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## EUROPE IN THE LATE MODERN SOCIAL ACCELERATION THE ‘SPOKESPEOPLE’ OF EUROPEAN STUDIES

**Zoltan GRUNHUT, PhD**

Centre for Economic and Regional Studies, Hungary

[grunhut@rkk.hu](mailto:grunhut@rkk.hu)

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**Abstract:** *The paper embraces the concepts of social acceleration and Late Modernity into a multi-theoretical argument. It sheds light on the reflexive and critical shifts, both at individual and institutional-structural level, induced by these processes. Through this lens, the proposed argument revisits the principal fundaments of ‘Europe’; those orienting and underpinning foundations that need to move from the ‘either/or’ framings to the ‘both/and’ logics of pan-relationalism, anti-representationalism, and anti-essentialism. Finally, in the last chapter, the paper (re-)theorizes the role of ‘spokespeople’ in the field of European Studies in order to show how academics/scholars can contribute the most to the reflexive and critical actorness of ‘Europe’ as a multi-layered institutional entity and its European citizens.*

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**Keywords:** social acceleration, Late Modernity, Europe, reflexivity and critical agency, spokespeople.

### **Introduction**

The current paper proposes an argument based on various conceptual sources, which inputs are put together not with the aim to understand something meta-theoretically, but rather to question something multi-theoretically. While the former approach strives to give meaningful answers by exploratory, descriptive, and/or explanatory investigations, the latter settles for unanswered problematizations. A meta-theory is synthesizing in order to grasp a more comprehensive, more detailed, and more accurate truth, while a multi-theory is only linking, without any reinterpretation and reframing, so that different kinds of truths could be embraced. The former approach claims objectivity for its truth, the latter tries to contest subjective truth-candidates in a process of deliberative justification. Through this multi-theoretical lens the paper aims to shed light on how social acceleration is inducing globally and locally relevant structural changes end up in cultural abstraction that undermines the reference value of semantic patterns frame the subjects’ routinized

ideas and praxes. Without valid references, in a contingent social world, the subjects have to develop reflexive competencies and critical agencies in order to keep being engaged in interactions. This process of individualization, then, further dismantles the cultural constraints, facilitates structural changes, and triggers social acceleration, therefore a circularity of impacts is emerging. Subjects and structures shape and reshape each other progressively. The interrelatedness of agents and institutions is shifting to a mutually reflexive and critical constellation. 'Europe' as a supranational entity, based on multilateralism and oriented towards integration, has to reconsider itself along these institutional trends. And as part of these efforts, it has to rely more on 'spokespeople' who realize the importance of multi-theoretical questioning against meta-theoretical answering, who contribute to the process of subjective justification against the imposition of objective truths.

### **Social acceleration in the era of Late Modernity**

Hartmut Rosa (2013) claims that the core difference between Classic and Late Modernity could be grasped as an 'acceleration' of time. Since everything (production, consumption, needs for institutional updates, social relations, construction of subjective reflections, narrative/performative (re-)constitution of the self, etc.) turns to be faster, then the 'horizon of expectation' and the 'space of experience' are more and more detaching from each other (Koselleck, 1979). This means that the subjects are much less able to predict the possibilities of the future based on their impressions gained in the past; they do not experience what they expect. While this acceleration is an inherent part of modernity, in the classic era social narratives as well as social praxes based on the relevant ideational framings aimed to make changes foreseeable and calculable, i.e. controlled to some extent. In line with this, social theories also proposed shifting but predictable paths, such as differentiation (Durkheim), rationalization and bureaucratization (Weber), individualism (Simmel), or a bit later systemic (or field-related) diversification (Parsons, Luhmann, Bourdieu) (cf. Giddens, 1995). What is new in Late Modernity is that acceleration is so fast that there is no time to establish coherent grand narratives any longer (cf. Lyotard, 1984; 1988). All kinds of framings and references, among them also the various cultural semantics, are heavily questioned (Giddens, 1990). Hence, in this era acceleration is much less the consequence of modernization, but the cause of it. It triggers itself especially respective to technologization, production-consumption, transportation, and info-communication (Rosa, 2013).

However, this is not a homogenous trend since acceleration also facilitates contingencies that are challenging for people to cope with (Giddens, 1991). Uncertain and unpredictable interactions with other agents (intersubjective relations) or abstract entities (subjective relations) undermine people's ontological security (Giddens, 1990). When routinized ideas and praxes, as interiorized cultural patterns, turn to be dysfunctional, then people experience pressuring anxieties and ambiguities (Grunhut, 2019a). Since acceleration avoids the possibility to reestablish (or stabilize) collectively agreed semantics, people have to be critical about their own individual references. They need to reflexively de- and reconstruct their routines, both their epistemologically relevant ideational framings and their praxis-related agency (Beck, 1992). Due to this pressure, an individualization of actorness emerges that further induces social acceleration because cultural constraints cannot keep their reference value any longer. This is how flows of migrants, products, services, information, as well as digitalized, automatized, and robotized technologies that depersonalize daily interactions, furthermore various threats and hazards, like ecology crises, diseases, terrorism, extremism, state-failings, and international crimes are not only consequences of globalization but they accelerate this process too; and this circular trend undermines the reference value of particular (traditional) cultures, because local structures are becoming more and more shaken (Beck, 1998). Due to these circularly interlinked processes, people have to de- and reconstruct their routines as there are no reliable patterns to apply (Beck et al. 1994). Thus, a parallel globalization/localization occurs. Global trends have impacts of abstractions on local structures and cultures, while local events and social reflections (e.g. sudden spreading of a disease, social protest against the various forms of – patriarchal, state, military, theocratic, oligarchic – power, artistic revolution, etc.) could trigger global waves (Giddens, 1999). Individual agents experience that their 'inhabited microcosm' of a social neighborhood is extremely expanding and shrinking at the same time. Global flows widens their social space while devaluation of particular (traditional) semantics pins down their options of being attached to partial groups or communities (Grunhut, 2019a). Some agents experience these processes with anxiety and fears, they strive to protect the once unequivocal cultural references in order to stabilize their ontological security (routinized form of knowledge, ideas, and praxes). Others, instead, try to cope with the challenges reflexively and critically by using social acceleration as a foundation to liberate their subjectivity from constraints (Beck et al. 2003).

In Late Modernity the present narrows down to short, impulsive moments. It is not experienced as a constellation of continuity links the past to the future rather as a density of fragments unattached from what was before and what will be after. In a phenomenological sense, this means that the past immediately turns to be a closed chapter that does not have a valid framing significance to predict the future, while the latter is necessarily perceived as something inscrutable (Rosa, 2013). Accordingly, there is no time for long contemplations and experimental periods to construct and deliberate meanings, to interpret and reinterpret the relevancy of experiences, to let patterns of narrative understandings being settled. References cannot be collectively stabilized or individually customized. Everything is in a status of constant formulation. Agents, thus, have to rely on impulses gained from snapshots of experiences; they need to make quick decisions and spontaneous shifts (Rosa, 2009). Autopoietic (narrative and performative) self-constitution is based on life-long but at least years-long ideational and praxes-related self-framings. It always happens in the present but it tries to embrace both the past and the future into a self-controlled constellation of strategic construction, deconstruction, and reconstruction (like ‘from where I’m coming, where I’m now, and where I’m heading to’ through what kinds of unexpected/desired critical junctures). The subject has to commit itself to relevant experiences in the past, while it aims to foresee and pre-plan the future (Rosa, 2013). Self-constitution extends time into a continuity. However, social acceleration very much hardens this actorness since neither past experiences can hold their importance, nor future expectations and predications can stay reliable. Due to these impacts, subjects easily find themselves in a decontextualized stream of rushing situations and interactions, where they are managing their own selves as detemporalized and atomized provisional fragments (Rosa, 2009). Self-constitution, thus, needs to be more spontaneous and more flexible. It has to be open for unanticipated inputs and abrupt impulses. Subjects should not strive for completeness.

Yet, not only individuals have to reconstitute themselves constantly, but also semantics and abstract entities using these references cannot keep fixed forms. While subjects reflexively and critically strengthen their actorness (competencies, abilities, capacities), they also realize their agency in relation to structures; how to alter institutions, how to question meanings, and how to deconstruct ideational (narrative) framings (cf. theory about structuration – Giddens, 1984). Hence, acceleration creates a social constellation where agents and structures are progressively shaping each other. These processes lead to various changes to social roles, statuses, positions,

relations, and interactions. The most fundamental shift may happen to traditional perceptions of Man and Woman since patriarchal structures are heavily questioned as legitimizing semantics in Late Modernity (Giddens, 1992). Many dynamics of the man-dominated social constellation are unveiled to be male chauvinist and sexist. The ‘othering’ of women through the lens of aggressive ‘macho’ pride of masculinity (such as women are physically weaker, more sensitive, more affective, more caring, more romantic, less competitive, less autonomous, more aesthetic-minded, etc.) is under attack even it is far away to be completely condemned. Still, women are slowly liberating themselves from their reified (instrumental) status, which trend has important future prospects on women’s lifestyles from relationships (roles in family, status of marriage, courtships and friendships), through education and career (studies, positions, leadership, employment, entrepreneurship), to consumption and various forms of public-political engagements (Beck & Beck-Gersheim, 1995).

All these changes de- and reconstruct differently the status of loving relationships. Both the traditional narrative of romantic bond and the legal interpretation of marriage as a pact are being more and more devaluated as ideational framings (Giddens, 1992). Instead, aspects like intimacy, togetherness, equality, honesty, bond of communion, mutuality, respect, giving freedom and space, providing a supportive and inspirational atmosphere to each other are becoming essential features of a courtship/loveship (Grunhut, 2019a). The sexual orientation of the parties is not perceived through the patriarchal lens of ‘normality/abnormality’ any longer, because the traditional family-model of husband, wife, and kid(s) cannot keep being a universal reference. The focus, thus, moves to the quality of the relationship, if it can safeguard an intimate connectedness for the couple to live a peaceful life in an era full of contingencies (Beck & Beck-Gersheim, 2002). In line with this, break-ups are not considered as failures as long as the once satisfying relationships stop to function according to the aforementioned features. On the contrary, to cut short these unhappy partnerships is a reflexive action contributing to one’s subjective emancipation (Grunhut, 2019a). Of course, due to these shifts, the concept of marriage is changing as well. Couples are together for years or decades without being married; frequently they are not keeping a common household or living in the same area. It is more and more a tendency that not just men but also women – irrespective to age – enjoy the autonomy from social pressures to be single, or to have relationship without being married. The connotation of divorcement is also different than it used to be. If a loving relation is not working then its legal status cannot hold it together either, so the

procedure of getting divorced is demanded to be faster and easier. In line with this, contracts about separated incomes, bank accounts and properties are becoming usual features of a marriage (Grunhut, 2019b).

Family as a basic social unit is perceived through a new lens as well. On the one hand, homosexual couples in more and more societies have the same rights as heterosexual ones (to marry, to adopt, to have joint loans and credits, to enjoy family-related social benefits and subsidies, etc.), while on the other hand, single-parent families are widely accepted and respected, both socially and institutionally (Giddens, 1992). The roles of family members are also changing rapidly. Neither based on gender, nor due to traditional family functionality there should not be a distinction between ‘breadwinning’ and ‘childrearing-housekeeping’ tasks (Beck & Beck-Gersheim, 2002). Although it is an inherent mechanism of every relationship that the parties are identifying themselves with certain roles, yet these are not socially-culturally pressured in Late Modernity, therefore flexibility of being reflexively adaptive to changing circumstances is expected from the couples (Grunhut, 2019a). The relevancy of ‘strong ties’, the intensity of informal relations between different generations of an extended family (for instance, to have common household, to ask for daily favors, to share certain costs, etc.) is decreasing; nuclear families are more relying on formal relations with various organizations in their everyday issues.

Above, the argument addressed the globally-locally interlinked structural aspects of acceleration and how these trends undermine the particular cultures and their semantics. It was also briefly elaborated how agents, in lack of valid narratives and culturally grounded references and patterns, need to reflexively revisit their routinely applied ideational framings and praxes, which critical attempts lead to individualization, i.e. to the unfoldment of individual subjectivity against certain traditional constraints. Of course, these shifts are neither linear, nor homogenous since social acceleration is incomplete; as regards to some aspects it is (self-)initiated, while respective to other things, it is much more restrained. This is because acceleration triggers wide varieties of contingencies and people are coping with these risks differently. Time is a scarce resource in Late Modernity (Rosa, 2013). Agents are anxious about their shaken ontological security not only because there is no time to de- and reconstruct routinized knowledge and praxes (neither collectively, nor individually), but because there is no time even to really live through (to emotionally-mentally contemplate) experiences (Schulze, 2005). People feel to be rushed like they cannot waste so much time and efforts on certain experiences because they may miss other

important ones that would enrich their subjectivity. Therefore, a hurried gathering of experiences unfolds as a general social praxis. This attempted search for self-completeness, however, cannot be achieved due to its distorted logics (what the subject misses is always more relevant than what it reaches, even though the missed experiences are unknown). This hastiness of being sooner than later a prime ‘experience-holder’ prevents the ethically relevant contents of experiences to be subjectively internalized. Agents are eager to achieve the state of being fulfilled since they expect the re-stabilization of their ontological security from this satisfaction. However, they should not be focused on *what to achieve* as *how to reach there* is much more pivotal. Self-completeness is impossible as ‘life’ cannot be enclosed into a form. It is always moving, changing, creating new circumstances, events, links, and trials to experience. Progressivity is in the journey, in the *voyage* and not at the arrival. Mikhail Bakhtin’s thoughts should be considered here: “*If I am consummated and my life is consummated, I am no longer capable of living and acting. For in order to live and act, I need to be unconsummated, I need to be open for myself – at least in all the essential moments constituting my life; I have to be, for myself, someone who is axiologically yet-to-be, someone who does not coincide with his already existing makeup*” (Bakhtin, 1990: 13).

Due to this social acceleration people’s actorness moves towards multi-tasking, i.e. they try to do things both more intensively (more thoroughly) and more extensively (in many areas and respective to many subjects) at the same time. Of course, this is contradictory as – over an individually diverse limit – enhancing more the quantity of actions necessarily reduces the quality of these deeds and their meaningfulness. Therefore, sparing time is a distinguished goal in this constellation (Rosa, 2013). Efficiency is regarded as the core motivating factor. If something is doable in a shorter period, then more time remains for other activities. Technologization and flexibility are seen as the main driving contributions to production both in economic and self-constitutional sense. By innovations and robotized-automatized modes as well as by flexible openness about how to register, administer, and solve problems in new and creative ways ‘profit’ could be increased, since these novel applications earn time for the ‘investors’. However, these trends also create a constant state of being loaded with over-spins. While both the economic sector and individual agents try to introduce crisis management strategies that are adapted to the unbreakable acceleration (such as increasing the consumption of products/experiences, keeping the pace of competitiveness/running for self-completeness by higher quality and more diverse inputs/experiences, etc.), yet continuous hardships are unavoidable. This is an inherent part of the

capitalist mode of product: there are winners and losers, there are ups and downs, and constant inequalities. However, subjects cannot balance and settle their inner-fights similarly. Especially not in an era when common references and narratives turn to be invalid and dysfunctional. The experience of mental, emotional, and physical misery and affliction harden the efforts to stabilize ontological security. Depression, boredom, indifference, lethargy, burnout, and loneliness deepen the anxieties and tensions of the late modern subjects (Sik, 2018; 2019). Both, the unappeasable hunger for experiences triggered by social acceleration and the isolationist self-exclusion from these hastened progression are dead ends for the agents. They need to find, instead, a subjectively constructed (continuously de- and reconstructed) balance. A reflexively constituted and critically revisable ideational and praxes-related individual pattern that helps them coping with the everyday trials of interactions. The extreme acceleration of Late Modernity undermines all the particular (traditional) references, however it also paves the path for an individualization based on self-reliability. This is a demanding shift for the people, so they need to be encouraged by supportive institutional dynamics. Reciprocated acknowledgement of one's individual uniqueness, of course, has to be grounded in intersubjective relations, however subjective interactions with abstract entities should provide an institutional framework for this ideationally driven and praxes-related recognition (cf. Honneth, 1995). Agents and structures, thus, have to shape and reshape each other in a framework of mutually reflexive and critical interrelatedness. At the institutional level certain 'spokespeople' should take the lead in this emancipatory progression.

### **'Europe' in the accelerated late modern times**

Social theories of Classic Modernity, irrespective to their main claims, understand modernization as a diversification and sophistication of the social complexity. Subsystems (Parsons, Luhmann, Münch) or fields (Bourdieu) are becoming both more connected and more complicated in a sense of multi-layeredness. If there is general social acceleration, then this trend of Late Modernity has to trigger desynchronizations and disintegrations insofar as the various subsystems' or fields' response time is dissonant (Rosa, 2013). Translating the structural changes and reflecting on these shifts, for instance, take much more time for education and health care than for info-communication and technology or finance. This is why grand narratives are collapsing and particular (traditional) cultures and their references are becoming questioned in this era. There are no prevalent, for the whole social complexity valid ideational framings and semantics. Even

economy as the most relevant and comprehensive subsystem or field of the capitalist mode of production is losing its influence over the other sectors (or superstructures), because it cannot react uniformly (in a fully harmonious way) and immediately (without hesitation). The binary logic of profitable/non-profitable is not so obvious in these accelerated circumstances.

The political subsystem or field is losing ground even more drastically. Since policies (means and ends), politics (modes and practices), as well as polities (institutional designs and set-ups) are all need time to be deliberated and continuously updated, and social acceleration heavily shortens these temporal capacities, then the political sphere has two alternatives to follow. On the one hand, new populism proposes hard-handed governmental style based on protectionism, centralization, in-group-favoritism, ideological hegemony, and respect for traditional semantics. Anxious people who struggle to develop reflexive competencies and critical agencies, urged by the social acceleration they are living in, are tempted to expect deceleration and predictability, i.e. security from this new populist promises (Sik, 2019). They feel nostalgia for something that might never existed before, new populism, still, could orient them towards this illusion/delusion of the past. New populists have similar narratives: the status quo, for instance, ethnic, national or religious unity-superiority, traditional family model, cultural and historical heritages, social conventions and customs, etc., have to be protected, so defensive mechanisms and inwardness should be encouraged and institutionalized at all – micro, meso, and macro – levels.

The other alternative for the political sphere is to ‘actively withdraw’, i.e. to let other subsystems or fields to make decisions in their own response time. In this case, the political sphere realizes that it cannot integrate the whole social complexity, it cannot deal with the asynchronies democratically, so it has to step back from its privileged status. This trend leads to privatization, deregulation, and juridification with many potential, both socially and functionally relevant anomalies. Yet, this latter alternative is still more an adequate path for Late Modernity insofar as not only the subjects need to develop reflexive competencies and critical agencies, but the same is expected from the institutions too.

‘Europe’ as a supranational entity based on multilateralism and bounded by the objective to promote comprehensive political, economic, and social integration does not have a choice between new populism and ‘active withdrawalment’. It has to go for the latter alternative since the nationalist-protectionist option explicitly hampers the European unification. For long, the future of ‘Europe’ was seen as a necessary post-national shift that gradually reduces the member states’

sovereignty in order to institutionalize supranational superstructures (cf. Habermas, 1998). However, this understanding is wrong according to the lens of Late Modernity. The shift has to be taken in this era is not about facilitating ‘post-nationalism’ against ‘nationalism’, since this framing cannot proceed beyond the ‘either/or’ logics of Classic Modernity. What is needed, instead, is a progression along the ‘both/and’ principle enables the emergence of reflexive competencies and critical agencies both for subjects and abstract entities (Beck & Grande, 2007). ‘Europe’ is not supranational and therefore post-national, but rather a multi-level and multi-sector institutional complexity being in a constant state of formulation due to rapidly changing multi-actor partnerships and cooperation (Delanty & Rumford, 2005). It is not a fixed structure but an elastic framework could be flexibly altered (Delanty, 2016; Rumford, 2007; 2008).

‘Europe’ has to be driven by three fundamental principles. *Pan-relationalism* suggests that everything is interlinked in the subjects’ objective, natural, and social surroundings (Rorty, 1979). An individual agent is neither a detached observer could take a neutrally rational position, nor an untouched actor able to unconstrainedly construct and deconstruct itself only by itself. No, both the subject–subject (intersubjective) and the subject–object (subjective) relations refer to a self-transcendent interrelatedness that cannot be substituted for a self-enhancing ontological stance without pathologies. The most common negative consequence of forgotten pan-relationalism is reification, i.e. the completely instrumental, egoistically profit-oriented treatment of one’s ‘world-out-there’ involving objects, natural entities, and other people (Honneth, 2007). This form of knowledge seems to be exempt from epistemological category-mistakes and immoralities since it pretends to be rationally coherent and consistent both respective to ideational framings and applied praxes. This is because it is distorted already at an ontological level. It makes the agent to take a contemplative position from where everything can be broken down into partialities (Lukács, 1971). Then, these reified partialities are easier to be assessed, measured, categorized, and addressed by meanings and functionalities, i.e. to compare them to each other according to a simple logic of maximizing gains and minimizing loses. Every objectified partiality has binarily segmented values (like: true/false, right/wrong, beauty/ugly, useful/useless, etc.) underpinned by a basic economic relevance about profitability/non-profitability. The fully mondialized (globally pervasive) capitalist mode of production imposes this rational form of knowledge on the agents. However, this rationale also tears them out from their objective, natural, and social surroundings, moreover it even urges them to treat their own selves instrumentally (not the total matters but the parts, i.e.

reified partialities overshadow the ‘big picture’). This form of knowledge claims to be rational as it aims to understand the details in an in-depth way and in accordance with logical reasons, however the core pattern, in any case, remains ontologically distorted, since the more the agents follow these patterns, the more they reproductively narrow down their subjectivity into something alienated reflectivism paralyzes social actorness (Honneth, 2007). Classic Modernity, framed by the ‘either/or’ logic, urges people to be rational. Bureaucratization, reflective scientization, individualism, functional theories and explanations about systemic diversification all apply this rational form of knowledge which is lately more and more questioned by the emerging late modern shifts and social acceleration. Developing reflexive competencies and critical agencies cannot be progressed without pan-relationalism. People are able to unfold their subjectivity (individualization, i.e. being unique among the others), if they acknowledge other people’s similar efforts and do not treat them and their perspectives instrumentally from a self-enhancing stance constrained by the pattern of rationalism (which latter stance should be seen as individualism, i.e. a contemplative egoism strives for capital gains).

Pan-relationalism is inherently linked to the second fundamental principle of the ‘both/and’ logic of ‘Europe’, which is *anti-representationalism*. Reflexivity and critical agency require from the subjects to realize that nothing is ‘represented’ in their objective, natural, and social surroundings, but everything is presented, i.e. subjectively constructed, deconstructed, and reconstructed (Rorty, 1989). The privileged status of ‘reflectivity’ that aims for rationally reasoned objectivity is misleading since there is no apparatus to compare human (therefore subjective) knowledge to something natural or logical (objective) knowledge. What people do not know about, it is unknown for them, it cannot be labeled, and what they know about, it has to be subjective, i.e. constructed (narratively and performatively theory-laden) (Vandenberghe, 2014). Giving meanings has nothing to do with representations. It is, instead, an act of presenting better to be acknowledged as a subjective agency of construction always remain open for reflexive and critical reconsiderations (Rorty, 1991a). The concern is right that this understanding could lead to extreme relativization, however the other option, based on reflective representations and objectivity, is the path of hegemonic idea-impositions. The key is to stop searching for Truths and institutionalize, instead, discursive debates about justice.

To make this shift *anti-essentialism* has to be respected as the third principle of the ‘both/and’ logic of ‘Europe’. It is a lens emphasizes the importance of deliberative justifications

against Truth-vindications (Rorty, 1998). If nothing is represented and there is no objective knowledge, then essential Truths are invalid. As Richard Rorty said: “...we can tell you about justification, but can't tell you anything about Truth, there's nothing to be said about Truth. We know how to justify beliefs, we know that the adjective 'true' is that we apply to the beliefs we have justified. We know that a belief can't be true without being justified. That's all we know about Truth. Justification is relative to an audience regarding truth-candidates, Truth is not relative to anything. Just because it is not relative to anything, there's nothing to be said about it”.<sup>1</sup> Every subject has the right to propose and deliberate its own truth as long as this truth-statement does not exclude others from the process of justification. Oppositional truth-statements can contest against each other vehemently, but none of the truth-candidates should be silenced or muted in discursive justification.

The multi-layered, always reflexively and critically alterable institutional complexity of 'Europe' based on the 'both/and' logic of pan-relationalism, anti-representationalism, and anti-essentialism is the condition for a progressive agent-structure constellation. Without a shift like this, 'Europe' won't be able to cope with the challenges of social acceleration and Late Modernity. On the contrary, it would be stuck in a state of sovereignty-related power-struggles, disintegrations, desynchronizations, and institutional dysfunctionalities. The path ahead of the European political sphere about 'active withdrawalment' urges reforms that could institutionalize mechanisms of reflexive and critical reconsiderations, deliberations, and consensus-oriented justifications in the various subsystems or fields of the social complexity. The political sphere cannot keep its privileged status any longer. However, it is principally responsible for progressive shifts in the other subsystems or fields.

In order to contribute to these changes, it is important to note that pan-relationalism, anti-representationalism, and anti-essentialism are all telling us that the diverse phenomena and events of 'life' (or the world-out-there involving objects, natural entities, and people) are grasped and framed by subjectively constructed ideas (Vandenberghe, 2014). Although ideational framings cannot be extended enough to hold 'life', yet what we know about 'life', it is definitely framed by ideas (Bhaskar, 1986). 'Life' does not have an agency of speaking for itself, however individual subjects are 'spokespeople' for themselves to frame 'life', i.e. to construct, deconstruct, and

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<sup>1</sup> Of Beauty and Consolation. Episode 23. Richard Rorty. Interview with journalist Wim Kayzer

reconstruct theory-laden meanings about it (Archer, 1995). Understanding ‘life’ is a subjective self-constitution, an autopoietic (narrative and performative) formulation of the self (Fehér, 1994). When subjects are giving meanings to the phenomena and events of ‘life’, when they are addressing somehow their objective, natural, and social surroundings and the linkages among these entities, they are more talking about themselves, they are more constituting themselves than identifying the world-out-there. This is why agents have the agency to be ‘spokespeople’ for themselves. Yet, this actorness is constrained. Constrained by ‘either/or’ kinds of logics, traditional semantics, cultural references, i.e. by grand narratives. Late Modernity and social acceleration undermine these narratives, therefore liberate the subjective agency of being a ‘spokesperson’. However, ‘influencers’ (‘gate-keepers’), i.e. more powerful ‘spokespeople’, who enjoy privileged political, economic, scientific, artistic, media, etc. statuses, have the actorness to impose ideational framings on others, or even to convince them about the unequivocal significance of these references (see Foucault’s theory about ‘govern-mentality’). Thus, the fundamental task of the agents active in the political sphere of the institutionally multi-layered ‘Europe’ is to make ‘spokespeople’ of other subsystems or fields accept and respect the ‘both/and’ logic of pan-relationalism, anti-representationalism, and anti-essentialism. This means to be rather ‘mentors’ than powerful ‘influencers’. Agents of the political sphere have to institutionalize the general frameworks and mechanisms of this late modern shift. If the ‘spokespeople’ of the political sphere do not initiate a reform like this, then ‘Europe’ will never be able to establish reflexive and critical institutional capacities. ‘Active withdrawal’ in this sense means that the political sphere does not try to integrate the whole social complexity as a dominant subsystem or field, nor strive to establish fixed structures; it aims to take care of, instead, the holistic framework, grounded in the ‘both/and’ logic of pan-relationalism, anti-representationalism, and anti-essentialism, by urging ‘mentors’ to encourage the individual agents’ abilities of being ‘spokesperson’ for themselves.

### **‘Spokespeople’ of European Studies**

In the last chapter, the paper theorizes how ‘spokespeople’ of European Studies, or at least a certain group of agents in this field, should contribute by general questioning to the reflexively and critically revisable multi-layered institutional entity of ‘Europe’. Although this is a very specific and small sector (or *epistemic community*) of the more comprehensive scientific subsystem or field, yet by addressing this sector, the paper describes in an in-depth way how agents

in other subsystems or fields should act as ‘mentors’ encouraging the reflexive capacities and critical agencies of individual subjects. At first, Slavoj Žižek’s argument needs to be considered about the differentiation between ‘intellectuals’ and ‘experts’. Žižek (2013) claims that ‘intellectuals’ have to aim for the right questions, i.e. they are critically revisiting all kinds of theoretical and methodological approaches that strive for the status of being a narrative. In this sense, ‘intellectuals’ have the role to identify problems, to ask rather than to answer. They do not try to synthesize ideas into meta-theories, but to link together subjective ideational framings into multi-theories, to ‘unmute’ critical arguments, to leave questions unanswered. This intellectual approach is very much needed for deliberative justifications, for communicative inclusions respect the ‘both/and’ logic of pan-relationalism, anti-representationalism, and anti-essentialism. ‘Experts’, on the contrary, are acting as ‘influencers’. They are looking for explanations, they elaborate rationalized answers. ‘Experts’ have to propose cause-effect-framed closed narratives underpinned by the ‘either/or’ logic otherwise they would not be able to offer solutions. Their contributions are useful but have to be considered as arguments of truth-candidates and not as objective Truths. By constant questioning, it is the job of the ‘intellectuals’ to prevent the Truth-vindication of ‘experts’ and the discursive praxis of idea-imposition attached to it.

How ‘experts’ are using ideational framings in their communicative interactions (discursive actorness), it is something similar to Max Weber’s argument about the role of ‘academics/scholars’ described in *Science as a Vocation*.<sup>2</sup> Weber (2004) claims that scientific results stem from routinized ‘practical activities’ respect certain rules and commitments. Rules about rationally-logically reasoned mode of argument and language/notion use, and commitments towards the theoretical-methodological exploration and explanation of the smallest possible details. Weber says that science expects specialization from the ‘academics/scholars’. “*Only rigorous specialization can give the scholar the feeling for what may be the one and only time in his entire life, that here he has achieved something that will last. Nowadays, a really definitive and valuable achievement is always the product of specialization. And anyone who lacks the ability to don blinkers for once and to convince himself that the destiny of his soul depends upon whether he is right to make precisely this conjecture and no other at this point in his manuscript should keep*

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<sup>2</sup> *Science as a Vocation* (German: *Wissenschaft als Beruf*) is the text of a lecture given by Weber in 1917 at Munich University.

well away from science. He will never be able to submit to what we may call the ‘experience’ of science.” (Weber, 2004: 81–82). Weber sees the objections against this rigorous specialization: “Among young people nowadays the idea is very widespread that science has become a question of simple calculation, something produced in laboratories or statistical card indexes, just as ‘in a factory’, with nothing but cold reason and not with the entire ‘soul’” (ibid: 82). He accepts that being inspired of new problems, new questions, and new approaches is fundamental for scientific progression, however ‘academics/scholars’ – he stresses – cannot substitute the ‘practical activities’ with enthusiasm. Motivation and stimulation for the new achievements, thus, have to consider the ‘blindness’ of rationalized science: “Inspiration does not do away with the need for work. And for its part, work cannot replace inspiration or force it to appear, any more than passion can. Both work and passion, and especially both together, can entice an idea” (ibid: 83). Weber emphasizes that the process of intellectualization is grounded in the progression of reflective scientization: “... we all know that what we have achieved will be obsolete in ten, twenty, or fifty years. That is the fate, indeed, that is the very meaning of scientific work. [...] Scientific progress is a fraction, and indeed the most important fraction, of the process of intellectualization... It means that in principle, then, we are not ruled by mysterious, unpredictable forces, but that, on the contrary, we can in principle control everything by means of calculation. That in turn means the disenchantment of the world” (ibid: 85, 86–87). Weber does not say that the ‘practical activities’ of science can answer everything; he is well aware of the limits of science. However, he believes that the process of rational intellectualization is the only progressive alternative that could push these limits.

Using Žižek’s aforementioned terms, Weber was surely in favor of ‘expertization’; he clearly and emphatically argued the importance of reflective scientization based on specialization and rationalized modes of researching (conceptualizing, theorizing, and methodological inquiring), i.e. producing answers. The Hungarian philosopher, Georg Lukács, who knew Weber well, took another path. In the opening chapter of the book *Soul and Form*, which is a letter to his friend, Leo Popper, Lukács developed on the importance of the essay. He begins his argument with the core differentiation between science and art: “Science affects us by its contents, art by its forms; science offers us facts and the relationship between facts but art offers us souls and destinies. Here they ways part; here there is no replacement and no transition. [...] as soon as science has become separate and independent, everything that has led up to it (such as religion,

ethics, and art – Z.G.) *loses its value. Only when something has dissolved all its content in form, and thus become pure art, can it no longer become superfluous; but then its previous scientific nature altogether forgotten and emptied of meaning*” (Lukács, 1974: 5). So, there is science deals with facts and their links, with contingent findings as these outcomes are based on rationalized verifications and falsifications in a pre-enclosed framework of concepts, methods, terms, etc. And there is art, pure art that can progress beyond the temporarily consolidated facts of the contingent ‘life’ to shed light on something deeper. According to Lukács, then, there is the science of art that works as science but aims for the substantial goals of art to question and criticize. This aspiration, thus, oscillates between science and art. It is proposing questions but also looking for answers, which shapes its asking-ability. It is using artistic expressions but tries to crystallize fact-like conclusions. For Lukács, though, a fourth way of *expression of human temperament* is relevant, and this is essay. These are “*writings in which the same life-problems are raised as in the writings which call themselves criticism, but with the difference that here the questions are addressed directly to life itself: they do not need the mediation of literature or art. And it is precisely the writings of the greatest essayists...* (ibid: 5) The nature of essay is to question. It is asking ‘life’ itself – directly, without artistic mediation. And it is not looking for answers. Lukács’ ‘essayists’ are Žižek’s ‘intellectuals’; they are ‘spokespeople’ who remind us that facts and the relationships between them, subjectively conceptualized in theory-laden ideational framings, could be discursively justified in deliberative communications, but could never be objective Truths explored by specialized and systematized ‘practical activities’.

These ‘essayists’ or ‘intellectuals’ know very well that the moment when European Studies starts to develop only answers based on ‘either/or’ kind of unequivocal solutions, it is the end of a discipline that should propose, instead, theorizations on ‘Europe’ as a multi-layered institutional entity bounded by the goal of promoting comprehensive political, economic, and social integration through multilateralism. If ‘spokespeople’ of European Studies, at least a significant number of agents of them, cannot ignore the trend of ‘expertization’ in the field, and they continue to pursue answers for problems pre-formulated by powerful ‘influencers’, then the discipline will degrade into mere Truth-vindication and hegemonic idea-imposition. ‘Essayists’ or ‘intellectuals’ are needed to remind us to what Richard Rorty said: ‘[I]t is comical to believe that one human being is more in touch with something nonhuman than another human being. [...] It is comical to think that anyone could transcend the quest for happiness, to think that any theory could be more than

*a means to happiness, that there is something called Truth which transcends pleasure and pain”* (Rorty, 1991b: 74). ‘Essayists’ or ‘intellectuals’ are reflexively and critically addressing ‘life’ itself, i.e. they are identifying problems through open-ended multi-theoretical arguments. They are leaving questions unanswered since all of us as individual subjects have to have the ability and capability to be ‘spokespeople’ for ourselves. To quote Rorty again: “[T]o gain an objective knowledge of the world, and thus of oneself, [is] an attempt to avoid the responsibility for choosing one’s project. [T]his is not to say that the desire for objective knowledge of nature, history, or anything else is bound to be unsuccessful, or even bound to be self-deceptive. It is merely to say that it presents a temptation to self-deception insofar as we think that, by knowing which descriptions within a given set of normal discourses apply to us, we thereby know ourselves” (Rorty, 1979: 361).

### **Conclusion**

The political project of ‘Europe’, as a multilevel and multilateral institutional entity, is bounded by the objective of promoting economic, political, cultural, and social integration. It cannot give up this normative principle. Progressed or regressed integration of the EU is not a dilemma of ‘either/or’; it is not like more ‘Europe’ means more constrained national sovereignty. On the contrary, if the EU is stuck in a process of integration/disintegration (i.e. one step forward/one step back), then the unstoppable late modern trend of social acceleration will generate harmful social-political conflicts and deteriorative impacts at all (supranational, national, regional, local, and even at individual) level. The current paper argued that the parallel globalization/localization of Late Modernity with its flows and accelerative tendencies is affecting people and their everyday routines (ideas and praxes) in various ways. Not only their actorness is impacted related to institutions, but fundamentally their social roles, statuses, habits, customs, narratives, etc. are deeply challenged. Subjects need to rely on their reflexive capacities and critical agencies in Late Modernity since the once so stable cultural (traditional) patterns are becoming more and more shaken due to the structural (institutional) abstractions progress rapidly. There is a trend of universalism that undermines all kinds of particular references; people, thus, have to construct, deconstruct and reconstruct their own subjective ideational and praxis-related routines in order to be able to interact without paralyzing experiences and anxieties. Their ontological security (i.e. the ‘know-how’ of dealing with the ‘would-out-there’ embraces objects, objectified

non-tangible products, nature, and other subjects) is not based on fixed references any longer. Instead, a mutually recognized and respected individualization among agents is requested in this late modern era. This individualization means that the most relevant common feature of us as human beings is that we are diverse; we have only one world, but we constitute it differently since we are unrepeatably unique.

To contribute to these progressively proceeding social-cultural shifts ‘Europe’ has to reconsider itself along three basic principles: pan-relationalism, anti-representationalism, and anti-essentialism. Breaking down the ‘either/or’ logics of fixed Truths (references) demands deliberative justice communicated among pan-relationally interrelated agents who are recognizing each other’s perspective and their individually constructed (therefore subjectively presented and not objectively represented) understandings. This deliberative justice of non-essential subjective truths diffuses framings based on the ‘both/and’ logic of multi-layered spaciousness. Both the agents and the institutions enjoy this multi-layered spaciousness for their reflexive and critical de- and reconstitution since there are more theoretical (optional) position to be taken (as part of the continuously expected self-adaptions). ‘Europe’ as a reflexively and critically shapeable institutional entity is vice versa interlinked to its reflexive and critical citizens and their active engagement. The ‘spokespeople’ of European Studies have important roles and responsibilities in this process; they need to focus on questions instead of searching for answers, they need to strive for deliberative justice instead of fixed Truths. They cannot be only ‘influencers’ if ‘Europe’ as a project has to be formulated by its engagement-oriented and participation-ready citizens. By continuous questioning, the ‘spokespeople’ of European Studies should encourage European citizens to be active ‘spokespeople’ for themselves.

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