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"LEARNING HISTORY

TO UNDERSTAND AND EXPERIENCE CULTURAL DIVERSITY TODAY"

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General Report

Symposium on

"Learning history to understand and experience

cultural diversity today"

Report by

Mr Jean-Michel LECLERCQ
France

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INTRODUCTION

The Symposium *Learning history to understand and experience cultural diversity today* was held at Council of Europe headquarters in Strasbourg on 29 and 30 October 2007 in the context of the project *The Image of the Other in History Teaching*. There were 111 participants from most of the member states of the Council of Europe, as well as representatives of a great many international organisations involved in intercultural dialogue, including dialogue between the Muslim world and Europe.

The impression that strongly emerged from the plenary sessions, round tables, working group discussions and other activities in the programme, which is appended, was that the title of the Symposium was not to be understood as referring simply to the use of resources already available in the form of historical knowledge or history-teaching practices. The idea was to come up with new ways of approaching history and new teaching methods in which young people could be actively involved. The thread running through these new approaches was the link between history and cultural diversity, which has long been established in the Council of Europe and was reaffirmed on this occasion.

For this reason it seems only natural that this report should be divided into four sections. The first recalls the importance the Council of Europe affords to the historical perspective as a means of grasping the nature of multicultural societies and the way in which they operate. The second sets out the new profile to be given to historical analysis so that it effectively takes cultural diversity into account. The third section explores the most suitable ways of ensuring that pupils' knowledge, attitudes and behaviour reflect this approach. Lastly, it should not be forgotten that the new approaches to the very conception of history and its teaching that were advocated sometimes differ radically from what has prevailed up till now. The last section will therefore try to assess how likely it is that the changes in question will actually be made and, more specifically, the extent to which the objectives the Symposium was set have been achieved.

I.   REAFFIRMATION OF THE LINK BETWEEN HISTORICAL ANALYSIS AND THE APPROACH TO MULTICULTURALISM

The Council of Europe has long highlighted the key contribution historical analysis can make to an appropriate view of multicultural societies. This contribution is at the heart of the project *The Image of the Other in History Teaching* and was, only naturally, reaffirmed in some detail at the Symposium.

1.1.   The political background to the Symposium

Since its inception, the Council of Europe has sought to make historical knowledge an instrument for fostering intercultural dialogue. In the aftermath of the Second World War, the revision of the school history textbooks used by the former warring states was the first evidence of this.

In fact, there is no need to go back that far. The last two decades provide many illustrations of the fact that there is still a desire to promote an intercultural vision of history so that everyone can learn about and assimilate the existence and key features of cultural diversity[1]. Recommendation 1283 (1996) stated that *history is one of several ways of retrieving [one's] past and creating a cultural identity*. Recommendation (2001) 15 of the Committee of Ministers on *history teaching in twenty-first century Europe* placed still greater emphasis on the expected benefits of history teaching as a means of encouraging the *debate based on multiperspectivity* that was essential to the development and promotion of intercultural dialogue.

It is therefore hardly surprising that the project *The Image of the Other in History Teaching* should refer to official declarations that have already called for such dialogue. According to the Action Plan adopted at the Third Summit of Heads of State and Government of member states of the Council of Europe in Warsaw in May 2005, *dialogue between cultures is also fostered by accurate understanding of history*[2]. The *Declaration on the Council of Europe's Strategy for Developing Intercultural Dialogue* (Faro, October 2005) took up and stressed the same theme. It emphasises in particular the need to develop *knowledge of history, cultures, arts and religions, and [highlight] elements illustrating both the historical and the contemporary influence of cultures and civilisations on each other, as well as cultural cross-fertilisation*[3].

As for the objectives assigned to the activities of the Council of Europe in the field of history teaching, the 22nd session of the Standing Conference of European Ministers of Education explicitly linked them to those of the project *The Image of the Other in History Teaching*. The study of history should be adapted to the increasingly multicultural nature of European societies and should seek to promote the values upheld by the Council of Europe, help people to get on with one another, and foster mutual understanding in the various contexts. Changes in the way history is studied and new ways of teaching it are needed in schools and in out-of-school education so as to facilitate intercultural and interfaith dialogue. It is for this reason that, at the opening of the Symposium, Mr Jean-Pierre Titz, Head of the History Teaching Division, emphasised the political nature of the project, which is designed to produce a new recommendation on history teaching. This shows the extent to which the project can be seen as a cornerstone of the Council of Europe's work and how important the Symposium was as the first stage of the project.

1.2.   The perspective of the Symposium

Accordingly, the Symposium was designed as a forum in which better to explain the convincing reasons behind the need to use history to deal appropriately with the various aspects of multicultural societies and the advantages of doing so.

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[1] Leclef, Daphné, *Managing cultural diversity*, Project "Democracy, human rights, minorities: educational and cultural aspects, Council of Europe, 1997.
[2] Document DGIV/EDU/HISTIM (2006) 07 rev., p.3.
[3] Ibid.

The opening address by Ms Gabriella Battaini-Dragoni, Director General of Education, Culture and Heritage, Youth and Sport, was particularly informative in this regard. She strongly emphasised that multiculturalism was a burning issue. The question that arose was whether it was an advantage or a threat to our societies. As she saw it, the answer was not in doubt, so long as there was genuine intercultural dialogue, the benefits of which were unquestionable. Such dialogue could avert or manage the risks inherent in diversity, through conflict resolution. Accordingly, from being a danger, diversity, once properly understood and addressed, became a hallmark of the richness of a society and enhanced its image. It allowed the values of tolerance, democracy and human rights, which should enable societies to coexist with due regard for their differences, to prevail and made for mutual understanding. The development of intercultural dialogue implied a knowledge of the history of the societies in which it was taking place. All those societies had been a long time in the making and had experienced turbulent relationships and numerous incidences of cross-fertilisation. Only a knowledge of the past could reveal their special characteristics and the effects these had on current situations and on any attendant difficulties. In particular, racism, nationalism, anti-Semitism and Islamophobia still existed. One remedy for such deviant attitudes that should never be overlooked was to reveal the distortions of the past that bred hatred and violence. The skills required for intercultural dialogue were, moreover, broadly the same as those needed to study history, for example critical faculties and the ability to interpret events from different points of view. The White Paper on Intercultural Dialogue shortly to be published by the Council of Europe would make a point of emphasising the key role of history.

The other statements during the opening session likewise stressed the need for intercultural dialogue and pointed to its close link with historical knowledge. Ms Sue Bolan, representing the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe, said that Europe's history was one of destruction and reconstruction. Accordingly, the fact that Europe was currently at peace meant that continuing efforts were needed to maintain this state of affairs. To this end, it was necessary to promote intercultural and interfaith dialogue, which was impossible without a knowledge of the past and unless that knowledge was applied to the present. Ms Annelise Oeschger, President of the Conference of International Non-Governmental Organisations of the Council of Europe, began by welcoming the project to build a Europe in which people could live in harmony. History was an incredibly strong weapon because it enabled citizens to know about the reality of past and present situations and, since anyone could make use of it, it was the best form of protection against manipulation. Mr François Audigier, who was responsible for introducing the Symposium, spoke along the same lines. There were not only peaceful contacts between cultures and civilisations but also power relationships and conflicts, and this was true of both the present and the past. The purpose of history was to know about the past but the questions being asked in the present day were not foreign to it because the past offered examples of what to do or not to do. These words echoed the initial remark by Mr Arild Thorbjornsen, Chair of the project group on *The Image of the Other in History Teaching*, to the effect that history helps us to understand the past, the present and the future, and this raises the question of what type(s) of history and what types of historical account we need to live together, how we will live together and to what purpose.

The issues to be addressed at the Symposium were thus clearly defined: they lay at the crossroads of intercultural dialogue and historical analysis, which need to join forces in order, as was said during the opening session, for peace, harmony and solidarity to prevail within multicultural societies and in relations between them.

There is therefore reason to believe that this implies a broader view of both multicultural societies and the approaches inherent to history.

It is striking that we now refer to multicultural societies as if all societies were multicultural. This is explained by the intensification of migration and movements of people in Europe, and indeed throughout the world. These phenomena are said to have made multiculturalism universal, whereas it was once restricted to cases where what were called minorities existed in a country. Nowadays, however, as a result of the development of communications and growing interaction, it is clear that all societies have close relations with others. Intercultural dialogue is seen as a desirable means of establishing relations not only between the cultures of a given society but among all societies, whether or not they can be termed multicultural. It is as if each society could be considered as having a culture whose degree of homogeneity varies without compromising its specificity. Conversely, moreover, the presence of a diversity of cultures in a society is far more frequently interpreted as a specific characteristic of its culture than as an obstacle to the existence of a culture specific to that society. Accordingly, all the issues connected with cultural diversity can be considered as being completely general in scope at European or even global level and not as peculiar to a few societies.

One senses that historical analysis is similarly broadening in terms of scope and the main themes addressed. Just as cultural diversity is found everywhere, there is a need for multiple histories. Firstly, there is the plurality of histories that results from taking account of the diversity of cultures in a particular society, each of which has a history. Secondly, those histories are themselves increasingly plural. In the old days, because there was virtually no contact except in the event of conflict, they could virtually ignore one another, but now they are constantly observing one another and making comparisons. Moreover, each history is plural from two points of view. On the one hand, depending on the situations studied and the main concerns, it may become more political, more social or more cultural. On the other hand, having abandoned positivist and scientist theories, it is able to offer several interpretations of the same situation.

We can infer that, in order to facilitate intercultural dialogue, this plurality of historical knowledge needs to be fully exploited with due regard for the nature and complexity of the situations in which it is to be used. In placing itself at the service of intercultural dialogue, it must try to avoid the pitfall decried by historians hostile to nationalism and sectarianism, according to whom *a history that serves is a history in thrall*. Teachers are therefore faced with two requirements that are difficult to reconcile: the need to teach the methodology without which so-called historical knowledge would be impossible and the need to instil non-negotiable values. Another comparable difficulty is how to address the memories from which historical knowledge is supposed to distance itself, but of which cultures never lose sight.

The cultural dialogue that history is called upon to support is now unprecedented in scale and complexity. It is no longer a matter of establishing dialogue simply between a majority society and minorities, but in all societies. For the purpose of informing and stimulating this dialogue, history and its teaching are seeing their role extended to areas that have previously been little explored and to the solution of thorny problems.

II.   WHAT TYPE OF HISTORY IS NEEDED TO TAKE ACCOUNT OF CULTURAL DIVERSITY AND FOSTER INTERCULTURAL DIALOGUE?

What profile should be given to history if it is to take cultural diversity into account and foster intercultural dialogue? This initial question facing the Symposium could not but appear at once natural and insidious. It goes virtually without saying that history should be interested in cultural diversity, which is to a great extent the result of historical developments and is clearly an historical fact. But if history has to change in order to embrace diversity, that surely implies two suppositions. Firstly, that history as it is practised is incapable of doing so and, secondly, that in order to do so history would have to adopt a new, as yet undefined, profile that is likely to elicit objections, given the requirements stemming from established, recognised historical knowledge. As for fostering intercultural dialogue, this is an undertaking that in many respects seems to be more a matter of the historian's personal choice that of professional practice. In order for it to be otherwise, a different form of history would be needed, and its validity would have to be demonstrated or remain in doubt. This impression was often evident in the discussions during the Symposium: there were what Mr Christoph Wulf would have called *open historians* and those who, in order to conform to historical methodology and take account of the constraints of school teaching, preferred to stick to methods that were less innovative but easier to master. The comment by Ms Gerdien Jonker of the Georg-Eckert-Institut for research on school textbooks, to the effect that historians have numerous sources at their disposal whereas pupils usually work with only a couple of documents, was a good illustration of the fact that there could be two points of view. They were almost never diametrically opposed, however, because during the meeting there gradually emerged a broader conception of history that made it possible to look at it from new angles without actually undertaking what were seen as drastic changes.

2.1.   Disarming history teaching

This is the case with the idea of *disarming*[4] history teaching, expressed in the summary of the discussions of the first preparatory seminar for the Symposium and taken up by Mr Jean-Pierre Titz in his introduction to the Symposium. What this meant was abandoning a tradition to which many historians have been faithful and which confined them in many respects and resulted in various forms of intolerance. This tradition bred the forms of nationalism and sectarianism that the Council of Europe has constantly denounced, advocating a complete change of approach. Reference to specific features, which is a perfectly acceptable approach, should not be accompanied by a refusal to recognise those of others. On the contrary, the approach to one specific feature should at the same time

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[4] Document DGIV/EDU/HISTDIM(2007)01 p. 5.

draw attention to everything that links it to others, which it needs, not to assert itself by virtue of opposition and exclusion, but to become part of a network of recognised and accepted differences. There is always a danger, however, that the old demons will re-emerge, and this point was made at the Symposium. This concern to disarm history is therefore a prerequisite if the investigation of cultural diversity and the encouragement of intercultural dialogue are to be fully a matter for history.

The implications of this choice were examined more from the point of view of history teaching than from that of history as a means of acquiring knowledge in itself. This was only natural, given that both the Symposium and the project of which it is a part expressly concern history teaching. History teaching, however, always rests on history as a means of acquiring knowledge. The frequent mention of the gap between history as a means of acquiring knowledge and what is taught in schools clearly shows this. The most plausible explanation of the primacy given to teaching practice is that the emphasis on the analysis and dissemination of good practice made it possible to avoid issues that would have led to discussions that many participants might have considered overly long and theoretical. There were many indications that these issues were in everybody's mind, however. For instance, several of the plenary session presentations and working group discussions mentioned the often divergent conceptions of historical approaches, for example with respect to the degree of rigour or conviction that was possible or should be required of their conclusions. At the risk of being accused of extrapolating, I shall therefore try, in this report, to explain further what was merely hinted at during the Symposium.

2.2. A broader conception of history

The need to teach history in such a way that it is within pupils' grasp was reaffirmed many times. This did not, however, mean keeping to a narrow conception of history, based on a strictly defined approach in predetermined areas. The prerequisites for well-founded knowledge, such as methodical interpretation of sources and the need to distance oneself from experiences, were not overlooked. But the register in which the relevant analyses could be conducted was opened up considerably. The view was that such analyses could be carried out both dispassionately, in the case of events that had taken place in the distant past, and in the heat of the moment, in the case of what were almost current events. It was also accepted that such analyses could equally well be conducted within the classroom and in other areas of economic, cultural and community life.

Thus it was acknowledged that history can deliver a multiplicity of messages that enable it to be present not only in schools, universities and research centres but also in bookshops and museums and on television and cinema screens. We were thus invited to become aware of the ubiquity of history. This does not mean that its image is so blurred as to be indistinguishable, but that history represents a range of approaches with different interests and canons. The resulting messages are characterised by an uneven concern for rigour but are nevertheless part of similar efforts to acquire knowledge. The plurality of these messages is evidence of the plurality of history itself, and always allows new approaches, because it jettisons a conception of history that is too exacting and too

narrow or simplistic in favour of a conception of history as a *soft science*, as one French historian put it.

2.3. History as a dialectic between us and others

The practice of this form of history, especially when it has to confront cultural diversity, does not, however, open the way to idyllic debates and meetings that encounter no obstacles. On the contrary, most of what was said during the Symposium, and particularly in the working groups, emphasised the difficulties. As Mr Audigier pointed out, it is not cultures that meet but individuals, whose representativeness in terms of the group to which they belong is variable and who have often unpredictable reactions to the other party. Moreover, as Ms Luisa Black and Ms Danielle Leclerc stressed, the "Other" is imagined or appears with very diverse faces, each of which almost always triggers very different reactions in the observer or interlocutor. Every individual is part of an "us", of a collective consciousness or mentality that gives him or her and others an image that is always likely to give rise to misunderstandings. A critical accommodation constantly needs to be made, therefore, to bring into focus the image of the "Other" conveyed in dialogue. This is a process that takes time and is conducted in a context of uncertainty, in contrast to the immediate and unquestionable assurances that a history closed in on itself allows. Faced with cultural diversity and experiences of intercultural dialogue, history is therefore constructed on this dialectic between us and others, which is a series of contrasting points in time. There are, in turn, moments of naive trust in the faithfulness of the images projected by interlocutors, and times of distrust prompted by the discovery of false images. There is also the difficult and sometimes painful process of exercising critical faculties, which entails negotiating one's way between sympathy or empathy and indifference or hostility. Moreover, the dialectic straddles past and present. It takes place in the present when cultural diversity is a fact at a specific point in time. But the meaning of that point in time can rarely be discerned and grasped without reference to the past. History based on an intercultural perspective has to get to grips with the multiplicity of such points in time, or levels of analysis, and this is a frequent source of difficulty.

2.4. A history of differences rather than similarities

Like any dialectic, the dialectic between us and others helps to overcome differences, but without there being any hope of their completely disappearing. In fact, the objective of intercultural dialogue is not to eliminate cultural diversity, without which it would serve no purpose. The world of such dialogue is therefore one in which differences are accepted as the norm.

It should be recalled that for a long time, and in many contexts, differences were regarded as exceptions to a model that could not be cast aside, or were even considered deviant. When the model became less rigid, differences were merely tolerated and were constantly at risk of being prohibited again when the tide turned. The totalitarian regimes of the twentieth century and their more recent versions gave rise to many such situations. Every intransigent ideology, every hegemonic tendency in any field whatsoever, produces results of this kind.

Less dangerously, but equally clearly, the priority given to the search for similarities of whatever sort gives analogous results. Anything that does not fit in with the similarities identified becomes an exception. This leads to the establishment of a dominant model that weakens the position of other systems. By contrast, recognition of the right to be different is also recognition of a diversity in which differences have become part of the way of life.

2.5. Comparison based on differences

If recognition of differences is to have its full impact, advantage should be taken of such recognition to show that it enables the most revealing comparisons to be made. For a long time it was generally accepted that it was possible only to compare like with like. But such comparisons were bound to reveal things that were identical, and yet this was of interest only if some differences were identified. It is for this reason that, according to contemporary epistemologists, who consider comparison to be an essential tool for the purpose of analysis and acquiring knowledge, it is only when it is applied to differences that a comparison can produce significant information about the terms of comparison.

This was confirmed on many occasions during the Symposium. When mention was made of differences in one field or another, the need to make comparisons was immediately emphasised. This was particularly clear in one working group, in connection with school textbooks and good practice. When efforts were made to pinpoint similarities, the first impression was one of an impenetrable jungle, but a series of evocative contrasts emerged when the situation was considered from the point of view of differences.

Comparative history has been little practised so far because it would come up against situations too different to enable comparisons to be made. Taking difference and diversity into account as the characteristic feature of these situations would surely be the way to alleviate apprehension and thus give history a stronger comparative dimension, which it needs if its epistemological status is to have firmer foundations.

It should not be forgotten, either, that a comparison affords all the terms of comparison equal importance, at least in theory. Indeed, the danger of purely quantitative comparisons is that there is a risk of insidiously diverging from the terms of comparison by attempting to classify or to establish a hierarchy.. Comparisons based on differences make it possible to avoid this pitfall to a large extent, by favouring qualitative approaches, which are also the ones that history prefers. By concentrating on cultural diversity, history is encouraged to make the comparisons most in keeping with its nature and ambitions.

2.6. In favour of a cultural history

It was only natural that, as people came round to these points of view, they expected new light to be shed on the world of cultures, which have become one of the aspects of past

and present societies that are attracting the most attention. This has led to a more cultural or, indeed, a completely cultural history being envisaged.

The changes that led from a history that was largely political, sometimes ironically referred to as the history of battles, to a social and cultural history were hardly mentioned, but the importance to be afforded to the perceptions and symbols that punctuate the life of a society was fully recognised. It is common knowledge that cultural history calls for attention to be paid to these - indeed, this is what makes it original. It may also be considered that what underlay, or was implied by, many of the comments was a reference to the concept of mentality, which has elicited so much interest among cultural historians that there are those who believe cultural history should have focused on the study of mentalities.

The appropriateness of giving significant space to the history of culture in cultural history also emerged. This was recognised as essential because every culture is part of a historical process, which means that it experiences setbacks that give it a very different existence from the almost miraculous one with which some myths endow it. Cultures, like anything with a history, are likely to have periods of growth and decline, of being recognised and celebrated and of being neglected or even forgotten.

It was therefore cultural history that appeared to offer the most revealing picture of a society, through its perception of that society's behaviour, both actual and imagined. It is from this angle that we can hope to make history teaching more attractive by allowing people into the experience of others. It is also the form of history most conducive to bringing out differences, which can be explained and therefore better understood. In any event, cultural history was clearly seen as the best way of enabling the dialectic between us and others to provide comprehensive images of others and prompt us to take a clear-sighted look at ourselves

2.7.   Interest in the key concepts of cultural history

The interest in cultural history was also explicitly demonstrated by the importance afforded to an enhanced perception of its key concepts, for example culture and identity.

Moreover, the working documents the Secretariat had prepared for the Symposium had stressed the need to clarify these at least, as it would probably not be possible to come up with indisputable definitions of them. Some presentations and several statements in the working groups attempted to do this.

The concept of culture was not completely disengaged from the plurality of sometimes conflicting meanings, embracing at once aspects of daily life and literary and artistic output. Nevertheless, what prevailed was what Mr Wulf referred to as a comprehensive vision of culture that included its various facets without favouring or excluding any of them. Accordingly, the culture of a society was seen in terms of the various ways in which it held sway over its environment. Frequent observations about the organisation and functioning of cultures enabled their nature to be identified more clearly. It was noted

that no culture could be either completely closed or fully open to others and that the common destiny of all cultures was therefore inevitably cross-fertilisation, which it would be unrealistic to seek to limit or stop. The authenticity of a culture was therefore always more relative than absolute and stemmed more from the fact that it was professed by public opinion than from actual facts. Interculturalism should therefore be seen as something natural to every culture and individual. This was overlooked solely as a result of circumstances that were unfortunately all too frequent. This should not, however, prevent the clash of cultures from being seen as pathological. Accordingly, the call for intercultural dialogue would not appear to be a move towards a new, undiscovered horizon but a return to normality that overcomes unseemly obstacles.

The other key concept of cultural history that elicited much comment was identity, on which useful light was shed. There was considerable agreement on the subject, in particular with regard to recognition of the versatility and polymorphism of individual identities, which stem from the multiplicity of roles all individuals have to assume. Their family role, their working role and their social role make them play different parts that do not usually have the same profile or share only certain traits of a common physiognomy. Most of these roles depend on the society in which they can be played out. There is therefore an unshakeable relationship between personal identity and collective identity, even though it is not possible to see them as being based on the same model. Individual roles and collective roles are not always the same. An individual and a group do not react in the same way to difficulties and failure in the series of roles they have to assume. Disturbances of the individual personality as a result of dissatisfaction with the roles themselves or the frustration resulting from their poor execution are well-known in both their mild and their serious forms. The equivalent phenomena at the collective level are far less well known or at any rate give rise to interpretations that are debatable. Be that as it may, access to a core identity on both levels is not easy. This is probably particularly clear in the case of national identity, which seems never to have been fully achieved, whether it is considered to be based on the idea of a national character or on that of a mentality, as suggested by cultural anthropologists and social psychologists, and even by some historians. Attempts to apply these concepts always result in views that are oversimplified or unduly rigid. In the final analysis, we are faced with identities that are far more complex and far less homogeneous than we cared to imagine initially. However, this is also reason to be optimistic about the chances of intercultural dialogue. When such dialogue is rejected by an individual or group, one can hope that it is only one aspect of the identity in question that is hostile to dialogue and assume that another aspect may be in favour of it. This is obviously what makes intercultural dialogue a temporal process. Sometimes it is necessary to wait for the time when it becomes possible.

These aspects of identity have never, of course, been without consequence for the way in which the image of the "Other" is seen. The plurality of identities under which the "Other" may be perceived was noted: sometimes as a close neighbour in every respect, sometimes as a stranger, geographically and culturally distant, with a whole series of variations between these two extremes. Such experiences have led to two versions of the image of the "Other" being distinguished, as happens with all images: one in which the image is taken to be simply a mirror image, in other words a faithful portrayal of its

subject, unless the mirror is flawed, and another in which the image is, on the contrary, a construct that has been carefully elaborated, with all the attendant risks. Everything militates in favour of the mirror image being a dangerous illusion. In the first place, subjectivity intervenes in the view of the "Other", and this means we are not dealing with an ordinary mirror but with a distorting mirror. Secondly, because of the multiplicity of its component roles, an identity cannot be conveyed solely in the role that is seen by another party, who would in that case be expected to perceive the invisible. The sole possibility that remains is that of an image as a perception, which is probably a source of error, but then the errors are the responsibility of those who make them. We can thus be considered responsible for the images we have of others, which we cannot hope to capture on film.

As in the case of identity, which we have just considered, we find there is a sort of natural state of intercultural dialogue because, unless we are completely closed to the outside world, we cannot help but forge an idea or construct of the "Other" and, in doing so, we begin to communicate. Although this process may often take place unconsciously and almost automatically, there is every reason to suppose that in most cases an effort is required. This seems to demonstrate that a major feature of intercultural dialogue is that it is potentially something that happens automatically but that it attains practical expression only in the effort to get through to the "Other" with whom dialogue is to take place.

2.8. Features of an approach to history that rises to the challenges of multiculturalism

The analyses outlined above made it possible to identify the features required if history was to rise to the challenges of multiculturalism.

Above all, light must be shed on aspects of the development and state of societies that have up till now remained largely obscure. This new light should make it easier to identify situations that are connected with the culture of a society and their possible effects on political, economic and social phenomena. It is also necessary to trace the development of a society in itself and in relation to others by paying greater attention to cultural factors over the long term, whereas these factors have usually been mentioned only in times of crisis. This can clearly be seen in relation to struggles by minorities, for example in the Balkans, to defend their languages and traditions. These struggles are hardly ever mentioned except in times of crisis and open conflict with the majority group, although they have for years affected every moment of the lives of the communities concerned. This approach to history also needs to give the players in the situations that are being analysed the same consideration as their official interpreters and external observers. This is where the concern to give the "Other" and his or her image all the required attention should be leading. The "Other" should be treated as another "I". The expression *social facts are not things*[5] also applies to history. It nonetheless has to be agreed that in analysing the motivations of the various players, historians have usually concentrated on the logic of interest and the balance of power at the expense of the most deep-seated and most subjective components of their personalities. The emperor may

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[5] Monerot, Jules, *Les faits sociaux ne sont pas des choses*, Paris, Gallimard, 1946.

have no clothes in fiction[6] but not in history books, except in biographies, which can in many cases be criticised for being indiscreet and insidious. In short, the history to be advocated if it is to be in tune with multiculturalism is a history that recognises, in all its aspects, the presence and initiatives of individuals in all their dimensions and not just in a single role that obliterates all the others. This is of course fully in line with the values to which the Council of Europe subscribes.

III.   HOW CAN THIS HISTORY BE PASSED ON TO YOUNG PEOPLE?

While the Symposium took place against this conceptual background, the questions that were most explicitly raised were of a more practical nature. They concerned whether and, if so, how one could hope to pass on this history to young people, the ways in which to proceed and the conclusions that might be reached. It was only natural that these questions should have arisen, for two reasons. Firstly, it seems that a history geared to multiculturalism would have to take a different approach from the one history teachers have followed so far, so it is not at all surprising that further details should have been expected of the avenues to be followed. Secondly, teachers may have the impression that it is planned to use concepts and types of analysis with which pupils are unfamiliar and may therefore wonder whether it is possible to make them accessible to their pupils.

3.1.   Reaffirmation of the relevance of multiple outlooks

The feeling is nonetheless that insurmountable obstacles are not inevitable. This is because the approach based on multiple outlooks is accepted as the most relevant one and is already well-established in teaching. Indeed, there were few statements at the Symposium that did not refer to the opportunities it offered when it came to bringing history teaching into line with new requirements.

There is no need to go into detail here about what the multiple outlook approach entails. It is a concept to which numerous official Council of Europe documents refer and one that has long been central to the work of the History Teaching Division. Even an outline presentation of the approach is enough to make it clear that it enables history teaching to embrace the various repercussions of the interest in multiculturalism.   The multiple outlook approach essentially involves discovering and exploiting the different approaches to the work of interpretation, which is considered the cornerstone of efforts to acquire historical knowledge. Such knowledge is formed through the various interpretations that may be give to a single event, the idea being, in particular, to foster multiple viewpoints or understand conflicting views. The most plausible of the numerous possible points of view is selected. There is therefore a pluralism of knowledge that accords with that of society, and we can clearly see how the new approaches to history may come into play here. History has to be *disarmed* in order to make for the broadest possible range of interpretations, whereas a history hampered by bias is inherently restricted. Ideally, at the very least, no society's history should be ignored - otherwise the chances of having a wide enough range of possible interpretations on which to base the chosen one will be reduced. The practice of adopting multiple outlooks should also foster an interest in all

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[6] As in Hans Christian Andersen's famous tale.

the facets of an event and therefore in its cultural aspects, because otherwise the range of possible interpretations will again be restricted. Lastly, it goes without saying that, when multiple outlooks are adopted, the freeze frames of the image of the "Other" will throw up, in dealings between us and the "Other", a whole series of questions that will provide scope for interpretation. There is therefore every reason to hope that, with the multiple outlook approach, we will find ourselves far more often on familiar ground than in uncharted territory. This is, moreover, what the Council of Europe's history teaching policy is seeking to achieve: as soon as it introduced the multiple outlook approach, it linked it with multiculturalism.

3.2.   Concepts difficult to place within pupils' grasp?

The question arose, however, as to whether linking multiple outlooks with multiculturalism entailed the use of concepts that might be difficult or impossible to convey to pupils. This particularly concerns the concepts of culture and identity, which inevitably arise when one is dealing with the problems inherent in multiculturalism. They are hardly covered at all in school textbooks or lessons. The question is therefore whether this situation can be changed, at least in the senior classes of secondary school, as these concepts may be considered too complex for younger pupils.

This is true of the concept of culture, whose complexity and lack of precision can be very discouraging. As Mr Wulf pointed out, there has been a transition from the concept of culture as literary and artistic output to a comprehensive conception of culture embracing all the reactions of a group to its environment. There is then a risk, however, of having to go into the arcane distinctions to be made between terms such as culture and civilisation or culture and lifestyle. It would, however, seem possible to explain even to middle school pupils that one has to try to make such distinctions without being afraid of possible difficulties, which are normal. This would provide salutary experience of the caution that is essential when choosing terms, this being a linguistic and cultural process of prime importance, but one that does not always offer absolute clarity. From this point of view, the comparison of certain terms could be very instructive because it would show both the scope for precision and what has to be left vague. For example, the distinction between culture and folklore would be relatively easy if folklore were considered both a significant aspect of culture and a stage in its development. It does indeed concern most aspects of culture, from ways of life to artistic activities such as singing and dancing, but it also serves as a memory of culture at a particular time, with all the attendant emotions and facets, which are used to gain recognition from a dominant majority or to preserve traditions considered to be under threat. It would be possible to promote the concept of culture by pointing out that it is now an indispensable key to dealing with and understanding the modern world, in all its characteristic features, because of the prevalence of multiculturalism, which is the hallmark of societies that are determined to live their culture precisely in all the dimensions that have just been mentioned.

Identity is also a strikingly complex concept. One participant referred to it as shifting. It varies from one region to another and may be community-based, tribal or religious. It is not the same in a centralised state as in a separate community. There are *murderous*

identities, as is the case in Lebanon. It was thought that the concept of identity was accessible to secondary school pupils, however. The parallel with the personality could be useful and eloquent here. Children experience the "I" and the "Other" when they are very young and are able to sense what is theirs and what concerns them. Role-playing centring on a personal identity also begins very early. As for the collective identity, for a long time it appeared impossible to see it as mirroring personal identity. Given the strictly unitary perception that existed of the latter, there was an inevitable risk of viewing the collective identity as an organic whole. Yet once familiarity has been established with a plural personal identity, there should be no reason not to see the collective identity in the same way. This would seem to be borne out if we look at the concept of "nation". The romantic conception that equated it with a person maintained the dual illusion of a person and an entity that were totally homogeneous and completely united. The time has come, however, to recognise plural nations in which cultural communities see themselves as nations within a nation, as is the case in Belgium and Spain. Care has to be taken not to push the analogy between collective identity and personal identity too far, but it may certainly help to provide a clearer idea of the complexity of behaviour and reactions within a society and in that society's relations with others.

It would seem that these approaches can also help us to show how excessive a culture's claims to absolute originality or authenticity are. This would be a very good thing. Such claims always preclude multiple outlooks and fuel all forms of nationalism and xenophobia.

3.3. The trend towards a cautious change in teaching practices

The view was that children could be made to work on the new issues without insurmountable difficulties. This probably explains why most participants did not consider that radical changes in teaching practices were needed. This was the impression that emerged from the discussions on the subject in the working groups.

Some concerns were voiced, for example the need to foster an *empathetic understanding of the "Other"*, adopt a comparative approach to the historical accounts of different countries, reconsider the accounts in use in one's own country and be honest when assessing one's own history or culture.

It was generally accepted, however, that it was possible, and indeed necessary, to conform to accepted historical methodology, which entailed interpretation and the exercise of critical faculties. It was not felt that the anticipated contribution of the new information and communication technologies would be vastly different from what could be expected in the case of history teaching less geared to interculturalism. It would seem that the new technologies have the advantage of facilitating exchanges among pupils from different countries and cultures and making more information about the "Other" available and easy to access. On the whole, the participants were more eager to report on their usual practices than to envisage extending or radically changing them.

This may at first sight seem disappointing, but it may be equally be a reason for optimism. If history lessons can be given a multicultural and intercultural slant with these quite modest changes, that is to be welcomed. It may be completely unrealistic to hope for much greater changes when one remembers how many ambitious reforms have become bogged down.

3.4.   Scope for further investigation

Nonetheless, several presentations at the meeting emphasised that the usual historical methodology and in particular critical analysis could be used to investigate areas that had as yet been little explored or not explored at all.

This concerned in particular the concepts that arise when we consider cultural diversity, beginning with the idea of the "Other". These concepts also include notions such as culture and cultural identity, as well as nationalism, patriotism and racism. Unlike facts, systematic observation of which leads to a precise description or unambiguous definition, these concepts are systematically expressed with words that always have multiple meanings. There is never a single, accepted definition of such terms as pluralism, nationality or foreigner. In different contexts and at different times, they have both positive and negative connotations. In accordance with historical methodology, pupils must therefore use their critical faculties in order to identify these different meanings and avoid using the terms incorrectly when interpreting a situation or in a discussion with someone else. Moreover, while the imprecision of these terms may make concessions necessary, those concessions must remain within pre-determined limits. The concern to avoid offending the "Other" should not prompt one to agree with him or her wholeheartedly without proper discernment. These limits of course vary according to the profile of the "Other", which should be identified as clearly as possible in order to avoid misunderstandings.

In pursuing this approach, we are seeking to refine historical methodology so that it is more attuned to cultural diversity and intercultural dialogue. For example, by maintaining the prerequisite of an analysis of the sources as the obligatory starting-point for seeking historical knowledge, we will shift the emphasis towards procedures that are more directly linked to the examination of multicultural contexts. It will be possible to foster an understanding of the debates and controversies surrounding the history of a period, a country as a whole or one of its components. One can teach children to identify bias and tendentious interpretations, to ask the most relevant questions, and to understand causality, continuity and change. One can also make them understand that it is impossible to have an accurate view of the past without carefully examining the values of the time.

3.5.   The importance of context

Such investigations also entail paying attention to context. As we have just seen, ignoring it entails a risk of serious misunderstanding about the meanings of the concepts and words used and the interpretation of situations.

Indeed, many comments made at the Symposium emphasised this point. Affording importance to the context does not just mean taking account of the conditions that prevail in the classroom in terms of the psychosocial and educational profile of the pupils, for example. In future, taking the context into account should mean that pupils have more direct experience of the situations they study. They should therefore be helped to see the "Other" as a very real and very diverse being who may be an immigrant, a refugee or someone who is from another country or of the opposite sex, or who belongs to a different generation or socio-occupational category. While these are perceptions that can be fostered with respect to the present, similar exercises are possible with regard to the contexts of the past. To this end, it is necessary to give the past a personal dimension, by talking about a slave rather than slavery, or a clearly identified persecuted person and his or her family rather than the Holocaust. Use must also be made, of course, of all the resources available so that the past is no longer conjured up in a purely abstract manner but is reconstructed through being brought back to life. Our civilisation, where the image reigns supreme, has long made this possible, provided that pupils are taught how to read images in the same way as they are taught to read written texts. Older and sometimes less spectacular resources, such as literary works, can be just as useful. Travel writers are of particular interest here: they take pupils to lands where the faces and behaviour of the "Other" are striking because they are so unusual and different from what is found in their everyday surroundings.

Such efforts ought to have been made already in all forms of history teaching, whatever their perspective. It is only natural that they should have seemed even more important in the case of history teaching that is geared to promoting interculturalism. The threat of abstraction loomed over this form of history teaching because of the greater place it is supposed to give to the history of other countries, rather than history that is closer to home and more familiar. It is recommended that the values that make intercultural dialogue possible should be respected, but that the resulting threat of abstraction should not be overlooked. These are all reasons for trying to prevent history teaching based on these concerns from becoming so abstract that it is over the pupils' heads, for this would cause them to skate over the issues to be addressed without really going into them.

3.6. Making use of environments outside school

Countless aspects need to be taken into account, however, in order to give concrete expression to everything that needs to be evoked in relation to interculturalism. It is for this reason that one of the leitmotifs of the Symposium and the preparatory seminars was that this could not be done solely with the resources available in schools. It seemed essential to be able to count on initiatives outside schools and co-operation among the various partners concerned. There is a very wide range of such partners and they have been identified many times. They range from associations in which the members mix with teachers and regularly co-operate with them to specialised institutions that may up till now have had only infrequent contact with schools. The ideas expressed in this connection shed light on ways of taking advantage of the objectives pursued in the various sectors in order to make the diversity of cultures better known and facilitate

dialogue between cultures as well as improving co-ordination of the activities of the various partners.

Many possibilities were mentioned, for instance establishing or strengthening contacts with neighbours from different cultures with which the youngsters are unfamiliar or which they do not even know exist, and arranging for the inhabitants of a city or region to discover a little-known past whose influence is still perceptible. For example, a guided tour of some urban neighbourhoods may reveal the long-standing presence of non-native communities and unsuspected cross-fertilisation. Especially in cases where communities co-exist on an uneasy basis, all forms of encounter between them as a result of initiatives of this sort may lead to improved mutual understanding and defuse any aggression. Revealing the complexity of people's origins and providing opportunities for contact are clearly means of offering a particularly concrete introduction to cultural diversity, which enables pupils to see and feel things far more clearly than in a lesson. Without such practical experience and additional opportunities, there is a risk that lessons will be too vague to inspire the sort of thoughts that can make a difference and elicit an active response.

On another front, emphasis was placed on the benefits of all the schemes to ensure that specific periods in the history of certain cultures are not ignored and do not simply disappear. Such schemes were considered particularly appropriate where they concerned immigrant or foreign communities. For example, where members of such communities have fought alongside the host country, they should be accepted and their right to be different should be more effectively recognised. Initiatives of this sort could therefore usefully be made better known and young people should be more widely involved in them so that they obtain a broader experience of other cultures.

It goes without saying that similar projects are still more desirable in areas where latent or open conflict is rife. Opportunities are needed for two sides which have so far ignored each other or have false images of each other to meet, sometimes for the first time. This is the objective of the *Festival of Invasions* in Cosenza, which brings together the various communities of the Italian town so that they are better able to envisage the future together. Projects of this sort require that the organisers have the ability to motivate the people concerned, and in many cases great determination is needed in order to overcome the frequent disappointment. There are still enough conflictual situations in Europe for it to be hoped that such initiatives will spread.

Exchanges of young people for educational or more explicitly cultural purposes in easier contexts, and even in situations of conflict, were of course also discussed. Language courses have a very important part to play here. For a very long time, improved proficiency in the foreign language was the only objective. This does have a certain intercultural dimension, but it is one that is usually too implicit to have a sufficient impact. Fortunately, largely because of the Council of Europe's insistence on the need to link learning a language with learning about the culture, the two increasingly go hand in hand on such courses. It also emerged at the Symposium, and particularly at the two

preparatory seminars, that there are a great many associations whose primary task is to organise encounters in order to enable people to learn about the culture of the "Other".

Museums were also mentioned many times as providing opportunities for very stimulating contact with past and present manifestations of different cultures. It was agreed that their permanent collections and temporary exhibitions were not always presented in such a way as to provide the information young people need to draw maximum benefit from them. The drive to attract the greatest possible number of visitors or the weight of purely museographic imperatives often results in the picturesque or aesthetic dimension being given precedence over the provision of information that would be meaningful to young people. It nonetheless remains the case that the objects displayed always provide interested teachers and guides concerned to adapt to their audience with valuable aids to conjuring up a culture as a whole or going into detail about some of its aspects. It was also pointed out that museums are in the best position to give new life to chapters or periods in cultures that have been victims of the vicissitudes of history. Particular attention was paid in this connection to Muslim culture, which may be considered to have become detached from that of the West in the thirteenth century, and a number of exhibitions designed to make good this rift were cited. Other similar examples concerning Europe itself were mentioned, such as the Tallinn Museum programmes, which seek to resuscitate forgotten communities and traditions from the past. The work being done by museums was therefore rightly considered to be an excellent example of how history teaching can be supplemented outside school, although the objectives pursued by such teaching and those of museums are not always the same.

The gap was still more marked in the case of the media, particularly the audiovisual media. There has been a spate of historical productions in the cinema and on television but they are very rarely of the standard needed to make a significant contribution to historical knowledge. Their main aim is to elicit a welter of emotion, rather than offer a credible or plausible reconstruction of the past. Very few of them are worth more than a passing mention, but the few that are deserve to be singled out. One was a television series that provided a very authentic picture of two cultures enjoying uneasy relations, through its portrayal of their everyday customs and a romantic plot involving members of each culture. In this case, the television drama succeeded in conveying a better idea of the opportunities available to people separated by stereotyping and prejudice to get together than would have been possible by means of cogent argument. Yet successes of this sort are quite rare and the craze for series that are not of this quality does little to contribute to the acceptance of other people, along with their differences.

The representatives of the Arte channel invited to the Symposium were quite honest about this. Their historical programmes invariably run into budget problems because they require recourse to expensive specialists. Besides, the tyranny of the ratings has so far been a handicap for such programmes. One series with strong ambitions of historical accuracy attracted only a limited audience. The channel's directors do not want to stop broadcasting historical programmes, but they are not optimistic about how well they will be received.

The point was made that if, despite its shortcomings, some audiovisual material is to be used in history teaching, a sound education in interpreting images is needed. This would enable pupils to distinguish between productions of no interest at all and others that are acceptable. This would lead them to discover documentaries: some of them are excellent, and their producers need to be encouraged. Image education would also give pupils a different view of the most common works. Once their inaccuracies and even the myths which they perpetuate have been identified and criticised, these shortcomings would become a significant factor. Historical television programmes would thus provide opportunities for pupils to exercise their critical faculties and would end up being a less facile and less suspect means of learning history. Thanks to image education, the need for which is not in doubt, there would be continuity in the treatment of iconography, from the illustrations in textbooks, which pupils must learn to interpret, to filmed sequences.

It was inevitable that the Internet should have been mentioned as an external aid, on the grounds that it made a vast number of sources and documents available to teachers and pupils. Nevertheless, very serious reservations were expressed as to their reliability. They are seldom checked and the case was cited of an account of an interview involving two politicians that had never actually taken place. Appropriate training in how to use what is available seems to be needed here, and it could include the exercise of critical faculties. This is, however, a huge and somewhat discouraging task, because young people are not interested in advice about how to use computers.

Rather surprisingly, little was said about the press. Is this because the press has been used in schools for years and the relevant guidelines are now well-established?

3.7.   Training teachers and other stakeholders

As has been said, there was discussion about the degree of educational innovation needed for history teaching to be directed or redirected more towards interculturalism. In any event, it seemed that history teaching had to be adapted to some extent at least to this new approach, if only because of the new skills required. This seems even more important in the case of teachers. They are required to work in co-operation with outsiders whose training profile is very different from their own and who have activities and contacts of a completely different nature and deal with people who often have nothing in common with pupils. These stakeholders are in a situation comparable to that of teachers, but their concerns and ways of working may seem very different. It is not surprising, therefore, that training issues should have been discussed at length in the working groups and that it was considered vital to come up with answers if there was to be any chance of achieving the objectives of the Symposium and the Project *The Image of the Other in History Teaching*.

3.7.1. Teacher training

Attention obviously focused on teacher training, probably because it was a field more familiar to the participants, most of whom were involved in school or university education. This no doubt also explains why the required changes in teacher training were

considered mainly in light of the prevailing trends, which have already sought to be innovative for some time now and do not, therefore, seem to be serious obstacles to the further innovations needed. Indeed, there was a consensus among all the countries on the attitudes teachers should have towards their pupils and on the teaching methods to be used. Everyone agreed that teachers must, without abandoning their authority, have a close relationship with their pupils and understand their reactions. It was also agreed that every subject should be taught in such a way that the pupils were actively involved in acquiring knowledge and skills.

Among the qualities training should instil, frequent mention was made of skills with no direct connection with history teaching or with the change of approach required of it. This is true, for instance, of the need, mentioned in all the working groups, to develop teachers' critical faculties and inculcate expertise in the analysis and application of curricula. It also applies to the use of the teaching methods considered most relevant, for example methods designed to present the subject in a stimulating way, in its most tangible aspects, and the to attention that needs to be paid to assessment and its results.

The view was taken, however, that working methods that were more in tune with the intercultural perspective in history teaching could be grafted on to these existing practices, which are now those most commonly followed in teacher training. For example, development of critical faculties is part of training in all subjects, but it could be given a particular slant in the case of history teachers. Critical thinking should be applied to all the materials available for teaching history, from textbooks, written sources and illustrations to external aids. Similarly, efforts to get through to the pupils should make it possible to establish a dialogue with them in order to help them discover the image and identity of the "Other". Nor was it forgotten that teachers' critical faculties should also be applied to themselves so that they could identify prejudices and preconceptions that were likely to affect their relationship with certain pupils and set examples that ran counter to the attitudes they wanted to instil in them.

The participants admitted that it was sometimes necessary to go a stage further if teachers were to be fully capable of teaching in a way that lived up to new expectations. It was acknowledged that, as far as teaching methods were concerned, it was becoming necessary to train teachers to ensure that pupils adopted a cultural viewpoint when referring to the concepts arising from the phenomena being studied. The analysis involved is a very complex one, and it is for this reason that there is a need for training in the multiple outlook approach, which should make it possible to avoid over-hasty, one-sided interpretations and simplistic views of the "Other". The emphasis in training should be on the elements of the curriculum that relate to this.

There did not really seem to be any suggestions as to how to achieve continuity between the training usually offered to teachers and the training required to teach history in a manner that was fully in tune with the multiculturalism of the modern world. Indeed, it was even considered that in some countries the real obstacle was the fact that history teachers' initial training was still not sufficiently thorough.

It was also argued, however, that initial training, even when it is of good quality, needs to be significantly supplemented and elaborated on. As we have seen, image education is crucial, and it requires a training programme in itself. Collaboration with associations and authorities offering extracurricular activities, in connection, for example, with the preparation of visits to museums and exhibitions, will require a significant investment in terms of time, planning and management. This is probably more a matter for in-service training than initial training. In any event, if history teaching is to be geared more to multiculturalism, teachers will have to do more to convey to their pupils the meaning of the relevant concepts and terms and their connotations. There is a whole new aspect of training to be developed here.

This is why it was frequently pointed out that it was essential for prospective and practising teachers to be better informed about all the out-of-school resources available to them. The point was made, of course, that the new information and communication technologies offer numerous opportunities, though attention was drawn to the danger, for teachers and pupils alike, of using the Internet without the required precautions. What is available on the Internet should be checked with the utmost care, particularly where culture and history are concerned. This also applies to the media: all the working groups reiterated that media education was imperative for both teachers and pupils. It was mentioned that UNESCO had just published a media education handbook.

All in all, the teacher trainers are likely to have come away with the impression that their work is cut out but that they are not going to have to start from scratch.

3.7.2. Training of other stakeholders

The need for co-operation between teachers and other parties involved in raising awareness of interculturalism was a leitmotif in the discussions. Such co-operation implies that efforts be made to train players who, in their activities, do not always draw sufficient attention to what they are doing to enhance knowledge of the "Other". It is as if they were doing intercultural work without saying so or even realising it.

However, unless something escaped me, hardly any mention was made during the Symposium of practical experience in this sector. The only exception seems to have been a brief reference to training for museum guides, who are apparently as receptive as teachers to the need to adopt an intercultural approach in order to improve contact with the public and make it more fruitful. In a different way, the initiatives presented by several associations during the preparatory seminars emphasised the issue of training for their workers.

Here, however, training seemed to be the responsibility of authorities that have their own preoccupations and traditions, which are quite different from those that prevail in teacher training. It is more often a question of learning on the job than of attending courses affording considerable space to theory, except perhaps with regard to communication. Self-training also seems to be quite common. This in no way implies that there is a special form of training that is diametrically opposed to training for work in schools. It

was pointed out that teachers are now invited to display autonomy on all fronts. This should also apply to their personal development while they are working and particularly, perhaps, to everything to do with interculturalism.

3.8.   The importance of the individual

The corollary of the emphasis on personal initiative was the importance to be afforded to the individual, not just in terms of his or her personal development, but on a far wider scale. Numerous comments at many levels referred to the individual as playing a decisive role.

At the very start of the Symposium it was stated that it was not cultures but men and women who would be meeting and engaging in dialogue. This does not of course mean that cultures themselves are unable to make contact. Their reciprocal influences and cross-fertilisation were rightly cited as evidence of the fact that they can. But it is clear that such results are identifiable only through the words and behaviour of the people involved.

Attention should also be drawn to the great stress laid on the importance of individuals when it came to forging an image of the "Other". It is only once it is related to individuals who have actually been encountered that this image can attain a degree of generality and be free of gross distortion. The essential starting-point for forging such a perception, on which everything else hinges, is therefore the individual's experience of the profile of the "Other". The "Other" must first be identified as an individual in a particular situation that is based on his or her socio-economic status, occupation, sex and other characteristics. It is only on this basis that a concept of otherness that is not abstract and empty but plural, like the identities on which it is founded, can be forged. In the dialogue, or rather dialogues, to be established, cultural diversity is something that is both observed at the start and ever-present. The teacher's role as an individual was not forgotten either: as someone pointed out, what makes pupils love history is above all the person who teaches it.

3.9.   Favouring local initiatives

The importance afforded to context and the individual also led to local initiatives being favoured as they were seen as the best means of addressing and resolving both the questions to which cultural diversity in societies may give rise and those connected with history teaching focusing on such diversity. Relations between communities from different cultures most often have to be managed at local level. Cultural diversity at every level will probably mean that consideration will be given to adapting the content and methods of history teaching to pupils in different schools, who often do not have the same expectations or the same ability to assimilate what is offered to them. Here again, it is at local level that the most appropriate decisions can be made. This, at least, is what can be inferred from what happens in the countries where local authorities have powers in this area.

The local level was also seen as that where the many forms of support outside the school can most easily be mobilised in order to give education the full intercultural dimension that is sought. It is desirable that such support should come from bodies acting at grass roots level, which are easily accessible and readily able to contact one another in order to negotiate the action to be taken. This is why the local (municipal or regional) level seemed the most appropriate both for the purpose of adapting action to needs and for the sake of speediness. The increasing autonomy of local and regional government in the wake of decentralisation policies, which the Council of Europe has always supported, should make it possible to pursue this approach without encountering major obstacles. The fact that local initiatives were given by far the greatest attention does not mean that importance of the national level was ignored or disputed, however. Frequent attention was drawn to the need for overall consistency.

3.10. From a segmented study of history to a comprehensive approach to learning

The intercultural approach to the teaching of history and the training recommended for the people who will be teaching it are rather different from what has prevailed so far.

To simplify somewhat without completely distorting what emerged from the debate on this subject, it was generally accepted that there were the following differences. Up till now, history teaching has essentially involved inculcating knowledge that results in a reconstruction of the past that cannot necessarily be used to understand the present. It has not been absolutely impossible to draw lessons from the past that can be applied to the present, but great care has been needed to avoid lapsing into questionable uses of history. National history, with its unacceptable tendency to glorify founding heroes or saviours, aroused very mixed feelings. When used to contribute to civic education, it might be reassuringly prudent, but it still elicited misgivings.

History teaching focusing on the characteristics of multicultural societies and designed to help young people to deal with the attendant challenges has other objectives and other approaches. Enabling pupils to forge a conception of society is doubtless one of its goals, which do not seem to differ radically from those of a political history geared to training citizens. But a society where intercultural dialogue is possible is based on respect for universal values that are not linked to a particular type of society, except insofar as they are characteristic of any democratic society worthy of the name, this being the only reference model. We are thus dealing with politics in its most universal aspect, the aim being to create a place in which to live, which is indispensable if individuals and the community are to be assured of living in a climate of freedom and fairness. This explains why this form of history cannot radically dissociate its approach to the present from its approach to the past. It needs to start with a knowledge and analysis of the past in order to interpret and act upon the present. It is also for this reason that we cannot confine ourselves to the knowledge to be found in books. We have to be able to call on practical experience in order to find clear traces of the past that will help us to grasp its meaning and shed more light on the choices to be made in situations that we experience. Clearly, therefore, this form of history needs to cover manifestations of the various cultures, in the form of monuments and objects displayed in museums, or to be in contact with people

who belong to these different cultures in order to know and understand them better. In other words, it entails making the transition from mere study, restricted to the acquisition of knowledge, to a more profound and comprehensive form of learning, if not one in which knowledge is acquired mainly through actual experience.

The expression *doing history*, so common in what might be described as school slang, therefore needs to be given its full meaning. *Doing* may be appropriate to all subjects, but there are good reasons for thinking that it is far more apt in relation to the study of history. In other words, history teaching should afford pupils the opportunity to engage in what one participant called a "historianistic" approach covering a whole range of operations. These include collecting information from a wide variety of sources (archives, visits to monuments and museums, meetings and discussions with different types of people), developing skills that can be used to interpret present and past events and defining the attitudes and behaviours to be envisaged accordingly. Without our necessarily embracing constructivist arguments, this form of history learning should at least be considered a process that requires those involved to pursue highly creative approaches, seeking out the necessary information and drawing conclusions from it in the light of the context and discussions with the widest possible range of people. This would narrow the gap between the history of researchers and history in the classroom.

Here again, such an immense task cannot be accomplished in the school environment alone: close co-operation is needed with all the players concerned with interculturalism. Their number and fortunately their skills should grow steadily with the proliferation of situations of concern to them. It goes without saying that teachers should also become involved in this process. Their initial and in-service training equips them less and less with a stock answers to every situation. With their pupils and with the partners with whom they work, they will keep having to come up with new solutions to problems that will constantly crop up.

It also emerged that learning history in this way is a long process that is not confined to one's schooldays. This must be one of the best examples of the need for lifelong learning and of its benefits. Lifelong learning will be essential because multiculturalism is such a vast and changing phenomenon and so full of contrasts that if we do not regularly readdress it we will have little chance of grasping all its characteristics and nuances. Another reason it is essential is that lifelong learning is crucial if people are to lead a lucid and stimulating life in a multicultural society and rise to its challenges: lucid so that they know about the changes in composition and profile that directly affect the attitudes of the various communities to one another, and stimulating because the possession of such information enables everyone to adopt the behaviour most appropriate to situations in which there will always be risks of misunderstanding, confrontation and conflict. Those who succeed in feeling that they have reacted appropriately in such circumstances will have the satisfaction of knowing that their image of the "Other" and of others was such that they were able to avoid the problems that would have arisen with less suitable approaches. People will also have the opportunity to take a good look at themselves and discover what another person or other people have learned about them. This will validate

a point frequently made during the Symposium and the preparatory seminars, namely that it is necessary to know the "Other" if one is to attain self-knowledge.

3.11. Adapting syllabuses and textbooks

Putting such learning into practice depends on several factors that received a great deal of attention. One of the most important is that teachers and other stakeholders should be trained in such a way that they are effectively prepared to adopt this approach. It was realised, however, that there could be a wide gap between the objectives set and actual situations. It even seemed, on occasion, as if the training of history teachers was far less satisfactory than that of teachers of other subjects. Syllabuses and school textbooks were seen as the most serious obstacles, however.

3.11.1. Curricula

Syllabuses were attacked on the grounds that they were responsible for the lack of information about the history of certain countries and cultures. The loopholes extended over varying areas and periods and, in certain countries, concerned groups of varying size. As was the case during the first preparatory seminar, mention was made of the very inadequate space given in most curricula to modern Arab Muslim culture. The history of Byzantium and the Orthodox world has likewise been largely left out for years. Mention was also made of the persistently widespread lack of attention afforded to the culture of certain minorities, for example in the Balkan countries.

The reasons for this unfortunate state of affairs were once again identified, without there being much hope of any adjustments being made. Syllabuses are overhauled only when they are considered seriously flawed. This is what is currently happening in the Arab countries, as Mr Mongi Bousnina, Director General of ALECSO, reported. In other situations, adjustments are often difficult to make or very minor. As curricula are criticised more or less everywhere for being overloaded, adjustments to the balance of the various countries' or cultures' history are almost always rejected because they would place an even heavier burden on syllabuses. In fact, an interest in a more comprehensive approach to history teaching tends to lead to syllabuses being pruned rather than fleshed out. The solution most frequently adopted to compensate for areas that are omitted or skated over is the introduction of optional themes. While in theory this should encourage attention to be paid to neglected areas, in practice it usually results in emphasis on the fields that are already most prominent. In addition, curricula are still very often set by central authorities, which are unused to giving, or disinclined to afford, the necessary space to the history and culture of groups of an intermediate size. Attention was nevertheless drawn to the consequences of extreme decentralisation, such as obtains in Spain, where each Autonomous Community is able to give considerable space to its language and culture. It was also pointed out that national history does not usually have the primacy it had twenty years ago and, where it is still dominant, it is no longer completely divorced from the history of other countries.

3.11.2. School textbooks

The content of school textbooks illustrates this change very well. It is now quite unusual for them to indulge in stereotypes of other nations or express intolerant viewpoints. At one of the round tables Mr Noureddine Dougui quoted a survey of textbooks used in 27 Arab states, which bore out this view. Another example mentioned was that of a textbook produced jointly by specialists from Germany and France in order to offer points of view acceptable to teachers and pupils in both countries, the aim being to obtain authorisation from the authorities to use it in the classroom. For instance, instead of using the expression *barbarian invasions*, which is insulting to the Germans, reference is made to the *migration of Germanic peoples*. Similar work is now being done through co-operation between Germany and Poland. Mention was also made of a survey of school textbooks used on both sides of the Mediterranean, being conducted by UNESCO, ALESCO and the *Georg-Eckert-Institut für internationale Schulbuchforschung*. These initiatives were dictated by a concern to move beyond the deep-seated antagonism generated by centuries of conflict and misunderstanding. While there is a good chance that they will succeed, this is because they have enjoyed the official support that ensures that the books will be widely used in the same way as others. This point is crucial because the "European" textbooks produced by authors from several European countries have been little used in schools: where they could be employed, which was not always the case, they tended to be regarded as supplementary material that could be used if there was time or when it was considered appropriate.

It could be that publications of this type would have more chance of being widely used if they were as different as possible from official or standard textbooks. This is the perspective reflected in the book published under the aegis of the *Georg-Eckert-Institut* on Muslim societies in the modern age[7]. The book does not retrace the history of Muslim societies but offers, with respect to various Muslim traditions, from Morocco to Egypt and Turkey to China, a wide variety of insights into the contexts of those traditions, such as the law, the economy, religion and the artistic heritage. It enables every teacher, according to his or her interests, to focus on one aspect, while encouraging him or her not to dissociate it from the others. This makes for comprehensive learning whereby the knowledge sought is acquired through a multiplicity of contributions. It is an excellent example of the openness and inventiveness that should characterise this method of learning.

It is for this reason that it would perhaps be futile to seek to provide all the resources needed, whether in the form of instructions in a syllabus or contributions from textbooks covering every register. Perhaps, on the contrary, it is only natural that, on embarking on this learning method, one should not immediately discover everything that should go into it, but merely everything that needs to be sought out so that this approach can be used. The initial impression may be that something is lacking, but it would be a false impression because there are, in fact, many existing resources that need to be identified and used. Accordingly, the role of teachers and all the other stakeholders is now not so

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[7] Gerdien Jonker, Pierre Hecker, Cornelia Schnoy (Eds.), *Muslimische Gesellschaften in der Moderne. Ideen – Geschichten - Materialien.* Studien Verlag, Vienna, 2007.

much to accept all the existing resources on a plate but to identify them and encourage pupils to find them. This is not a pretext for exonerating them from their educational duties: the idea is to place those duties in another register.

IV.   AN ATTEMPT TO TAKE STOCK

Now that an attempt has been made to give an account of the discussions that took place at the Symposium and the views that were expressed, it is appropriate to try to take stock, on two fronts. One the one hand, we need to consider the feasibility of the changes in history teaching called for by the conclusions that were reached. These changes were often presented not so much as radical innovations as extending or building on trends that were already identifiable. Nevertheless, they may encounter obstacles that have to do with regulatory frameworks and the practices of certain stakeholders. It is probably difficult, however, in the short term to assess the likelihood and scale of resistance. It is for this reason that the Secretariat set objectives for the Symposium whose attainment is more easily measurable in that they concern the content of the Symposium itself. After rapidly exploring the first question, I shall therefore concentrate on the second in this section.

4.1.   An exciting but difficult undertaking

As far as the first question is concerned, a participant in the first preliminary seminar clearly pointed the way by stressing an epistemological concern. He considered that it was difficult but exciting to envisage a history of diversity and plurality that would offer a dual system of interpretation, providing a perception forged of the tensions and contradictions resulting from different points of view, but one that was also universally intelligible and enabled the greatest number of people to appropriate a history that was often conflict-ridden, with the ambitious aim of making it an instrument for co-operation and sharing[8].

In fact, this ambition seems to be more and more common in the modern world, given the growing interest in, and respect for, the right to be different, which needs to be thought of in connection with respect for the truth, of which it is a facet. It is because no one possesses the truth but everyone has to seek it that the right to be different has to be accepted as a manifestation, albeit a partial and even flawed one, of that truth[9]. The importance to be afforded to differences and the place to be given to them when comparisons are made came out very clearly at the meeting. The emphasis on the appropriateness of a multiple outlook approach to history was in keeping with this.

There is no guaranteeing, however, that all historians will agree to go down this road. Mr Audigier said that replacing the history of wars and conflicts with that of co-operation and exchange was a political rather than an academic choice. Many similar reservations are conceivable. The cultural history that the new form of history teaching should favour

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[8] Statement by Jean Petaux at the first preparatory seminar.
[9] Louis Marmoz and Mohamed Derrij, *L'interculturel en questions. L'autre, la culture et l'éducation.* 2001, Paris, l'Harmattan, p.39.

does not appeal to all circles of historians, any more than comparative history, which should also receive more coverage with the multiple outlook approach, does. In 1988 it was still possible to read in a specialised journal that people were constantly calling for the development of comparativism but that in practice it remained the exception[10].

Consequently, we can foresee a great deal of debate taking place, and the outcome is too uncertain for the matter to be resolved quickly. It will be possible for a long time yet to contrast *scientific* history with *political* history, but also to discuss what is meant by scientific history: certainly not what is advocated by the disciples of positivism and scienticism, who are less and less persuasive. But is a scientific history one that, as is argued by many representatives of the profession, strives to identify *plausible plots*[11], one that a French historian called a *soft science* or one whose spirit is, in the words of one participant, one of *fluidity*? In much the same way, the vision of society promoted by the Council of Europe will probably continue to be seen more as one option among others than as the only option. In order for it to be otherwise, intolerance and distrust of others would have to become impossible. But is this not an ideal that, like others, will for the foreseeable future remain a remote possibility rather than a predictable development?

From this very general point of view, there is reason to believe that the chances of the changes of approach called for by the Symposium being put into practice are not non-existent, but nor is there any certainty that the changes will take place. This is, after all, hardly surprising, for reasons connected both with the Council of Europe's chosen approaches to societal matters and with the balance of power between the various schools of thought when it comes to history. Moreover, without wishing to be ironic, I am inclined to add that in the final analysis it would be illogical to expect a meeting held to motivate the advocates of respect for differences and dialogue to result in conclusions that enjoy unanimous support. It is, on the contrary, highly desirable that these conclusions should continue to be debated, probably not so that they can be rejected but so that they can be re-examined and taken a stage further, or moderated. It is equally important that those who apply the ideas expressed should do so in the belief that they are acting autonomously and are fully responsible for what they are doing and should not feel that they are following orders. Indeed, it was in this spirit that the objectives were set for the Symposium and it is to these that we must now turn in order to produce a more modest but clearer analysis.

4.2.   Achievement of the objectives set for the Symposium

The information document prepared by the Secretariat set four objectives for the Symposium:
-    to define global strategies for learning history in a multicultural society;
-    to identify and clarify key concepts;
-    to identify teaching methods and material for the training of all stakeholders;
-    to collect a first set of examples of good practice.

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[10] Annales ESC 1988 Paris Armand Colin No. 2.
[11] As Paul Veyne put it.

There is every reason to believe that progress was made towards each of these objectives.

4.2.1. Definition of strategies

The strategies needed to implement a new approach to learning history in a multicultural society were defined as being global ones and were fairly explicitly described .

The concern for a global approach means, first of all, that history should be studied in the broader framework necessitated by multicultural societies. This led to a clear formulation of what should be encouraged and what should be avoided. It is desirable to move away from the national framework, which is no longer any guarantee of a homogeneous society within impermeable borders. The history that can still be referred to in connection with the term "nation" is now that of its components, which have more or less harmonious relations with one another, and no longer the history of an identity with no fault lines. This history is also that of all the reactions and counter-attacks that it has triggered in the country concerned and elsewhere.

This is why, when history is learned in this way, it is necessary to use political, economic and social concepts that are defined sufficiently broadly to make it possible to describe and understand very varied situations and offer interpretations that are acceptable rather than hurtful from an outsider's point of view. The example of preferring the expression "migration of Germanic peoples" to "barbarian invasions" has already been quoted. As we have just seen, a similar change is needed with respect to the term "nation", a designation which entities such as the Autonomous Communities of Spain are now claiming, whereas it was until recently restricted to entities whose political, economic and cultural unity was much more strongly asserted on another level.

The same global strategy is to be found when it comes to putting the learning of history into practice. It should no longer be confined to the subject of history alone. Giving it a multicultural dimension also means that history should be taught as part of all the other subjects. This extension of its scope can be justified as a means of making up for the inadequate amount of time allocated to history teaching, which is lamented everywhere, but this solution, which might have appeared to be an expedient, is becoming natural in the context of multiculturalism, since the practice of interdisciplinarity in teaching foreshadows, or is tantamount to, intercultural dialogue.

The desire to ensure that such learning no longer takes place in schools alone but benefits from all the external assistance available is part of the same global strategy and stems from the same concern to bring together different cultural worlds and engage them in dialogue. The various stakeholders that have to co-operate, be they associations that promote multicultural contacts, museums with exhibitions on cultures and areas of history that are not particularly well known or media dealing with comparable themes, each have their own culture. But this culture must cast aside conceptions and practices that are too specific if it is to be capable of communicating with others.

The list of evidence that global strategies have been chosen could be even longer. The often repeated emphasis on the need to adopt, at all times, strategies that take the context into account provides a basis for a model. The attention to be given to context means that a strategy should not deal with an isolated aspect of a situation but with all its facets.

There is therefore little doubt that the objective of defining the most appropriate global strategies was amply achieved. The very concept of a global strategy was clarified and the various ways in which such a strategy could be used were outlined and a few details provided.

4.2.2. Identification of key concepts

The new approach to history teaching needs to be based on key concepts that have not as yet often served as a reference in the study of history. It is essential to define them more precisely if this approach is to produce results.

Progress seems to have been made here too. Where they had been used already, most of the concepts in question were still beset by uncertainty and ambiguity. This was true of the notions of culture, personal, collective and national identity, and authenticity, which are bound to crop up regularly as soon as one deals with cultural diversity or interculturalism. The same is true of the idea of the "Other", which has to be defined in these contexts.

The meanings to be afforded to these concepts were substantially clarified. In most cases, clarification entailed either an extension of their usual meaning or, on the contrary, a tighter definition, designed to prevent misuse. Culture was seen from the broadest possible viewpoint, as embracing not only literary and artistic output, but also, more particularly, all the ways in which a social group appropriates its environment. Similar approaches were taken to the concepts of identity and authenticity. In particular, attention was drawn to the plural aspect of every identity, whether individual or collective, and therefore to its relative character, which rules out any claim to absolute unity or authenticity. With respect to the image of the "Other", what emerged was the need to give the "Other" an actual face, such as that of a foreigner or immigrant, and to go further into how "otherness" tended to pigeonhole people.

The very concept of history was shown to be of a complexity that had not always been properly grasped. A clearer distinction was made between history and memory. Above all, the various types of messages put across by history were more clearly itemised: mention was made of those stemming from the work of professional historians, those served up as accounts by the media and those resulting from a biased or even sectarian approach to history.

It is true that these clarifications did not produce rigorous definitions but merely ideas and notions whose scope was more clearly marked out, rather than concepts in the sense of highly structured constructs. Yet it is difficult to see how it could have been otherwise. The most prominent specialists in the human sciences are constantly debating

the meanings to be given to these terms. Culture does not have quite the same meaning in cultural anthropology as it does in the sociology of knowledge. Historians are still debating whether or not their discipline is an exact science. It is therefore not at all surprising that the Symposium should have stuck to *soft* concepts.

In the final analysis, one may wonder whether this is the fate of any analysis based on interculturalism. Such an analysis has to break through frontiers or abolish them, but at the same time it has to confront differences that emphasise distance and separation. On the one hand, an intercultural analysis is drawn to means of identifying contrasts and divides but, on the other, it has to embrace situations that are far from clear on account of the displacements and overlap caused by the meeting of societies and their cultures. This means that what seemed to be a firm foundation at the outset becomes unstable and confused. These *soft* concepts are not, therefore, debased concepts but those most appropriate to interculturalism. This was another interesting outcome of the Symposium.

4.2.3. Methods and materials for stakeholders

This report has already drawn attention to the interest shown in teaching methods and materials.

Given their professional background, the participants, most of whom work in schools or universities, paid great attention to work in the classroom. The preference is now for methods that prompt pupils to become very actively involved in developing their own skills. The means of instilling and fuelling motivation were clearly identified. First-hand experience and encounters with the "Other" were considered essential. Contacts with the various types of out-of-school environment were also considered indispensable and, indeed, rewarding. In short, it was invariably a very active type of teaching that was advocated, on the grounds that this was the best way to enable pupils to acquire knowledge and develop skills at the same time.

Insofar as the chosen approaches focused on making use of actual experience, they could be recommended not only for teachers but for all stakeholders. Indeed, other players sometimes seemed to be even better placed in this regard. Teachers clearly have to leave the classroom mentally and physically in order to seek out this experience. Other stakeholders are almost always in the midst of it.

It should be emphasised that no recipes or standard models for training were suggested. The complexity of the issue, which derives from the diversity of situations, may account for this, but there is also another reason. Since it is stressed that pupils should exhibit autonomy, it is only natural that the people who train them should display the same capacity. Evidence of this was the tendency to focus on self-training, particularly in connection with the initial and in-service training of all stakeholders.

There is no doubt that the reflection required if history is to be taught from a multicultural perspective has a far-reaching consequence that needs to be highlighted. It makes trainers and young people feel more responsible for putting into practice the desired responses to

the issues raised by the new characteristics of societies. Everyone now feels directly concerned by cultural diversity all the time and is aware that, unless cultures are prompted to engage in dialogue with one another, there is a risk of tragic confrontation. The only means of avoiding this would seem to be for all individuals, whatever their situation and role, to take their destiny into their own hands in order to foster, in the niche that they occupy, mutual understanding. If this requirement is emphasised, stakeholders will have the best possible basis for finding the resources needed to take the most desirable initiatives, effectively and completely independently. This does not, of course, rule out the possibility of jointly devising initial and in-service training schemes, but it is to be hoped that these will be requested by those who will benefit from them rather than offered or virtually imposed by those organising them. This would be the best guarantee of their quality and relevance.

This brings us to a frequently expressed concern about training, which is how to assess it. In such training, as in the self-training that often accompanies it, appraisal is an irreplaceable analytical and guidance tool. Each individual's appraisal of his or her self-training, possibly with the assistance of an adviser, would seem to be decisive when it comes to choosing the additional training needed, which will of course also have to be assessed. We are therefore seeing both a new approach to training and a consolidation of the most valuable aspects of the training normally provided so far.

4.2.4. Collection of good practice

There is no doubt either that a substantial set of examples of good practice was collected both during the Symposium and at the two preparatory seminars, whose valuable contribution should again be mentioned here.

The case studies presented at the three meetings concerned exemplary practices in most of the areas worth taking into consideration. In schools, it is possible to make pupils aware of the multicultural perspective in various ways, in particular by going more deeply into the image of the "Other" by addressing his or her history and culture, which have often played an unacknowledged role at important stages in the development of a society. In the area of exchanges between schools and other forms of placement, schemes have been developed that are no longer limited to improving language skills, but have been broadened to include familiarisation with a whole range of types of heritage. The role that museums and the media, particularly the audiovisual media, can be expected to play also received sustained attention.

Mention was made of the conditions that had to be met if such practices were to be of high quality. The first is, invariably, thorough preparation, which entails setting out the objectives to be achieved and the approaches to be adopted as clearly as possible. This is essential. Equally important, in some cases, are the precautions to be taken to ensure that participants in an activity are not disconcerted or disappointed because it does not match their interests or is not in keeping with their usual habits of analysis and thought. On the basis of these elements it would surely be possible to establish a typology of the most

desirable practices, which would be another far from negligible benefit of the Symposium.

With respect to good practice, it was often remarked at the meeting, as at many others, that, once good practices have been selected, it is important to make sure they are disseminated - otherwise they will have an insufficient impact. The Seminar also produced encouraging results here, largely because of the importance afforded to context. This meant that it avoided giving the illusion that good practices were universally valid and could be disseminated without encountering obstacles. What emerged instead was a clear awareness that a practice, however good, needs to be adapted to any new environment to which it is transferred. There was never any claim that the examples presented were immediately transposable. If a typology were attempted, it would merely concern a series of fundamental characteristics that have to be respected: it would be like a plan to build houses that can be adjusted to take account of the needs of their future occupants. There is nevertheless reason to hope that the requirements, which are the same as those that facilitate intercultural dialogue, will not be so different as to be irreconcilable. Acceptance of the differences between cultures would, in a way, result in the emergence of a common culture, which would mean that the dissemination of good practice, although it would not take place entirely unhindered, would come up against fewer expectations that were impossible to meet.

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There is therefore every reason to hope that everyone who took part in the Symposium came away with two convictions: firstly, the conviction of having a better understanding of what experiencing and understanding cultural diversity is all about and, secondly, thanks to the new approach to history teaching that was outlined, that of having a tool with which to address cultural diversity, using the most appropriate knowledge, skills, attitudes and behaviour. This should improve the chances of seeing the values upheld by the Council of Europe gain wider acceptance in the societies of the twenty-first century.