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**Civic Concern: European Identity beyond  
Emotions and Metaphysics.  
An Argument against Mythification**

PAPER<sup>1</sup> PRESENTED AT THE SEMINAR  
"YOUNG PEOPLE AND ACTIVE CITIZENSHIP"

Panel 1: Constructing European Citizenship – Meanings and Understandings

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<sup>1</sup> Please, note: This paper is to be considered as a draft only. Do not quote without permission.

## Preface:

Due to numerous inquiries in reaction to my presentation it has to be noted that I am in no way arguing against accentuating a common European history, i.e. raising awareness of the common past that was violent and bloody clashes as well as a common creation of what is called "European values" (rule of law, democracy, human rights etc.). Both made Europe what it is today. I am deeply convinced that the knowledge of the past is indispensable if we want to understand the present and if we want to build a better future. Moreover, I am consistent with Theodor W. Adorno's quest to "work through the past".<sup>2</sup> According to Joerges "'Working through the past' is a European burden" and "it may, however, even be Europe's vocation to reconstruct a purged identity through confrontation with its pasts."<sup>3</sup>

But I do express severe criticism of misusing the past by *telling stories* instead of *teaching history*, by creating and/or stabilising myths around "great events" and "great men" instead of presenting pure facts. Stories on myths and heroes are **already interpretations of the past**, whereas the mere presentation of all the facts leaves the interpretation to the individual and the times and circumstances she or he lives in. The circulated myth of European integration – that some seek to use for educating European citizens – reads as a storyline in which visionary leaders engaged in the critical adventure of designing a new Europe to overcome barbarism. As every myth also this one has some true aspects, but it presents only a small part of European history and is embellished by having suppressed components like underlying motivations that are generally labelled with the keyword "idealism" but that in reality were as well political and economic interests of the ruling elites in every nation-state and therefore were less sublime than the myth tells.

Moreover, myths are unchangeable stories, not open to scepticism, with an absolute claim that narrows the leeway of the evolving future. Therefore every attempt to build a European identity by mythifying the past and using emotions

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<sup>2</sup> Adorno, Theodor W., "The Meaning of Working Through the Past" (1959), in: Theodor W. Adorno, *Critical Models*, 1998 (trans. Henry W. Pickford), p. 89. (The concept was initially concerned with Germany's way of coming to terms with the past but in my opinion is of importance for the "Project Europe" as well.)

<sup>3</sup> Joerges, Christian, "On the Disregard for History in the Convention Process", in: *European Law Journal*, Vol. 12, No. 1, January 2006, p. 5

of adoration for European heroes or “founding fathers”<sup>4</sup> is an attempt to negate essential facts of European history. The history of Europe and first and foremost the history of the European Communities / European Union is a history of relativisation, challenge, uncertainty and doubt. After centuries of having been the ruler of the world, Europe in the 20<sup>th</sup> century had to discover that power is relative, that the “centre of the world” is subject to change, that the future is not a way of absolute advancement. Europe suddenly was a weak, doubtful place between two super-powers.

This experience of relativity and this knowledge of uncertainty in my opinion are now genuinely European and mark ways of “Europeanness”: a certain attention in regard to conceding absoluteness to anything. When thinking about European identity and European citizenship, one should not deny the special experience of absoluteness and totalitarianism that led to the beginning of the process of formal European integration (COE, EU).

Furthermore, one should not build a European identity similar to the national identity. The concept of the national primarily originates from the romanticism of the 19<sup>th</sup> century using stories, myths and heroes to address emotional affiliation among strangers to overcome their strangeness because the modern, industrial state required homogenous, standardised people. These myths pretend(ed) absolute belonging. But the concept of Europeanness is deeply influenced by the events of the 20<sup>th</sup> century that made affiliations less absolute and put former certainties into perspective.

The presence of the 21<sup>st</sup> century makes feelings of belonging even more relative. I just have to point to the greater mobility (travelling, studying/working abroad, or also virtually by using modern means of communication) of more and more people, to the huge number of people immigrating to Europe and those seeking asylum. Building European identity by tracing the origins of European integration back to some myths is pretending mere idealistic reasons further on and sticking to Europe as an elitist project invented by some visionary men. But it ignores the experience with Europe of many ordinary people and most migrants living and coming to live in Europe today.

That is why I argue for a prosaic down-to-earth approach instead of emotionally charged myths, visions and illusions concerning European citizenship. That is why I argue for concentrating on the concept of *Civic Concern*. I see European

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<sup>4</sup> Moreover, what a signal is worshipping some “founding fathers” to the female youth regarding ideas of emancipation and gender politics?!

identity as the result of a political construction of institutions (having been established to rescue the nation-state after World War II, to answer economic challenges like the globalisation and so on), and I see being a European citizen as the result of being a member of the polity, i.e. being subject to common laws. Since Europe is work-in-progress (We do not even know the future direction: federal state or supranational commonwealth or something else?), European citizens (and European citizens-to-be) should not be sworn to mythological stories of the past that tell them nothing about how to engage in the "Project Europe". But they should be confronted with the facts of European history, with the institutions that represent "European values" (that I would, by the way, rather call "achievements", as "values" may be mistaken of being absolute themselves), with the institutions and functioning of the Council of Europe, of the European Union etc.

Creating and relying on a common European myth, on stories about founding fathers and other heroes holds nothing for the present and future active citizenship. It would – as I fear – just path the way for a kind of Euro-nationalism (e.g. "With our visionary leaders Monnet and Schuman we Europeans rose like a phoenix. We overcame war and barbarism", meaning: being someone better), recycling the imperial myth-formations of the 19<sup>th</sup> century's nation-states.

But pointing to European institutions and the practice of European politics would raise awareness of how much everybody is affected by the "Project Europe" every day. For the focus of our research seminar this would mean to **urge youth workers to demonstrate the many ways the young are affected** by decisions made by EU-institutions and the work of the Council of Europe. Moreover, **means of engagement have to be highlighted, so that action could result from concern.**

This may be a way that the former elitist project of European integration may be taken over by the people. By telling emotionally embellished stories of the European myth, of great men and conventionalised founding treaties, European identity would rely on an interpretation of the past alone but suppresses and neglects that Europe is a daily concern and a work-in-progress.

I finally dare to argue that Europe's daily political practise concerns the European citizen more and commits her or him more to her or his European citizenship than flowery stories.

That leads me to the last correction in responding to my critics: I am not arguing against any emotion for Europe or the European idea (For this reason, the paper is called "beyond emotions", not "without emotions"). But I turn against any attempt of persuading people to love Europe by telling heroic stories that suppress many aspects of historical facts. I turn against trying to use metaphysics to activate citizenship. If young people get interested in European affairs for a start (because they see that they are affected by European concerns) they may discover that Europe is loveable (or not) by themselves. Emotions towards Europe should only be a result of experience ("If what 'Europe' stands for is good for me, my family and friends then I will like it and will engage", i.e. becoming an active European citizen), not of manipulating the youth, because: Myths are reductions of historical complexity. Telling such half-truths to build a European identity flouts every intellect. Myths are sheer propaganda, whereas the education of political consciousness by pointing to the daily concern could be a way to interest people for engagement in the "Project Europe". It would be necessary to teach history in all its complexity and to enable the youth to the democratic discourse, i.e. enabling them to be part of the civil society.

The following is a further elaborated version of the presentation I gave in Budapest on November 23<sup>rd</sup>.

Vienna, December 10<sup>th</sup> 2006

## 1. Heroes, Myths, Identity

### a. Hungary 1956/2006, an Introductory Example

Since we were meeting in Budapest in November 2006 just a few days after the commemoration of the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Hungarian Revolution, Hungary lent itself to serving as an introductory example to show the connection between myth and identity:

Hungary's struggle for freedom, the people's brave fight against the Soviet superiority in 1956 still marks a modern foundation myth of identity for the people of Hungary.<sup>5</sup> Everyone can name a grandfather, a grandmother or an uncle or at least knows someone through stories told at home or at school who stood up to the Red Army, who stood up for Hungarian sovereignty, for freedom, who even died for the cause. Legends are told, heroes were made. Since then Imre Nagy, prime minister at that time, is a Hungarian national hero and the uprising, this self-assertion against an alien power, is part of the "collective memory" (Maurice Halbwachs)<sup>6</sup> of Hungary, something that holds Hungary together. Hereby the myth fulfils its task: political integration by pretending homogeneity, reducing social complexity, offering orientation and companionship. Still today "many have retained a rather passionate romantic vision of the revolution: Hungary dodged and challenged the Soviet giant like the mythical 'David and Goliath'".<sup>7</sup> But many historical facts that may rake the mythical image were and still are not told. The scientific analysis of these events is only in the early stages.<sup>8</sup>

Even the young Second Republic of Austria drew from the Hungarian national uprising. Just having obtained freedom and neutrality itself, Austria was the first place of refuge by many Hungarians. This became a source for Austrian identity: to be – finally – regarded as a free country, to be protected by neutrality. (Ernst Bruckmüller even notes: "In any case, Austrian neutrality as a fundament of identity does do one thing: it encapsulates the abandonment of fantasies

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<sup>5</sup> See recently: James, Beverley A.: *Imagining Postcommunism: Visual Narratives of Hungary's 1956 Revolution*, A & M University Press, Texas 2005

<sup>6</sup> Halbwachs, Maurice: *The Collective Memory* (1950), Harper and Row, New York and London 1980

<sup>7</sup> Kezsmarki, Adrienne: Budapest 1956: a missed opportunity? In: *Café Babel*, 23.10.2006 <http://www.cafebabel.com/en/article.asp?T=A&Id=2094>

<sup>8</sup> See recently: International conference *The 1956 Hungarian Revolution: Context, Effect, Myth*, Collegium Hungaricum, Berlin, 4 - 6 October 2006

regarding Habsburg nostalgia or a pan-German Reich into an easily understood concept."<sup>9</sup>)

Moreover, the Bridge at Andau became the symbol for freedom, became a "lieu de mémoire", how Pierre Nora put it.<sup>10</sup> A small, wooden bridge over a small river, the Bridge at Andau was the escape route for about 70.000 Hungarians. It became a memorial and a symbol of tolerance and helpfulness, reconstructed in 1996 at the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Hungarian Revolution according to the storyline: Those brave Hungarians that fought for the freedom of their nation and those free and neutral Austrians that warmly welcomed the oppressed people founded an emotional identity in each of these two countries. Even literature ("The Bridge at Andau" by James Michener, 1957) and film ("Der Bockerer III", an Austrian movie) refer to this event, again blinding out many facts that would allow more sophisticated interpretations of the past and would therefore allow another political handling with present (and future) events and decisions.<sup>11</sup>

## **b. Theorising the Myth**

Already Plato characterised a myth as "dishonest", but admitted that the myth may be necessary as a lie for state's ends.<sup>12</sup> Wolfgang Schmale explains the use of a myth for state- and nation-building today accordingly: Myths provide identity. This myth-based identity supports the processes of political integration by reducing complexity and denying strangeness.<sup>13</sup> The dictum is: "We are one because we have a common past when we suffered together for a higher reason. We prevailed because we were guided by someone / something bigger than us." This someone or something bigger, this ideal, is thereby often wrapped in historical mystery – telling only those parts of history that are necessarily needed for state's ends, overall being dishonest concerning historical truth.

Ernest Renan in his famous speech "Qu'est-ce qu'une nation?" saw the very basis of every nation in the common suffering for "the good cause". Not until this common experience had been made one could speak of the nation as a daily

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<sup>9</sup> Bruckmüller, Ernst: The UN and Neutrality, in: *Exhibition catalogue: The New Austria. The Exhibition to Commemorate the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the State Treaty 1955/2005*. p. 205

<sup>10</sup> Nora, Pierre: Between Memory and History: Les Lieux de Mémoire (1984), in: *Representations*, 26, Spring 1989, pp. 7-25

<sup>11</sup> I for example allude to recent discussions concerning Austrian neutrality.

<sup>12</sup> See: Dörner, Andreas: *Politischer Mythos und symbolische Politik. Sinnstiftung durch symbolische Formen*, Westdeutscher Verlag, Opladen 1995

<sup>13</sup> Schmale, Wolfgang: Europa ohne Mythos, in: Völker-Rasor, Anette and Wolfgang Schmale, *MythenMächte – Mythen als Argument*, Arno Spitz, Berlin 1998, p. 140

plebiscite.<sup>14</sup> Etienne Francois and Hagen Schulze accurately relate to myths as “emotional fundamentals of nations”, stating: “How strongly nations stick to the perpetuation and transfiguration of their sovereignties can be seen by the fact that they conventionalise those big moments in history into their most important myths, when they – being sure of enjoying the benevolence of destiny and fighting for the good cause – fought heroically for freedom and independence.”<sup>15</sup> To sum it up: Myths can support political integration by providing a common identity.

So, what’s the problem concerning Europe?

When thinking about using myths for backing European identity and activating citizenship further on, we have to bear in mind that myths are part and parcel of religious thinking. Myths rely only on clippings of the past, they are already interpretations of the past, and they essentially rely on thought figures like heritage and ethnic descent. Who has not experienced the heroic act that constituted a myth or who is not akin to a witness of the heroic act through generations, who was not brought up in the culture that passed on these stories of heroes and exceptional events, who does not dearly believe in these stories, this one will forever stay somehow “different” and therefore excluded from the “real nation”.

Myths pretend absoluteness and homogeneity (concerning the perception of history, of culture, of values etc.) that does not exist, that first and foremost cannot exist in a huge and pluralistic and constantly changing society like Europe that faces changing borders (by enlargement) and changing people (by migration).

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<sup>14</sup> See: Renan, Ernest: Was ist eine Nation?, in: idem: *Was ist eine Nation? Und andere Schriften*, Folio, Vienna 1995, p. 56

<sup>15</sup> Francois, Etienne / Schulze, Hagen: Das emotionale Fundament der Nationen, in: Flacke, Monika (ed.), *Mythen der Nationen. Ein europäisches Panorama*, Koehler & Amelang, Munich/Berlin 1998, p. 22

## 2. Searching for the European Hero

### a. Worship whom?

Who is the European hero we could (or: should) adore?

Jacques Delors' well-known remark "You can't fall in love with the single market" is still today an often cited reference to the European longing for identity that transcends the common market. Since the very beginnings of European integration it often was maintained that Europe has no narrative, no substance and therefore no lasting feeling of solidarity, precisely uttered e.g. by French sociologist and historian Raymond Aron in the 1950s: "The European Idea is without substance. It does not have the transcendental sheen of messianic ideologies, it is not comprehensible, not tangible compared to the traditional embodied fatherland. Europe is a creation by intellectuals that appeals to reason but hardly has an echo in the hearts."<sup>16</sup>

Is Aron's analysis still valid? Do Europeans meanwhile identify with Schuman or Monnet as Hungarians do with Kossuth or Nagy? For example, look at the Hungarian Forint-banknotes (or remember your Austrian, German etc. banknotes) and then look at the Euro-banknotes: Europe only could agree on a common history of architectural style that is quite meaningless to many ordinary people living in Europe...

Is the place where the Treaty of Rome was signed a lieu de mémoire like the tiny Bridge at Andau? Actually, I did not even know where exactly the Treaty of Rome was signed (and therefore would not have known where to pilgrimage...) until I did some research on this question for our seminar.<sup>17</sup> That is worth mentioning because I – being Austrian – would not have to look up the place where the Austrian Treaty of 1955 was signed. I know this since elementary school.

To answer the questions above: There is no European hero, there is no practicable European myth that holds Europe together!

Forget the legendary figure "Europe" who was kidnapped by a bull. It has no practical power. The image is just something for artists or academics, like the

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<sup>16</sup> Aron, Raymond: *Der permanente Krieg*, Fischer, Frankfurt am Main 1953, p. 410

<sup>17</sup> By the way: The halls "Orazi e Curiazi" at the Campidoglio.

names "Monnet" and "Schuman" are something for sculptors and intellectuals, not of any importance the (wo)man in the street.

We are left alone. No hero, no leading myth, just some "Eurocrats" sitting there in Brussels, currently designing labels for vodka bottles that are telling us that spirits are bad. But although spirits lose out in Brussels, Europe is still in search for the common *European spirit*, for a spirit that constitutes a feeling of unity and therefore a feeling of citizenship that activates engagement with politics. Some already seek to use the storyline of visionary, idealistic leaders that had the dream to overcome barbarism to create a European myth for educating European citizens.

**b. The History of the Concepts of European Identity and Citizenship as the History of Defining a Common Spirit<sup>18</sup> [to be elaborated]**

1973: European Commission - Declaration on European Identity

1984: Adonnino-Report

1992: Maastricht-Treaty

1997: Modification by Amsterdam-Treaty

December 2001: Laeken Declaration

February 2002 – July 2003: European Convention

9 – 12 July 2002: European Youth Convention

18 July 2003: Draft Treaty establishing a Constitution for Europe  
etc.

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<sup>18</sup> See: Shaw, Josephine: *Citizenship of the Union: Towards Post-National Membership?*, Harvard Jean Monnet Working Paper 6/1997

### 3. Post-emotional?

#### a. Myths and Heroes as the Creed of the Secular Nation- State

In my opinion, we should not search any longer for a *European Soul* and for European symbols like a Euro-anthem or a European foundation myth. These symbols, myths and heroes belong to the concept of the classical secular nation-state of a "Kulturnation", replacing religion as the tie of society, being quasi-religious themselves.

Mainly Johann Gottfried Herder contributed to an understanding of nation as "Volk" as imagined particularly since the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century – a community based on common ethnic origin, common language, telling common stories about heroic deities and great battles, reciting common poems, a "Kulturnation" (nation by culture): a narrow definition of culture leading to a mythologically charged understanding of citizenship, an understanding that presumes a nation to be homogeneous unit, a very exclusive and therefore excluding unit, overall a concept that does not give any consideration to the plurality of modern lifestyles, morals and identities. Ernest Gellner accordingly located the beginnings of nationalism at the time when a socially mobile, anonymous society suddenly starts pretending to be a closed, cosy community<sup>19</sup>, thereby taking up the differentiation between community and society first elaborated by Ferdinand Tönnies in his monograph "Gemeinschaft und Gesellschaft" (1887).<sup>20</sup> A few years after Tönnies, Friedrich Meinecke introduced the conceptual dichotomy of "Staatsnation" (civic / constitutional nation) and "Kulturnation" (nation sharing cultural attributes and language, images of common ancestry)<sup>21</sup> into the academic discourse, a concept still dominating the debate and of interest for our approach towards Europe.

The traditional European nation-state predominantly goes back to nation-building done by a "Kulturnation" (confer Germany, Italy and others in the 19<sup>th</sup> century and the newly established nation-states on the Balkans) and still mainly relies on

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<sup>19</sup> Gellner, Ernest: *Nations and Nationalism*, Blackwell, Oxford 1983

<sup>20</sup> For further information compare the presentation by Oana Balescu at this seminar.

<sup>21</sup> Meinecke, Friedrich: *Weltbürgertum und Nationalstaat*, Munich 1907

the *ius sanguini*<sup>22</sup> as the basis of citizenship. The establishment of the nation-state was closely linked to nationalism and its violent excesses. Hence, it is quite paradox that on the one hand the European project and especially the concept of European identity is said to having been set out to overcome nationalisms, and on the other hand it avails itself of the tool kit of nationalism.<sup>23</sup> Is Europe by doing so searching for a way of emphasizing nation-building in the sense of "Kulturnation" rather than state-building in the sense of "Staatsnation"?

Gret Haller distinguishes nation-building from state-building by the creed:<sup>24</sup> The national identity demands for a statement of faith (uttered by the knowledge and propagation of the nation's myths, heroes, poems etc.) to a community defined by ancestry. Contrariwise, the "state-identity" operates beyond every creed since the individual can be part of the society without belonging to the ethnic group that prevails and without providing evidence of believing. She or he can identify with the state because she or he is subject to its norms and therefore concerned by its politics.

For the reasons mentioned above, in my opinion Europe's way should rather be the way of state-building, i.e. becoming a Staatsnation, than nation-building, i.e. becoming a Kulturnation.

If we could agree on this way, one could raise another question: Where does the democratic, liberal state – that Europe surely would want to be – draw its unifying power from, if not from the ethnic-cultural ties that the in this respect successful 19<sup>th</sup> century-concept "nation by culture" provides? Because according to Ernst-Wolfgang Böckenförde we hold the wolf by its ears as the liberal, secularised state lives on preconditions he himself cannot guarantee by means of enforcement without losing its liberality. Hence, Böckenförde suggested already years ago that the identification towards the state would have to be fed by an inner impetus similar to religious feelings.<sup>25</sup> No identity without a creed? No active citizenship without something bigger than prosaic institutions to believe in?

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<sup>22</sup> i.e. nationality by descent (Austria, Germany, Switzerland etc., esp. countries denying that they are immigration countries!), in contrast (and sometimes also in addition) to *ius soli* as the nationality by place of birth (immigration countries like the USA, Canada, Australia etc.).

<sup>23</sup> On this notion see also: Gerber, Gerold: Doing Christianity in Europe: An Inquiry into Memory, Boundary and Truth Practices in Malta, in: Stråth, Bo (ed.), *Europe and the Other and Europe as the Other*, PIE-Peter Lang, Brussels 2000

<sup>24</sup> Haller, Gret: State-building statt Nation-building, in: *Blätter für deutsche und internationale Politik*, 11/2003

<sup>25</sup> Böckenförde, Ernst-Wolfgang: Die Entstehung des Staates als Vorgang der Säkularisation (1967), in: Böckenförde, Ernst-Wolfgang, *Recht, Staat, Freiheit. Studien zur Rechtsphilosophie, Staatstheorie und Verfassungsgeschichte*, Suhrkamp, Frankfurt/M 1992, pp. 92-114

Do we need a "European Creed" similar to the American Creed? A secular religion based on mythical stories about great events and great men, about "Patriots that sacrificed their Lives and Fortunes" as the ties of society *to feel the community*? The American Creed<sup>26</sup> became the touchstone of the US-national identity. The USA are not borne by a myth, they are the myth. Should Europe be a myth too? The American Creed reflects American nationalism, accompanied by symbols like the flag, the seal, the Pledge of Allegiance, the Star-Spangled Banner, the eagle etc. This creed is quasi-religious and hereby reflects a huge difference between US-American and European traditions: Freedom of religion in the USA since the days of the Pilgrims means "freedom to religion", but in Europe since the Thirty Years' War means "freedom from religion", clearly separating state from church, seeing religion as something private, not to mingle with any state affairs. This fundamental difference has to be taken into account when discussing the American Creed as a model for Europe, when taking European history into account for discussing European identity politics.

Since Europe has another history, since it is a secular project based on the experience of relativisation (and with the initial aim to overcome nationalisms, according to the official storyline that neglects and suppresses a lot of other than mere idealistic facts like political and economic interests of the ruling elites in every nation-state) I strongly argue against any longing for dependence on religious respectively quasi-religious (myths, heroes...) backings of European integration. Searching for metaphysics like a "European Spirit" or defining the "European Soul" reveals constant attempts in this direction.<sup>27</sup> "I therefore believe it is my duty to my country to love it" – as the American Creed states – does not comply with the experiences of European history in the 20<sup>th</sup> century that bore the process of European integration. There should be no duty to love Europe. If Europe is loveable because politics hold something for peoples' everyday life, Europe will be loved anyway and people will engage to support this processes.

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<sup>26</sup> "I believe in the United States of America as a Government of the People, by the People, for the People; whose just powers are derived from the consent of the governed; A democracy in a republic, a sovereign Nation of many Sovereign States; a perfect Union, one and inseparable; established upon those principles of Freedom, Equality, Justice, and Humanity for which American Patriots sacrificed their Lives and Fortunes. I therefore believe it is my duty to my country to love it; to Support its Constitution; to obey its laws; to Respect its Flag; and to defend it against all enemies."

<sup>27</sup> See recently: José Manuel Barroso: *A Soul for Europe*, Speech held at the Conference "A Soul for Europe" Berlin, 17 November 2006, Speech/06/706.

## **b. Eros vs. Ratio**

The 21<sup>st</sup> century, the century of globalisation, the century of mass tourism, the century of mass communication, of information and acceleration has broadened the outlook; and at the same time the “cocoon” of the local and the nation in many places have rekindled as a place of refuge in a sometimes insecure and confusing world. Many people recall the local, the concrete. They recall the things they know to gain orientation again. Where is Europe’s place?

There is no European people like the American people, referring to a common creed, a common language, common education etc., and there is no Euro-nation in the narrow sense of the 19<sup>th</sup> century that defined the concept of Kulturnation. But during the last few years the European Union made attempts to stand in the place of a Kulturnation by using means of nation-building and trying to draw off emotions that are bound to the old concept of nation that was successful in many countries throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century and even today still is. Much to the surprise of many politicians this project is failing as it attracts public hostility by the majority of people, especially by the older age-groups as they perceive “unknown Europe” as a threat to what they know since decades: the own nation-state they live in.<sup>28</sup> The referenda in France and in the Netherlands recently showed (among other messages to politicians) the limits of Euro-Kulturnation-building.

So, what to do to answer these hostilities and fears? Has Europe to be post-national and therefore perforce to be post-emotional? Does Europe have to leave the way of becoming a Kulturnation, of trying to share symbols, myths and quasi-religious emotions? Is Europe’s only way the way of a Staatsnation, strictly rational and technical?

Joseph Weiler in his essay “To be a European citizen: Eros and civilisation”<sup>29</sup> clearly distinguishes by stating that the national is appealing to our hearts, and the supranational is appealing to the rational within us. Although this idea frequently reappears in sophisticated debates, and although – from an academic and historical point of view – I like the idea of a European citizenship without any passion (that, in the end, would also assure: without any blinding emotions), a truly rational citizenship, I cannot imagine that reason is attractive enough to

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<sup>28</sup> See the Eurobarometer: [http://ec.europa.eu/public\\_opinion/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/public_opinion/index_en.htm)

<sup>29</sup> Weiler, Joseph: *The Constitution of Europe: ‘Do the New Clothes have an Emperor?’ and Other Essays on European Integration*, University Press, Cambridge 1999

promote European citizenship beyond the walls of academia. Especially, what is pure reason to the young?...

#### 4. Civic Concern!

I am arguing for a third way (and hereby partly sharing the thoughts of Jan-Werner Müller): a *Civic Concern*.<sup>30</sup>

In my opinion, lacking heroes and myths in the European identity of ordinary people is great and there is no reason to search for them as this absence gives us a chance to a new form of citizenship and political engagement that corresponds to the European experiences in the 20<sup>th</sup> century and leaves ways to correspond to present and future events like changing borders (EU-enlargement) and changing people (migration): a utilitarian, mostly cognitive approach, a kind of cerebral love that is less spectacular than the emotional, affective approach but therefore less bellicose, more diversity-oriented and does not come into conflict with the existing love for one's country as it addresses another level of affiliation. Because, contrary to a common saying, the development of a European identity does not have to be accompanied by the decline of a national identity!

Whereas citizenship in most countries is still ideologically based on blood and ancestry (and naturalised citizens hardly ever are regarded "true" citizens by the "natives" – especially when the "foreigners" have darker skin – as they do not share their national myth and therefore their collective memory since they simply were not brought up with it, e.g. as they cannot come up with relatives that fought for freedom in Hungary in 1956, as they do not know Hungarian heroes and stories that are told to Hungarians already at school), the cognitive *Civic Concern*-approach to European citizenship can be open for all (migrants, asylum seekers etc.) that are willing to live within the borders of the "Project Europe" and are therefore subjects to European norms and rules. Because this citizenry is not based on images of ancestry and collective memory (that are mostly collective myths...) but it is a citizenry of a politically organised territory, the citizenship of a Staatsnation.

In a Staatsnation people are not educated to share the collective memory and identity is not created by the loop way of engaging in politics because one loves her or his country due to myths that are told to provoke feelings of pride (that are too often resulting in feelings of superiority), but people are educated to share the knowledge of how to use legal and political institutions (citizens'

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<sup>30</sup> Müller, Jan-Werner: Is Euro-patriotism Possible? In: *Dissent Magazine*, Spring 2004 <http://www.dissentmagazine.org/article/?article=364>

initiatives, petitions, referenda etc.) to pursue their own concerns (environmental, social, health policies etc.).

European identity and citizenship should therefore be promoted as being future-oriented. People should not be persuaded to worship what was, but they should be enabled to come to terms with what is and what will be!

Until the 1980s and later on, people were not asked (through politically binding referenda) what they want, yes, if they want the "Project Europe" at all. But suddenly the elitist project comes to its limits and recalls the demos?! Suddenly the demos is needed also to approve what was by being told flowery stories?!

I do not think that "why Europe is" has to be pitched to the youth so insistently. Because for them Europe already is reality. The existence of the "Project Europe" as such is – according to the recent Eurobarometer – not in question by the youth.<sup>31</sup> Therefore, I conclude that what concerns them more than "why" Europe is, is "how" Europe is and the ways of shaping how Europe could look in the future. To handle the future you of course have to know the past, but you have to know the historical truth not the fiction that was and is told because the truth may be inconvenient in some regards...

Europe should therefore seize the chance not to exclusively stick to lopsided interpretations of the past and to e.g. conventionalise the Treaty of Rome into a mythological foundation treaty and to rely on the radiance of "founding fathers", but to think of Europe as ever-aborning, open-ended, as an ever-to-achieving act of civilisation, never fully completed. According to Bo Stråth "a concept like Europe is constructed in processes of contention and bargaining".<sup>32</sup> A concept like Europe lives on relativity and the willingness to doubt, hence in opposition to the concept of a myth.

This leads me to another specialty about the EU that is its peculiar nature as an evolving polity that should not seek to rely on the *European people*, on one *demos*, but on the *people of Europe*, a multiple *demoi* moving closer together without becoming one. Because such a definition of Europe would not challenge the national identity and does not want to replace the love for your country, because compared to the evolvement of the nation-state Europe is still a rational construct, where identity has constantly to be negotiated and renegotiated.

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<sup>31</sup> See also chapter "Two Recent Studies" in this paper.

<sup>32</sup> Stråth, Bo: A European Identity. To the Historical Limits of a Concept, in: *European Journal of Social Theory*, 5(4) 2002, p. 397

In my opinion “Europeanness” is a way of thinking and acting. You partly can find this already laid down in the Copenhagen Criteria, esp. the political criteria. Acting as a European means having a consciousness of relativism: seeking the compromise, respecting and protecting minorities, moreover promoting solidarity and democracy; being European means acting for participation in a project that has no mythological heroes but rational institutions to build upon: Europe to me is not an *old* collective memory based on fictional stories but a *young* collective work in progress.

Citing Jan-Werner Müller, achieving a common Europe “ought to be more a matter of establishing a ‘thin’ liberal community characterised by a certain amount of civic concern, rather than a full-fledged ‘imagined community’.”<sup>33</sup> This “Civic Concern” means: a certain level of care for European affairs in addition to the national. I care about the “Project Europe” because it concerns me, because I am affected by it in my daily life.

#### **a. Side-glance: Constitutional Patriotism**

The concept of Civic Concern differs from the concept of Constitutional Patriotism conceived by Dolf Sternberger<sup>34</sup>, further elaborated by Jürgen Habermas<sup>35</sup> and nowadays often circulated in discussions about European identity. Constitutional patriotism is understood as a post-national, universalistic form of democratic political allegiance. Habermas proposed the transformation of societies from national to trans-/post-national communities, from “ethnos to demos”. It might have been appropriate in the context where it originated, namely West Germany, a ‘half-nation’ with a sense of deeply compromised nationality on account of the Nazi past. But – summing up the arguments against this concept – other countries do not have a comparably difficult past, and other countries either have no (written) constitutions, or they simply do not venerate the constitution as a focal point of democratic loyalty in the way Germans and US-Americans might

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<sup>33</sup> See footnote 14

<sup>34</sup> See Sternberger, Dolf: *Verfassungspatriotismus*, in: *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, 23th May 1979. And: Sternberger, Dolf: *Verfassungspatriotismus*, ed. by Peter Haungs, Insel Verlag, Frankfurt am Main 1990

<sup>35</sup> See: Habermas, Jürgen: *Staatsbürgerschaft und nationale Identität*, in: idem: *Faktizität und Geltung*, Suhrkamp, Frankfurt am Main 1992. And: Habermas, Jürgen: *Post-National Constellation*, Polity Press-MIT, Cambridge 2001

do. Therefore, the concept could not be foisted successfully on Europe as a whole.<sup>36</sup>

Seen from a strictly legal perspective, the European Union already has a constitution – it (i.e. the piled contracts) just is not called “constitution”. Taking into consideration this legal fact, the process of drafting a “European constitution” was nothing more than doing identity politics and nation-building according to the concept of constitutional patriotism. Preconceiving the arguments against this concept mentioned above how could European politicians believe in succeeding? It might work in Germany, maybe in Austria (but I doubt it), but British do not even know a written constitution... It would be another way of worshiping, a personification and hypostasation to use the constitution as an object of reference to love Europe.

Moreover, what’s a constitution, what’s the text of law to the young? How would one communicate it?

In contrast to constitutional patriotism, the concept of *Civic Concern* could easily be communicated by highlighting how Europe affects your everyday life.

### **b. Citizenship by Common Subordination to Legal Norms**

A short legal excursus on one of the seminar’s central questions: “How can European active citizenship be given meaning beyond the core group of actual citizens and spread to include all those living in Europe?”:

The concept of *Civic Concern* requires overcoming the substantive notion of “state” by decoupling it from “nation” [to be elaborated: examples in history, e.g. Switzerland in the 19<sup>th</sup> century]<sup>37</sup> and therefore decoupling nationality from citizenship. And it’s up to practitioners and policy-makers to pave the way for such an understanding of what “state” and “citizenship” could be. To be enthusiastic: Another citizenship is possible!

Following jurist and legal philosopher Hans Kelsen I plead for a prosaic, anti-metaphysical approach towards citizenship by the EU:

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<sup>36</sup> Müller, Jan-Werner: On the Origins of Constitutional Patriotism In: *Contemporary Political Theory*, 5/2006, p. 279

<sup>37</sup> See: Ehs, Tamara: *Helvetisches Europa – Europäische Schweiz. Der Beitrag der Schweiz an der europäischen Einigungsidee im Kontext schweizerischer Staats- und Nationswerdung*, Peter Lang, Frankfurt am Main et al. 2005

„Man (muß) sich von der üblichen Vorstellung emanzipieren, derzufolge das Staatsvolk ein räumliches Zusammensein, ein seelisch-körperliches Konglomerat und als solches eine unabhängig von aller Rechtsordnung existente Einheit einer Vielheit von Menschen ist.“<sup>38</sup>

(“One has to emancipate from the common perception that the people is a regional gathering, a psychic-substantial conglomerate and therefore an entity of a multiplicity of individuals existing independently from every legal system.”)

and

„Die Einheit des Volkes (ist) nur durch die Einheit der Rechtsordnung begründet.“<sup>39</sup>

(“The unanimity of a people is justified only by the unanimity of the legal system.”)

According to Kelsen, everyone who is subject to the norms (of the European Union) has to be regarded as a citizen. Referring to our interest in this seminar this would mean: Due to the simple fact that I reside in Europe – regardless of being citizen of a member state or not – I am subject to its norms. And that is why I care about legislation, that’s why I participate in this project. This is a concept of fluctuating citizenry: I am citizen of the legal entity (EU) I currently reside in (e.g. to demonstrate by registration form). It consequently would imply enfranchising all those living in Europe for European Parliamentary elections! Swiss historian and political scientist Georg Kreis recently<sup>40</sup> attested the European Union a very restricted notion of “citizen” and compared it to the Swiss medieval “Hintersassen” (long-time residents) that had much more civil liberties than other residents. He stated that the EU’s current notion of citizenship does not at all give consideration to a modern society faced with migration. He pled for a new process of drafting a European constitution incorporating all those living in Europe on a broad basis. Thereby, Kreis sees the opportunity of making *the process of drafting* a constitution (not the constitution itself!) a point of reference for a common European identity.

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<sup>38</sup> Kelsen, Hans: *Allgemeine Staatslehre* (1925), Vienna 1993, p. 150

<sup>39</sup> Ibidem, p. 149

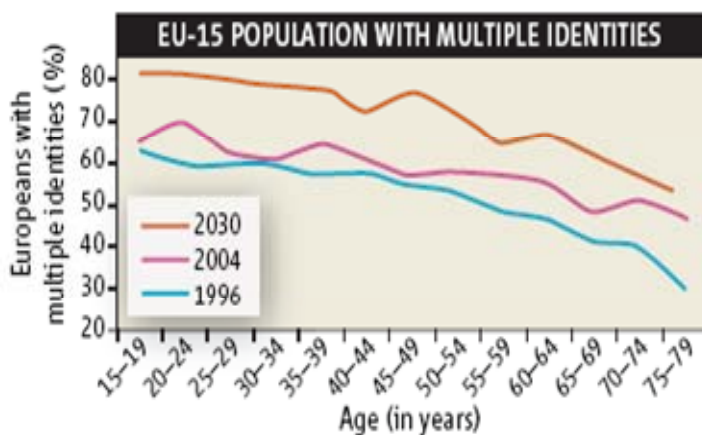
<sup>40</sup> Kreis, Georg: *Welche Demokratie braucht Europa?* Lecture held at the Austrian Academy of Sciences, Nov. 10<sup>th</sup> 2006

## 5. Concluding remarks: "Growing" European citizenship

### a. Two Recent Studies

The question of our research seminar from my scientific point of view would be how to promote *Civic Concern*.

For the start of the debate, I would like to remark that we do not have to worry too much. Because according to a recent study<sup>41</sup> based on the Eurobarometer since 1996, younger Europeans are more likely than older groups to consider themselves to have a European identity in addition to their national one. The conclusion of this study is that as older, more nationally oriented cohorts die, there are likely to be significant changes in the pattern of European identity. By the year 2030 the commitment to a multiple identity will hold the majority.



(Chart taken from: Wolfgang Lutz, Sylvia Kritzinger, Vegard Skirbekk, The Demography of Growing European Identity In: *Science*, vol. 314, Oct. 2006)

Another recent survey<sup>42</sup> screened 500 Austrian adolescents (15-20yrs.) on their attitudes towards Europe. The conclusions are that grown-up Austrians may be amongst the most sceptical people concerning Europe, but their children are not. They feel more and more European, especially the girls. Overall, the survey also shows: the better educated they are the more European they feel.

<sup>41</sup> Lutz, Wolfgang / Kritzinger, Sylvia / Skirbekk, Vegard: The Demography of Growing European Identity, in: *Science*, vol. 314, Oct. 2006

<sup>42</sup> Zuba, Reinhard / Tschirl, Iris: *Jugend und Europa. Eine Studie im Auftrag der Industriellenvereinigung*, Österreichisches Institut für Jugendforschung, October 2006

The way I interpret these studies is that we are now experiencing the first generation that grew up not only in a Single Market but that is currently growing up in a European Union (or in a future member state or in a future candidate state). The youth is already used to Europe, to its advantages and to its struggles, to the way of "Europeanness". Whereas the older may return to the local and to the nation, i.e. to what they know, the young do not return since they cannot return: They have never been there, simply because they are too young to remember times without being an EU-member or being an EU-candidate or debating of becoming an EU-member sometime. Europe is already part of their lives and they have a European identity in addition to their national one. For this reason, Adolf Muschg recently stated: "The people of Europe maybe are less in need of a 'European Identity' than politicians in well-meaning speeches try to recommend warmly ... Europe already is part of peoples' reality."<sup>43</sup>

However, the very fact of feeling European yet says nothing about whether it is a rather positive or rather negative feeling towards Europe. But: Emotions concerning a common cultural identity do not really matter as long as people are not indifferent towards European daily politics, as long as they are just concerned with Europe.

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<sup>43</sup> Muschg, Adolf: *Was ist europäisch? Reden für einen gastlichen Erdteil*, Munich 2005

## Afterword: Impulse for Discussion

We can think of Europe as *growing together by growing up* and should support this development by the following actions:<sup>44</sup>

- Enfranchising all those (aged 16 and older) living in Europe<sup>45</sup> for European Parliamentary elections and enabling them to citizens' initiative and the like, no matter whether they are citizens of an EU-member state or not.
- Expanding media impact coming from and reporting about the European level to be informed how the institutions work in practise, what's on their agendas etc.
- Increasing the number of students in exchange programmes – already on the grammar school-level. Most notably, Switzerland could serve as an example for these listed measures. The "ch-Stiftung"<sup>46</sup> is a foundation working for intra-Swiss exchange of pupils, apprentices, young professionals and teachers. The programme supplements the conventional schooling by providing direct contact (depending on age: penpalship, contact by e-mail, mutual visits, conventional exchange of students, etc.) with people from other regions (i.e. other language, other cultural heritage etc.) in Switzerland.
- Compulsory stay in Brussels for all pupils within school attendance: As a matter of fact the "European Capital" changes peoples' attitude towards the EU (This phenomenon is e.g. quite obvious concerning traditionally Euro-sceptical Tory-MEPs. Stephen Castle recently wrote about them in the "Independent": "In the end all of them relent"...). Europeans living in Brussels for some time experience that the pious hope of Europe growing together finally adds up. They get an idea of how the institutions work, that meetings may be tough and tedious but that's the way of hearing all the voices, of bargaining the "Project Europe".
- Standardising teacher-training on university level all over Europe and promoting teacher exchange programmes since the better teachers are educated the better the youth is. Because as the studies show: The better

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<sup>44</sup> Some of these ideas are already part of the new "Youth in Action"-programme by the European Union.

<sup>45</sup> Holders of a Registration Form

<sup>46</sup> CH-Stiftung für Eidgenössische Zusammenarbeit, <http://www.chstiftung.ch/>

educated people are the more they identify with Europe due to the fact that they know what is going on and how participation (i.e. active citizenship) is possible and worth doing.

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