I start by thanking the editors of this volume, the organizers of the conference which underlies it, for giving me the opportunity of answering a challenge.

The challenge is in the question. Is it not extraordinary that in countries that for more than a generation have committed themselves to Europe by binding treaties and by the incorporation of common references in the rule of law should, 40 years later, ask why? And when a conference is convened to address this question, it covers such a wide field of interests that the question breaks up into a kaleidoscope of questions.

And, of course, as soon as I perused the list of topics, I realized that, as this was not a conference of French administrative lawyers, of socialist ministers or of persons born of Franco-Scottish ancestry, I had no obvious qualification to introduce such discussions. But I do believe that, as if from Mars, I may have a message for you. It is very simple: you are European. Why can I be so sure of this? Because, for many years, I have been involved in the process of screening all important laws and regulations which come into force in one of the member states. This provides the possibility of evaluating the impact of the obligations related to the treaty on the rules binding the citizens of one of our countries. And although our perception of the workings of administration may be different, I know the same forces are at work in all the member states.

The political discussion about Europe more usually focuses on Europe as a construction. It underplays the fact that Europe is functioning and when the public is taken by surprise and has to sit back and let Brussels decide on the meat-course in the menu, it ignores the fact that the same thing is continually happening in numerous fields. In France, practically every week, the wheels of administration turn to introduce some rule discussed in common, and may well have been influenced by, among others, a British administration which may at the same time have been making a show of Euroscepticism. And, of course, in parallel, the British are taking steps which will have been thought out in discussions with the French.
Now, given that this is the real state of affairs, it is high time, if we are
asking why, to have the answers ready.

There are very good reasons for the six, then the 12, then the 15 coun-
tries concerned with Europe to conceive a common destiny, such very
good reasons that they could be termed valid in an even wider circle. Yet,
as time goes by, there seems to be a grumbling dissatisfaction about
Europe, all the more interesting because it does not seem to give voice to a
strong alternative view. So, time and again, the relatively narrow and priv-
ileged circles which, in all our countries, are definitely committed to
Europe rely on the obscurity of the debate and the narrow majorities ral-
lied around each further commitment to invest in the future. Apparently,
they are less sure of the outcome, as is clearly shown in the periodical
bouts of embarrassment in France, on the right and on the left of the polit-
ical spectrum, about this subject.

It seems it might be a good start to our discussions to try and understand
the reasons for this state of dissatisfaction. Are they not related to the con-
tradictions which have been built into the European process itself, contra-
dictions which may appear vivid enough to make our common enterprise a
provocation for history? Is there a way out of the maze for whoever is
convinced enough, if not to solve the contradictions, at least to bypass
them by tackling some new issues which could interest a new generation
in all our countries? Might there not be some form of cultural deficit in the
method chosen to build Europe? Might there not be some form of contri-
bution to be made by culture in the refounding of Europe?

1 THE UNCERTAINTY OF BEING EUROPEAN

As a starting point, I shall make the case that, while there are very good
reasons to be European, they are plagued by a form of invisibility. Either
they are so good and so well proven that people have become too used to
them; or else, our old sophisticated societies have become too subtle and
have gone too far in the techniques which seem to allow consensus with-
out allaying contradiction.

As suggested in a very interesting book, which I shall recommend for
an illustration of our subject, Généalogie de l’Europe, Lамaisong
and Vidal-Naquet’s geography has been kind to Europe. Fertile plains and pro-
tective mountains, plenty of water, the rich variety of the seasons, the sea
and ocean hugging a beautiful coastline, vineyards and fisheries and enough
resources to meet energy needs: no wonder our lands attracted the great
variety of populations who have made us what we are.