

1st Global Governance Interdisciplinary Symposium

Luigi Cajani Interview

Luigi Cajani teaches Early Modern History at the Dipartimento di Storia, Culture, Religioni of the University La Sapienza in Rome (Italy). By appointment of the Italian Ministry of Education he coordinated in 2001 the committee for the History, Geography and Social Sciences curriculum for the first level school. He is Associated Scholar of the Georg-Eckert-Institut für internationale Schulbuchforschung in Braunschweig (Germany).

Currently he is participating to the following EU projects:

1. CiCe thematic network (Children Identity and Citizenship in Europe).
2. Assessment, tutorial structures and initial teacher education of trainee students in the subjects “Political/Civic Education, “Social/Cultural Studies” and History in Europe – a comparative study.

On the 13th of July 2017, in occasion of the First Interdisciplinary Global Governance Symposium, we had the opportunity and the pleasure to interview professor Luigi Cajani.

In the following paragraphs we report our meeting with professor Cajani and his answers to our questions.

Q. You have recently participated in writing a Book called “Controversial History for Italian Schools, in Historical Consciousness and History Teaching in a Globalizing Society”. Since here at Global Governance we stress the importance of the concept of Globalization, do you think that it should be more involved in the Italian educational system?

And also, do you think it is useful for a better understanding of the modern and contemporary history? How?

A. Well, first of all, unfortunately in Italy and in general in European countries there is no World History taught at school. You will find either Eurocentric models (like for instance in Italy) or more national oriented models like in most eastern European countries or also in Netherlands. So, this is the first remark to do.

Therefore, World History is taught quite well in the United States where most of scholarships in this field developed.

Let's come to the second part of the question: in my opinion the history of globalization is a core element for understanding the current state of the world. There has been a big debate about when globalization began: Bruce Mazelish in the 80s developed the idea of Global History as World History meaning the history of humanity since the very beginning (Paleolithic or even earlier) of the evolution of human being inside a more general concept of evolution. In Mazelish opinion, the history of globalization starts at the middle of the 19th century. Now this narrow vision has been abandoned by almost every world historian and the current opinion is that in order to understand globalization you must start with the discovery of America because all relevant features both geopolitical economical and cultural (like for example the scientific revolution in the 17th century) started with early modern times. To understand the economics of globalization today, you must start with the discovery of the silver mines in the Spanish America during the 16th century. So in this sense the accepted vision is that the history of globalization starts with the discovery of America when let's say the world was reunited for the second time. We speak about a second time because it was already united during the last ice age when it was possible for instance to colonize Americas.

Q. We also noticed that you participated in the publication of the book “Between Cosmopolitanism, Europeanism and nationalism: the shifting focus in the teaching of history in Europe, in A Europe of Many Cultures. Proceedings of the fifth conference of the Children’s Identity and Citizenship in Europe Thematic Network.”

Do you think that the pacific and merged coexistence of different cultures in Europe is more an utopia or an ambitious goal that can be reached?

What do you think about the last proposal regarding the IUS SOLI?

A.Let me start with the last point of your question. In my opinion is not correct to speak about Ius Soli in relation with the law that is currently debated in the Parliament because Ius soli only exists in the United States and most Southern American countries meaning that automatically when you are born in a country you become immediately citizen of that country. This could only make sense in a part of the world which developed thanks to immigration so it was logical for them to accept and invite most people they could.

In Europe the Ius soli in this pure form does not exist. In all countries there is a combination of many factors such as birth, status of permanency, cultures and so on. Speaking about Ius soli in the case of Italian law it is only a way to bring the debate and to use it for political propaganda. So, the Italian law does not deserve neither glorifications nor to be blamed or condemned as a catastrophe. In my opinion the law which exists now which is going to be emended works quite well in order to make clear some administrative procedures. So there was no really need of a new law. This new law will not be very different: it will only make some steps for the acquiring of the citizenship a bit easier. But with the current law in 2015 about 180.000 foreigners became Italian citizens: it shows that this law works quite well.

Coming to the core of your question about the pacific coexistence of different cultures I can say that it is already achieved. You cannot imagine a war now between France and Germany, England and Germany, Germany and Italy and so on like it happened during the past century. So in this sense the pacific coexistence is already achieved.

The only problem is Europe is Islamic extremist: it is not only a problem in Europe but also inside the Islamic world. This latter, is suffering because it has not been able since the late 19th century to cope with modernity. Nowadays we find the conflict between Shiites and Sunni because of their dream of establishing the caliphate, they have this very aggressive attitude against Europe and the west considered responsible for the backward worse and so on. The pacific coexistence of different cultures in Europe is not a goal, is not an utopia: it is a reality.

Q.Nowadays we live in a society that is really changing and moving fast: it is very different from the one in which our parents and grandparents lived. In that society there was much more space for imagination, while recently we have seen a (probably too fast) booming technological progress that seems to put imagination in the second line.

Do you think that web is really a damage for imagination or can be a support for a new kind of imagination?

A.Today we have a different level of innovation compared to the one we had in the 60s, 70s and 80s. But the web does not change anything on the qualitative level. It changed the quantitative level. It makes your research faster but the substance does not change. It is the same difference between a chariot and a car; you travel faster but it is only a matter of velocity. This does not change anything in terms of quality of research and communication. The web is not positive nor negative, let me say that is completely irrelevant. Today we have a different lifestyle compared to the one we had in the past but it was also possible to reach the same result in the 60s, 70s and 80s.

Q. The Global Governance Symposium has been a great opportunity in order to exchange ideas between different guests coming from different worlds.

Focusing on your thematic word, did you expect that imagination could be linked to so many fields of study? (taking the example of the speeches of your colleagues from mathematics, business, and literature)?

Do you think that the perception of the same word can change shifting from a subject to an other?

A.No, I don't think so. Regardless the mathematician, an expert of history or geography, either you have an idea of continuity of different mental activities or you have an idea of discontinuity... even if there are somebody who still today blame the difference between them.. In my opinion it is not related to the difference between different fields.

Q.Did you had expectations on the conference? Had it fulfilled your expectations? Do you have any suggestions for the implementation of it, thinking about the next editions?

A.Well, in a certain sense, I could say that that the outcome was better than I expected. At the beginning I was skeptical but I found the debate quite interesting. It is always interesting to see different points of view. In terms of interdisciplinarity I cannot say that it was achieved and in this sense what I suggest for the future is to prepare a precise conceptual framework, in order to make possible to work together on a common object of research. Today the introduction was a kind of brainstorming but without a concrete outcome because to have a concrete outcome you need to work on a concrete object. This represent a real advancement of research.

Q.Talking about your speech on 'contrafactual thinking' of this morning, what if the web did not exist at all ? Do you think that human being would be able to find a potential substitute for it ?

A.We had a wonderful substitute already in the 18th century. There was an international web of scholars in Europe and also in the Middle Ages. Their communication took more time but it was also less stressful in my opinion. I do not see any change in the substance of the web. In a certain sense the web creates its own necessity because today for instance we cannot follow all the books written in the past centuries; for instance I work much more through the web than through libraries or bookshops because it is easier (Amazon, online books, stores). Almost 80% of my work is through the web because it is impossible for everybody to control such a big amount of production. At the same time the existence of the web increases the amount of production. Today we have different needs and we have different tools to answer these needs. Although the outcome, what you think and what you produce is always the same.

Cristina Bottoni
Ganna Korniychenko