresponds to about 3,000 French francs (FF); gold the biggest French ticket was 500FF. This does not offend the Germans, however, who imposed the €500 denomination because they use more cash (especially large denominations) than checks and credit cards; the development of the cash payment in Germany is 1.5 times higher than what exists in France. As for the hundredth, it is new for countries which, like Italy, did not have submultiples.

Finally, the weight of habits has always been expressed by the immobilization of monetary types, and this for three different but complementary reasons: the still sacred character of royalty and

all that can represent it; trust in authority, inspired by the known and respected brands of the issuing public authority; and the attachment to graphics.

The weight of the habit is such that certain currencies had an immense longevity. The British gold sovereigns were still stamped "1925" 30 years later! Officially, it was to maintain the practice of certain techniques in the monetary workshop. In reality, these sovereigns were, in certain trading places, less well-rated than those who carried the effigy of a king.

When Maria Theresa of Austria (Empress of Austria, Queen of Hungary and Bohemia) died in 1780, it was customary for her effectiveness to be replaced on each new thaler by that of her successor Joseph II. This risked harming the trade in thaler which, from the Levant in Africa to Java, was identified with the image of Marie-Thérèse. It was therefore necessary to "save the face of the thaler, without prejudicing imperial majesty". After many meetings, debates and discussions, the workshops received the order in 1783 to strike a thaler with the effigy of Marie-Therese, with the date "1780" invariably refrapped ... This thaler thus beaten was strictly reserved for export and took the name of "Levant Thaler"; the other thalers were reserved for the internal market.

Changing money is a revolution. Even changing graphics is an event. But that is not always easy: here too, tradition and habits play a big role. Athens used the tétradrachme the owl for 5 centuries (from the fifth to the first century BC.) With no overall change in initial type (Athena on the obverse and the owl on the reverse) while Athens was the very advanced era in the artistic and aesthetic fields; this conservatism was linked to the success of the currency: it was not daring to change its appearance for fear of shaking public confidence ... Whereas in the fifteenth century, all the Italian cities adopted the teston, Florence was the only one to refuse it because it considered it too revolutionary: then capital of the world trade, it did not want to change its monetary types, nor to dethrone its famous gold florin created in 1252; it did not join the teston until 1532, when Alexandre de Medici returned in 1532. Venice reasoned in the same way with its sequin in 1284 and depicting St. Mark putting the banner back to the city, to the doge kneeling. In 1958, to make it easier to accept the passage to the new franc, worth 100 ancient francs, it was attached to a typology already known: the Semeuse de Roty.

The strength of public habits can greatly compromise the effectiveness of a monetary union. If the public has become accustomed to certain payment methods or particular types of currencies, it may be slow to change and adopt what the new monetary system requires.

Some factors seem "irrational", but in reality there is no irrationality, only the unpredictable! One of the best examples is reported by Philippe Flandrin in his account of the history of thaler, from the moment when an order of April 13, 1752 authorized the export of this currency. Exports fell from 685,000 pieces in 1768 to 205,000 in 1772. An inquiry was immediately made with the Turkish merchants. It appeared at first that this disaffection was due to the competition of Prussia and Saxony, which made their own thalers pass through other channels. But the real reason was that since 1741, the date of the first strike, Maria Theresa of Austria was represented with a deep neck ... which disappeared on the new coins struck after the death of her husband in 1765: she appeared veiled there and dressed in a mourning coat. The Levantines, unanimous, demanded that the mourning of the Empress of the Holy Roman Empire be ended, otherwise they would continue to buy Prussian thalers, Saxons, and even Spanish realms! The Empress was begged to give up her mourning clothes in the name of higher economic interests, which she accepted. In 1776, a new coin was struck with a restored Maria Theresa, and the price of the thaler rose again soaring on the foreign exchange market!

Economic rationality is one aspect of a larger rationality, that of social life. This aspect is provisional and relative. "There is no rationality in itself or absolute rationality. The rational of today may be the irrational of tomorrow, the rational of one society may be the irrationality of another. "A conduct which seems to us" irrational "according to our criteria finds a rationality of its own when it is placed in its social, historical, cultural and political context. The conformity of a regime with the system dominating representations and beliefs is not established by a rational calculation; it is due to many factors that are largely beyond the control of the leaders.

Insofar as there is no irrationality but the unforeseeable, the major uncertainty in the case of the euro concerns the duration of learning and the nuanced reactions. They vary according to the populations concerned, and also according to the individuals, according to a large number of variables (age, aptitude for mental calculation, type and extent of the consumption, sparing or saving character, sedentary life or not, report to the world, mobility, illiteracy, illiteracy, impaired vision, level of poverty, social exclusion, emigrated status, total lack of interest in all matters relating to money). It is normal for citizens to be disturbed. The lessons of the other monetary reforms teach us that adaptation time, the exact duration of which cannot be known, is necessary. In monetary matters, "it is very difficult to react by legal texts against the force of things."

The results of the Eurobarometer carried out between February and May 1996 among 3,778 "decision-makers" generally show that support for the introduction of the single currency is much higher among high-level decision-makers than among the general public. The four main reasons given by those in favor are economic, political, commercial and monetary. As for the concerns of those who are against, some relate to more psychological aspects such as the fear of losing its "symbol of national pride".

Consumers represent a very differentiated population; their needs in relation to the euro are different. As long as the member countries of the Union have not accepted that money is based on "fundamentally philosophical fundamentals", we will be close to a monetary misunderstanding, or a risk of failure of the euro. Let us consider the specific case of Germany: the abandonment of the mark is felt by the Germans as a mourning.

Germany having been ostracized by the international community after the Second World War, it was its economic performance that enabled it to regain its place on the international scene. The mark has become a reference currency, it has taken on a symbolic dimension in the German collective consciousness, and has become the symbol of the German economic revival, especially as Germany has great difficulties with its national symbolism, probably due to discontinuities in the history of the country. Like all currencies, the mark is not just a currency, it is also a factor of identity, a founding myth. As Chancellor Kohl often reminded them, the Germans got their money before having a national anthem or flag.

#### D - The international identity of the euro

In the official discourse EU, the single currency, in addition to its many qualities, will be one of the strongest currencies in the world and a factor of international stability (see Kirrane [2003]). The EU also defends the idea that, "in fact, Member States will lose a prerogative, which in practice they cannot use", and that the euro will offer Europe a consistent monetary weight. its economic and commercial role in an international monetary system today dominated by the

dollar. The single currency will, according to the EU, be an asset against external shocks: better than isolated and dispersed measures, it will strengthen its collective resistance capacity.

Identity asserts itself in relation to the outside. It is defined both as an affirmation of Self and a differentiation of the Other. Therefore, Europe cannot be exclusively defined in itself, it must be defined in relation to others, even from their point of view.

By forcing the Member EU States to show solidarity and overall strength on the international stage, the euro will create and reinforce among Europeans themselves the feeling that they have shared interests worthy of being defended in common.

A currency has an international vocation and is accepted abroad only if the issuing State is politically and economically powerful. It is a constant throughout the history of money. The currencies which dominated the great trade and were widely diffused, were always imitated: the barbarian cities which copied Athens' "owl" currencies sought to benefit from the prestige and confidence attached to this currency, the value of which was recognized far from its place of origin, as far as Sicily, Syria and Egypt. The international success of the British "sovereign" gave great prestige to British commerce and maintained the unity of commercial relations; it is even said that in Egypt their circulating percentage was higher than that observed in England.

Each currency is in principle official only in relation to the legal order of the country of issue. The status of international money is particularly important. He asks that different conditions be fulfilled. A currency is first considered "international" if it fulfills the three functions usual means of payment (exchange instrument), unit of account (value standard), and value reserve, beyond its emission frontiers.

Since the use of money outside its country of issue depends mainly on the markets, an international currency is more of a transaction instrument and a unit of account than a store of value: that is why the number of currencies used at the international level is usually limited to one currency, or a very small number (see Kirrane [2003]). This is the case of the dollar. The international monetary system is currently dominated by the American currency, "norm-money", which fulfills the three functions listed above. The dollar has seen its role grow outside its territory and expand geographically. It is an international currency in the sense that, among other things, it is either a unit of account for the exchange of goods at the international level (crude oil), or a currency in countries where the local currency is weak and unstable. Its stability is the key to its success.

The United States has always been ubiquitous in the EU thinking on the European monetary identity. The economic weight of the EU-15 represents more than 30% of GDP global compared with 23% for the United States. In 1996, the share of US exports was only 15.2%, but 53% of global transactions (foreign exchange, commercial and financial transactions) were made in dollars. The economic characteristics of the country of issue, including its share of world trade and the size of its economy, are among the decisive factors for the international use of money: the larger a country accounts for a large share of world trade, the more its currency is likely to be known to traders, and the more it renders services as a unit of account and instrument of transaction. The US capital market is the largest and deepest in the world. The EU is the world's largest trading power, but the dollar's hegemony is still present.

A European currency will not only have an impact on the concrete perception of Europe by the rest of the world, but also on the same perception by European citizens. As an identity is always

defined in relation to the outside world, the international success of the euro will probably contribute to creating a real sense of European belonging needs symbols. The euro is one of them. It's not just a technical project. And, let's face it, cultural diversity is not a handicap; on the contrary, it constitutes an element of balance that must be kept at all costs to avoid phenomena of national frustration.

The ignorance of European mutual histories is great, as shown for example by Franco-German relations. The Germans want monetary policy as far as possible free from the right of decision in politics; France, on the other hand, considers money as a means at the service of politics. These divergences are not theoretical, but are based on historical experiences.

How to build something together when no one understands the cultural heritages, the references and the symbols with which others think? The "common ground" of knowledge of the past is indispensable to face the future. It is therefore necessary to overcome ignorance, to deepen the knowledge of differences so that mistrust towards one another diminishes. The double work on identity consists in valuing everyone's identity and simultaneously opening up to the other's knowledge. One accepts to come closer to others if one does not feel threatened by him. Europeans are all Europeans, but "they are, simply, in a different way". Confidence is gradually built up as mutual knowledge grows ingredient to the co-operation that it is a product of it.

History shows that money today only has a real status if it fulfills two conditions: to have received a definition of public authority and to be accepted by the citizens for whom it is intended. Money is a social phenomenon whose use as a means of payment is based on the trust that men place in it. The only durable good money is that which enjoys the trust of the users: because they deserve it for their intrinsic qualities, and especially because they impose themselves by force of circumstances and then enter definitively into the uses and become almost a cultural fact. There is a subtle dialectic between private action and institutional creation to achieve confidence in the currency. Confidence arises at the same time from institutional guarantees, from a pre-existing social climate, from an adequate practice of the actors social, and user consensus. Money can be born of a private initiative, or suffer a failure despite its legal basis. States are both creators and tributaries of these social and cultural dynamics.

Therefore, the "process of social integration of money", that is to say the time of integration of money in the monetary practices of the actors, is long. An instrument becomes money only from the moment it acquires a past, and remains so only if it can be projected into the future by its means; the whole problem of the monetary character is therefore limited to memory and anticipation. "A thing is not born money: it becomes it," and it even becomes a reprieve, according to the variations of the confidence.

A growing sense of belonging to a common space is needed. It is, so to speak, a looping process: a common consciousness is needed for the structures to be accepted and for this consciousness to reinforce itself. The impetus is therefore both top and bottom, ie a political will and a common sense of belonging on the part of the citizens.

The euro is the first major European project that involves all citizens to this extent and calls for their participation. With the euro, European citizens have the concrete symbol of their belonging to the same community. The single European currency will certainly have a power of political and cultural integration, and an impact on the concrete perception of Europe by European citizens but at the cost of greater openness. (see Kirrane [1996]). For the moment, Europe still

belongs to the order of the means, serving an end which, for most political authorities, is still the national interest.

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