About Engagement

Abstract

Volume 8 of Inter Faculty *takes up the theme of Engagement expressed not only in the research studies proper but also in the individual approach taken by each researcher.*

Keyword: engagement

The avowed aim and purpose of this journal is to promote research from a transdisciplinary perspective. Clearly though, every single article we publish is the result of an in-depth study of a research problem specific to a single discipline. It is in the juxtaposition of what, at first glance, would seem to be widely disparate studies that a common thread becomes apparent. The task of our preface then, and rightly so, is to make evident the underlying issue running through the different studies which can link each to the other. It is not an easy task as the research studies discuss distinct problems, have their own particular objectives and approach, yet, even so, a common thread can be perceived. The theme of volume 8 of *Inter Faculty* is 'engagement', and we would like to take a moment to express our thoughts as to what this means in the context of the present volume.

In the common usage of today's modern English, engagement signifies: "(i) A formal agreement to get married; (ii) An arrangement to do something or go somewhere at a fixed time; (iii) A fight or battle between armed forces; etc." (Oxford). Despite such rather restrictive spheres as betrothal, contract, military action, and so on, a common concept lies at the root of them all, that of gage. Etymologically, engagement was the act of 'giving a gage', of 'laying down a gage', in every instance of the word; where a gage is taken to mean "a valued object deposited as a guarantee of good faith" (Oxford), "something deposited as a pledge of performance" (Merriam-Webster), "something deposited in the hands of another as a guarantee of a debt, a loan" (Littré). According to Littré moreover, in former times a gage was that "of battle, of combat", in the sense of "engagement to fight manifested by the throwing down of a gauntlet as a gage and contracted when the opponent, in taking up the gauntlet, had accepted the gage".

Clearly, a gage forges a singular bond between two protagonists (between the debtor and the creditor, the fighter and his foe, the lover and the loved one, etc.). It is in these terms that we have taken up the theme of engagement for Volume 8 of *Inter Faculty*, for, in the same way, a researcher in human sciences must lay down his gage and forge just such a singular bond if he is to engage in the arena that is research. The bond he must take on is that between himself and the research problem, and again that between himself and the community, both for which his gage can be no less than himself. Such a link is unbreakable and the researcher may risk defeat, risk not convincing the community of the validity of his research, but by the same token he has the chance to stimulate reaction, to take things that one step further with the community. Once engaged in the arena the researcher is able to formulate the problems posed and imposed by society, history, philosophy and epistemology. He is able to raise issues and propose solutions. Engaged, the link is forged between the researcher himself, human society and the subject of research. Engagement is a fundamental characteristic of research in human sciences. Without engagement there can be no research.

To turn then to a consideration of the papers presented here:

In his article 'Maintaining Identity and Rights of National Minorities: Visibility, Linguistic Landscape of the Slovene Minority in Carinthia' Andrej Bekeš takes the case of the ethnic Slovene peoples of Carinthia in Austria to discuss identity and rights of national minorities. The ethnic Slovene territories have seen a long and complex history. In brief, for a time, the Slovene lands were part of the Holy Roman Empire and then its successor, Habsburg Austria. In the nineteenth century, with the demise of Habsburg Austria, the ethnic Slovene territory was divided between several Austrian territories and the Kingdom of Hungary. At the end of WWI a large part of the territory was integrated into the new Kingdom of Yugoslavia, later the Federative People's Republic of Yugoslavia, the remainder being split between Italy, Austria and Hungary. In 1991 the country of Slovenia gained independence from Yugoslavia and in 2004 acceded to the European Union. Hence, then, the singular situation of the people of this region who, though they have never moved away from their native lands, have been subject to a continuous change of regime. With each change their relationship with the nation, the state, the governing body has been modified and their identity redefined, avowed and consolidated, or renounced and disowned.

For Andrej Bekeš the issue of the Slovene minority in Carinthia is not solely a problem of safeguarding immigrant peoples as can be seen in every region of the world, but one which goes to the heart of the problem of identity itself: identity which is of an extremely complex nature, which is built up over the passing of history, movements of politics, ideology, society, division, fragmentation and oppression, and more. Questions of personal identity and identity of peoples as a whole are at the core of Andrej Bekeš' body of research. It is in this sense that he focuses on the autochthonous Slovene peoples confronted with issues of linguistic rights with regard to Austrian authorities and movements of ideology.

The work of Irène Tamba, 'L'invention du genre grammatical au Japon et en Grèce Antique/Emergence of Grammatical Gender in Japan and Ancient Greece', would seem a rather surprising subject of research as grammatical gender is a well-established, shared concept, posing no problems. Nevertheless, it appears that it took over a century for the concept of grammatical gender to be assimilated into the Japanese language. During the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, Japan imposed a strict isolationist policy of *sakoku* (鎖国) or 'closed country'. Yet, despite this policy, the country was not completely cut off from the outside world as there were relations, though severely restricted, with China, the Ryûkyû Kingdom, Ezo and the Netherlands. Under the Shogunate of the time, the Dutch in fact, were permitted to maintain diplomatic and commercial relations with Japan, albeit confined to a small artificial island of just 1.5 hectares in Nagasaki. From this tiny space set apart for the Dutch in Nagasaki, nuggets of European civilization filtered through to the Japanese people. Japanese specialists of Dutch studies, *rangakusha* (蘭学者), and official interpreters/translators, *tsûji* (通詞), pored over Dutch works to gain a deeper understanding of their meaning, to be able to give a precise and detailed translation, and to report back to the highest authority of the land. The works covered the world's most advanced sciences and technologies of the period: medicine, botany, chemistry, geography, astrology, and so forth. A few select families appointed by the Shogunate were designated as translators; they were housed in Nagasaki and learnt the Dutch language directly from the Dutch themselves and from Dutch-language grammar books. The art and craft of translation and knowledge of European civilization was handed down from father to son, from generation to generation. In certain respects these translators were the technocrats of the time. They were not concerned with questions of philosophy or the universal condition of mankind, nor of the history of Christian missionaries

come to Japan in the previous century, instead they devoted their days, months, years to the translation of Dutch words, phrases, writings. For a translator, to be able to grasp the meaning of grammatical gender (masculine, feminine, neutral) was a practical problem that could not be ignored. So it was as a technocrat as such that the translator Ryûho Nakano undertook the task of improving and devising ways to comprehend the Dutch language with its completely different system and, in the eyes of the Japanese, its strange and unsettling logic, without posing questions of language such as would be common today.

So how and by what intellectual process could Ryûho Nakano arrive at an understanding and an explanation of grammatical gender when the concept did not exist in the linguistic system of his native language? It is inevitable that Irène Tamba would seek to answer this question as throughout her career as a linguist her research has turned to problems of grammatical category in East-Asian languages compared to European. Instead of looking to the universalism of language for the solution, the author has gone to the core of the conflicting reality of two heterogeneous languages being made to correspond. Though Irène Tamba is not a specialist of Dutch language, nor is she a philologist of Dutch studies in seventeenth and eighteenth century Japan, the problem posed by Ryûho Nakano is not one that can be ignored and in this her engagement is made quite clear. In her research on the process of interpretation of grammatical gender by Ryûho Nakano, Irène Tamba is led to consider the process of grammatical gender in Ancient Greek. A comparison of the two languages may appear somewhat eccentric, but represents a natural course of research for the author.

Following an overview of Japanese grammatical gender terminology, Irène Tamba gives a thorough analysis of how the process of transferring the notion of gender was accomplished. Nakano resorted to the Sino-Japanese concept of *yin/yang* to interpret the three genders (masculine, feminine, neutral) of the Dutch substantive, taking *tyû* 中 (middle, centre), independent of *yin/yang* polarity, to represent the neutral form. From Nakano's interpretation of neutral (in relation to masculine/feminine) a comparison with Aristotle could be established. It appears that, in calling into question the Sophists of the fifth century B.C., Aristotle introduced the concept of *metaxu* (middle, intermediary) to account for the neutral form. Compared to the Japanese language, the grammatical category of tripartite

gender in Greek (masculine, feminine, neutral) was only firmly established after a long process of deliberation lasting over 700 years. By engaging in a unique and singular path, Irène Tamba has, with this study, opened a hitherto unsuspected new avenue of research.

The last entry for this volume is the research note by Marko Ogrizek on 'The Development of Confucian Ethics in the Teachings of Itô Jinsai'. Though little known in western philosophy, Jinsai (1627-1705) is, especially with regard to Confucian ethics, a prominent figure in the field of Chinese studies. Marko Ogrizek examines Jinsai's works and his role in the link between the Zhu Xi Chinese school of thought and that of Ogyû Sorai (1666-1728), another, though later, leading intellectual of Edo-period Japan.

However, the author does not limit his study to annotating a philological interpretation of Jinsai's works, but also attempts to reinterpret the thinking and life of Itô Jinsai in terms of 'embodiment of knowledge', as, according to Marko Ogrizek, Jinsai's teachings on Confucianism and the way he lived his life are inseparable one from the other. The theory of Embodiment of Knowledge, stemming from phenomenology, has greatly influenced current cognitive science, and could open the way to a new framework within which to reconsider, and perhaps give a truer insight into, the works of Jinsai on Confucian ethics.

As ever, *Inter Faculty* is an interactive journal which questions man, his society and the contemporary world, it is a journal which proposes new and original ideas, but above all it is a forum for exchange and as such we welcome comments and discussions from researchers of all domains.

Saburo Aoki
Co-Editor-in-Chief
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