

The divorce between the European Union and Europe - About the reinvention of a European civil competence



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Introduction

The myth about Europe begins with a rape: a triumph in the conqueror's perspective. Max Beckmann, on the other hand, shows in his painting "The kidnapping of Europe" (1933) the situation from the perspective of the victim.¹ The official discourse in the EU still strikes a triumphant tone when claiming the success of European market and policy as the fulfilment of European history. In this paper this interpretation will be questioned but in a different way Jürgen Habermas² did it recently. He accused the boneless politicians to be the cause of decline of Europe. Habermas blamed them for having blocked the democratic legitimation of the EU by hindering a powerful European Parliament (EP). But is political voluntarism the right answer to the questions of European citizens about European identity? Which Europe are we speaking of? Since the Lisbon Agenda of 2000 the EU speaks a language of social constructivism:

The Union has today set itself a **new strategic goal** for the next decade: *to become the most competitive and dynamic knowledge-based economy in the world, capable of sustainable economic growth with more and better jobs and greater social cohesion.*³

The alliance of technology and economy is the priority assigning to other objectives the role of instruments to reach the "new strategic goal". Meanwhile, the evasive attitude of the European Union about the *raison d'être* of this new entity of now 27 member states has not been acknowledged by the citizens: The more competences the

¹ See last page

² Habermas, Jürgen (2010): *Wir brauchen Europa!* In: Die Zeit, Nr. 21, 20-05-2010.

³ http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms_data/docs/pressdata/en/ec/00100-r1.en0.htm, 2.

EP gets, the lesser is the participation in the elections to the EP. The authors of the Lisbon Agenda obviously cast to the wind the warning of Jacques Delors that you can't love a GNP: Europe needs emotional cement. But it would be a misinterpretation of this warning to launch just another marketing campaign⁴ on the marvellous European culture. It is even a dangerous appeasement to say, like chancellor Angela Merkel did, that Europe is already here, we just have to bundle the scattered pieces.⁵ On the contrary there are sufficient indications that we need to go back to the philosophical roots in order to make us sure what means Europe.

These are my thesis:

1. Since the Lisbon Agenda of 2000 the EU has divorced from the Europe of Robert Schuman and Jean Monnet.
2. Therefore, more institutional arrangements will not cure the lack of common emotional ties.
3. The technocratic European paradigm since 2000 requires, then, philosophical criticism opening the search for a new paradigm of European life.

1. The divorce of EU and Europe

The equation EU = Europe seems to be a striking Marketing success but meanwhile the reality is different: There is a dramatic need for ideas and visions which could forge more cohesion between the populations of the 27 (and more?) member countries.⁶

⁴ *Europa eine Seele geben* (2006):

www.asoulforeurope.eu/uploads/media/Berliner_Konferenz_Ablauf_03.pdf, see Müller-Pelzer, Werner (2009): *Europa ein Rückgrat geben – Wie ist heute in Europa Gemeinschaft möglich?* In: impEct 4.

⁵ The incantation of the „Jewish-Christian tradition“ of Europe as a cultural-political entity reflects a double theological allegation: that Christian theology is right in taking possession of the Jewish tradition, and second that Christian theology has contributed in a positive way – not just as an anti-thesis – to modern democracy. On the other hand there is a strong refusal to analyze and to face reality, for instance prescribing to German schools, in the German Educational Standards for language learning, that “through the capacity to compare their own perspectives, values and social structures with those of other cultures in a tolerant and critical way, pupils experience an increase in understanding and strengthening of their own identity”. In: Hu, Adelheid / Byram, Michael (2009): *Einleitung / Introduction*. In Idem (eds.) (2009): *Interkulturelle Kompetenz und fremdsprachliches Lernen. Modelle, Empirie, Evaluation / Intercultural competence and foreign language learning. Models, empiricism, assessment*, Tübingen, VIII.

⁶ Isensee, Joseph (1996): *Europäische Union – Mitgliedstaaten*, 91. In: Akademie der Wissenschaften und Literatur (Ed.): *Europa - Idee, Geschichte, Realität*. Mainz, 71-106, states „dass „Europa heute durchweg identifiziert wird mit der Europäischen Union“, whereas Frevert, Ute (2003): *Eurovisionen. Ansichten guter Europäer im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert*. Frankfurt, 17, says: „Das Projekt europäischer Einigung, so sehen es viele, krankt an einem dramatischen Defizit an emotionaler Bindung.“ Isensee, Josef (2008): *Eine Verfassung für Europa – Zweckverband oder Wertegemeinschaft?* resumes: „Die Europaidee ist somit zu einer historischen Zierleiste einer hochmodernen Bürokratie geworden.“ In: <http://www.faz.net/s/RubBF7CD2794CEC4B87B47C719A68C59339/Doc~EED2A672DC09348ECBA7AFD8E694433F9~ATpl~Ecommon~Scontent.html>

In the 1950's, peace, economic growth, wide spread wealth and mutual understanding represented the promises of a new community which were anchored in real life and stroke the imagination of a great number of persons. The names of Robert Schuman and Jean Monnet stand for this first European paradigm seeing the economic success as the means of a new European community.

But the reunification of Germany and the end of the Cold War made evident that the European Community had to face new challenges in a global context. After years of laboured consolidation the economic and financial turbulences leading to the Euro coined the answer given in 2000: With the Lisbon Agenda the EU pretended to become, by 2010, the first global player in economic performance and knowledge based development, innovation, social cohesion and safe environment. Tony Blair, Gerhard Schröder and Jacques Chirac were the steering committee of this second European paradigm declaring the whole stuff of European history and culture to become the means of economic success.

Fig. 1: The two European paradigms

First paradigm	Second paradigm
Save Europe as intellectual and emotional home	EU as the global player with the best and sustainable benefits
Economic and political unification as an instrument of cultural and social renewal of European traditions	Economic and political unification as an instrument of empowerment and expansion
Humanistic values driving economic and political progress	Culture as strategic competitive advantage and instrument of social cohesion
Encouraging critical research on forgotten and suppressed liberal traditions	Promoting an image of EU as the fulfilment of European aspirations throughout history

The second paradigm was based on the following assumptions:

- Economic growth = wealth
- Political strength = pride
- Cultural diversity = peaceful coexistence

The sum should be civil acceptance of the EU as organisation and European identity amongst the populations.

But the EU reality is rather different: There is evidence of a growing lack of acceptance of the EU as organisation, even by the national elites, supporting in Brussels the EU as far as it is useful but not as a common vision. On the other hand European identity is evermore challenged by populist and nationalist movements benefiting from the widespread doubts on further integration of states and immigrants. The official cultural programme of EU thus shows to be a harmonistic fallacy.

The assumption that identity could be boosted through efficiency and technological innovation has been defeated – if necessary! – by the economic crisis of 2009/10.

Would more institutional arrangements help? Habermas claimed:

- more rights for the European Parliament
- information and mobilization of the citizens
- general criticism of spineless political class
- to choose the wildcard of pushing supranational integration

If it is right that a lack of emotional concern in real life situations is, for the majority of Europeans, the cornerstone of their scepticism *vis-à-vis* the EU, just political voluntarism and new institutional arrangements won't help. It seems that it is not sufficient to insist once again on the identity between EU and Europe. There is the need to launch a new research leaving open the result what Europe is about.

2. What is Europe about?

Following Hermann Schmitz⁷ I would like to propose a draw back to the source of European intellectual culture. From the angle of the cultural morphology one may distinguish between the regime of despots and priests (for instance the ancient Persia, Egypt, Incas, the Christian Millennium between 300 and 1300), the regime of rites and rules (China, Japan ...) and the occidental regime of intellectual leadership by means of arguments (Greece, modern Western societies).⁸

The first eminent focus of European identity was the battle of Salamis 480 B.C. opening the opportunity for the Greek intellectual revolution. Philosophy overcame a culture of analogies as the humoral pathology (comparable to Ying and Yang) and the

⁷ Cf. Schmitz, Hermann (2003): *Was ist Neue Phänomenologie?* Rostock. For further bibliographic references see the home page of the Society for New Phenomenology (Gesellschaft für Neue Phänomenologie) www.gnp-online.de. In this short summary, I will give just some hints.

⁸ Cf. Schmitz, Hermann (1997a): *Die gegenwärtige Aufgabe der Philosophie*. In Idem (1997): *Höhlenhänge. Über die gegenwärtige Aufgabe der Philosophie*, Berlin, 23.

domination by suggestive and bewitching impressions (the gods in the *Ilias* and the old tragedy). Against this Greek philosophers beginning with Democrit and Plato, created a tradition of decomposing the puzzling situations *more geometrico*. Despite the Aristotelian counterpart, this elementaristic approach fascinated with the promise of precise prognostic, experimentation and statistics in order to strengthen the Self *vis-à-vis* overwhelming passions and Nature. It was the beginning of the dream of human autonomy. In consequence life was ruled by a new hierarchy of values.

Fig. 2: The Greek Revolution: A new hierarchy of values

Before the Democritic-Platonic turn	After the Democritic-Platonic turn
1. Passions = Gods = strong	1. Reason = divine ideas = strong
2. Emotions = character / will = unstable	2. Emotions = character / will = unstable
3. Reason = knowledge = weak	3. Passions = irrational = strong

Against the decentred way of experiencing the world, the steering I centres the experience of man in the world, transforming the emotions and passions into enemies who have to be defeated or at least to be hold in check. It could have been expected that in the Christian theology the dream of the autonomy of the person would be deleted but the contrary is true: The Christian theology of the western part of the Roman Empire instrumentalized the tendency to individualistic autonomy in the name of God: The good Christian, looking for his individual resurrection, was called to leave behind all emotional ties, including marriage, children, friends, and to assimilate his will to divine omnipotence.

The other part of the Greek way of seeing the world represents the basis of occidental scientific achievements: They allowed to dominate and manipulate nature even if the program was only realised much later on beginning with Renaissance.

These achievements of the Greek Revolution have to be counterbalanced by the costs.

1. The creation of a steering I created an artificial separation from real life phenomena. The reality to be in the world and to be with others was cut in two parts, in an inner and an outer world. Schmitz calls the construction of a *psyché* opposed to the rest of the world *psychologism*.
2. Greek philosophy introduced the shift from a qualitative to a quantifying world view focussing on a small number of standardized classes of objects identifiable and quantifiable by anyone at any moment and any place: This was the new ideal of precise perception. Schmitz calls the decision to substitute real life by an atomistic model which pretends to reconstruct reality by constellations *reductionism*.
3. The consequence of exclusion of the non quantifiable was to throw these parts of real life into an inner world: soul, mind, spirit, consciousness, brain as the realm of atmospheres, emotions and moral standards. The contact with the outer world was seen as a passage through the channels of the five senses. Schmitz calls this process *introjectionism*.

This new model of perception made possible the fantastic technical progress of modern times. But on the other hand this model faces the great difficulties to explain real experience in all its complexity. *Psychologism* and *introjectionism* transform the *psyché* in a jail. In this model, what I experience only comes to my knowledge through filters. I am cut off of the world and except the small domain of scientific experimentation there is no way to be sure that what I think to know is the truth about the world.

Reductionism blocks the common experience of *situations* through corporeal communication, the first units of our perception⁹. The quasi monopoly of manipulable constellations offer to men a huge range of technical possibilities but implies also the negation of their *corporeal reality* (*Leib* in contrast to *Körper*) and of *corporeal communication* (*leibliche Kommunikation*). This leads to the misinterpretation and depreciation of emotions, atmospheres and norms which are necessary to fix one's goals. Following the Greek elementarism and its modern consequences the only way to come to personal and social identity is to construct it individually and socially: In this perspective the meaningfulness of the world is not the starting point of common experience but the result of the social contract as an aggregate of rules stemming from the addition of individual wills. Instead of relying on pre-reflexive evidence of

⁹ Cf. Schmitz, Hermann (2005d): *Der gespürte Leib – vergessen zwischen Seele und Körper*. In Idem (2005): *Situationen und Konstellationen*, 147.

identity (*elementar-leibliches Betroffensein*) with the chance to build convictions, the grounds for decisions must now be “negotiated” but are lacking an emotional impact.¹⁰ The PISA consortium may be quoted as representative of this constellationist spirit: “Individuals need to draw on key competencies that allow them to adapt to a world characterised by change, complexity and interdependence.”¹¹ The aim is to steer social uniformism, „what individuals need in order to function well in society as they find it“.¹² Left on his own the individual has to construct a net of constellations, i. e. to be provided with the „ability to form and conduct life plans and personal projects“.

This competency applies the concept of project management to individuals. It requires individuals to interpret life as an organised narrative and to give it meaning and purpose in a changing environment, where life is often fragmented.

This competency assumes an orientation toward the future, implying both optimism and potential, but also a firm grounding within the realm of the feasible.¹³

In consequence the PISA authors invite students to transform the exuberance of the pursuit of happiness into the more sober attitude to manage their own lives with the tools of project managing.

The underlying hypothesis of life as a construct is that the world consists of neutral things and that meaningfulness is something individuals project on them following their needs. It is obvious that on this ground any revitalisation of a European civil competence would lack the authority of an emotionally embedded common norm. Schmitz has shown against Quine that on the contrary the world of meaningfulness is primary¹⁴ and this argumentation helps to clear the way to a new European paradigm.

3. Elements of a new European paradigm

The comprehensive reconstruction of the phenomena of our common life experience by the New Phenomenology gives us the chance to detect the failures of occidental thinking and to conceive the principles of a new European paradigm.

¹⁰ That's the reason why Rousseau demands imperatively a civil religion as the final stone.

¹¹ PISA (2005): The definition and selection of key competences. Executive Summary.

<http://www.pisa.oecd.org/dataoecd/47/61/35070367.pdf>

¹² Ibid., 6.

¹³ Ibid., 15.

¹⁴ Schmitz, Hermann (2005): *Sprachliche und leibliche Verständigung*. In Idem (2005): *Situationen und Konstellationen*, 126-137. In a pragmatic perspective it should be noticed that the groundless optimism to which the PISA authors wish to oblige students is not too far from cynism.

The current *psychologism*, *reductionism* and *introjectionism*, combined with modern *dynamism* and *autism*¹⁵ refer to two far-reaching errors: in the anthropological realm the evacuation of my body (*Leib* in contrast with *Körper*), and in the ontological realm the smashing of the *situations* as the original units of our perception.

The phenomenal I understood as emerging from a corporeal (*leiblich*, not *körperlich*) origin indicates the lost pole of subjectivity: what I cannot deny to be mine without an intellectual operation (in order to avoid a *regressus in infinitum*)¹⁶. Subjectivity is understood on the basis of emotional affection (*elementar-leibliches Betroffensein*).¹⁷ This pole stays the ever present reference of the personality: The different modes of *personal regression* may be provoked for instance by shame, fear, pain etc. But some modes induce, too, *personal emancipation*, i.e. a new rise of revitalised personal balance through, for instance, laughing and weeping. Subjectivity coming from the corporeal reality of an individual then is the inevitable reference for creating personal identity in a lifelong process. The need to redefine our roles, to make explicit what at a certain moment is felt as authentically mine supposes the continuous process of personal regression (striving for the pole of corporeal subjectivity) and personal emancipation (striving for the pole of distance from the body, imagination, planning, realizing targets). Further, to define my world in contrast to the estranged parts always implies distancing myself from and returning to the emotional base of corporeal subjectivity.

The intertwinement of the anthropological and the ontological aspect in the phenomenological revision is the following: The corporeal existence is an existence in situations, i.e. the dialogical structure characterizes the corporeal existence as well as the coexistence with the transcorporeal world. The *personal situation*, established on this corporeal basis, is embedded thus in a huge number of *common situations* and is challenged by them. Knowing that *situations* are defined as internally diffuse, comprehensive entities with a characteristic significance¹⁸, they have a programmatic

¹⁵ Cf. Schmitz, Hermann (2005e): *Menschenrechte und Menschenpflichten*. In Idem (2005): *Situationen und Konstellationen*, 243-245.

¹⁶ Cf. Schmitz, Hermann (2005a): *Situationen und Konstellationen*. In Idem (2005): *Situationen und Konstellationen*, 18-32, particularly 28.

¹⁷ Cf. Schmitz, Hermann (2005b): *Warum bleiben wir am Leben?* In Idem (2005): *Situationen und Konstellationen*, 76-78.

¹⁸ Schmitz 2005a: 22: „Eine Situation [...] ist charakterisiert durch Ganzheit (d.h. Zusammenhalt in sich und Abgehobenheit nach außen), ferner eine integrierende Bedeutsamkeit aus Sachverhalten, Programmen und Problemen und eine Binnendiffusion dieser Bedeutsamkeit in der Weise, daß die in ihr enthaltenen Bedeutungen (d.h. Sachverhalte, Programme und Probleme) nicht sämtlich – im präper-

content: They attract atmospheres and emotions loaded with a wide range of more or less demanding norms.

Schmitz¹⁹ distinguishes three different grades of normative impact:

Type A: The common situation with the lowest impact, for ex. an association which relies on calculable interests. There's no emotional impact.

Type B: The common situation with a sensible impact called inclusive common situation (*includierende gemeinsame Situation*), for example a family where the children understand and respect the preferences of their parents without having the same ideas. There is an emotional impact but not with a personally addressed norm so that it is possible to take one's distance.

Type C: The common situation with a strong impact called implementing common situation (*implantierende gemeinsame Situation*), for example a partnership with a personally addressed high emotional norm how to behave. To take a distance is not possible and the loss of the partner induces a serious and lasting injury.

The EU as organisation is an entity (type A) founded on rules, i. e. the common situations which consist mainly of facts, programs to realize and problems to solve. But in the perspective of the reinvention of European common life this isn't sufficient. The founders of European cooperation already looked for a historical and cultural union of common destiny. In the language of Schmitz they looked for implementing and including common situations (Type B and C) and not for constellations giving just the opportunity to manage and to rule complex situations for the sake of economic benefit. In the end Schuman saw the economic success of EC with some resignation: He had to concede that his ideal – no more search for supremacy over other peoples – didn't have a binding normative basis in an organisation relying on economic success. In this sense may be interpreted the final statement of Robert Schuman that, if he had to begin it once again, he would have begun with culture and not with business.²⁰

sonalen Erleben überhaupt nicht - einzeln sind.“ The theory of situations is explained in detail in Schmitz²1995: 65-79. The concept of situation is of particular interest because the educational sector has become one of the fields where the “evidence based policy” is demanding results on the basis of all the more differenced “competences” and “partial competences”, - another case of constellationistic reduction.

¹⁹ Cf. Schmitz, Hermann (2005a): *Situationen und Konstellationen*. In Idem (2005): *Situationen und Konstellationen*, 18-32.

²⁰ Cf. Benda, Ernst / Maihofer, Werner / Vogel, Hans-Jochen (eds.) (²1994): *Handbuch des Verfassungsrechts*, Berlin / New York, 1257.

To overcome a materialistic and utilitarian attitude without putting at risk living together in peace and under decent material conditions was the idea of anchoring the economic union in a political union driven by a specific European vision of community. Jacques Delors was one of the protagonists to underline the need of European citizens to know where they are belonging to and how they could adjust their personal life with a comprehensive political union.²¹

The fact is that 50 years after the beginning of CECA the run for the pole position compared with the US, China and other countries has been declared to be the official EU strategy concentrating on technological, economic and political power including the willingness to guarantee its own wealth, if necessary, by war. On the other hand the great project of a European Constitution failed because a large number of European citizens claimed more influence on the destiny of Europe.

To build a new paradigm for Europe as a home (implementing and inclusive common situations) for its citizens implies a critical and a constructive part:

The critical part:

- leaving behind anachronistic European traditions, especially the arbitrary limitations of our perception of the world (*psychologism, reductionism, introjectionism*)
- restricting the impact of scientific *constellationism*, i. e. the model of a social contract, as well as the temptation of *organicism*, i. e. communitarism, on society;
- framing the *dynamistic economics* treating the earth as made for consumption.

The constructive part:

- to build a resonance for the body (*Leib*) and corporeal communication as the absolute point of reference of individual and social identity, due to an anthropology anchored in phenomena;
- to become sensitive for personal and common *situations* being the key for a balanced relation between subjective rights and obligations of the citizen;²²
- to live in the European countries, in analogy to live in European languages, receiving guidance from *implementing and inclusive common situations*.

²¹ Delors, Jacques (2004): Mémoires, Paris.

²² Art 1 of the German Constitution (*Grundgesetz*) should be completed as follows: "Die Würde des Menschen ist unantastbar. Sie verpflichtet." Cf. Schmitz, Hermann (1999): Hitler in der Geschichte. Bonn, 386.

European identity means the process of formulating common goals and returning, as the need rises, to what we cannot give away.

How shall we imagine receiving guidance from *implementing and inclusive common situations*? The notion of situation as Schmitz defines it implies that the human ability to be emotionally struck (*elementar-leibliches Betroffensein*) is the ground of a pre-reflexive resonance catching and reinforcing impressions, atmospheres, emotions and norms. To grow means for an individual to learn by the social praxis how to deal with common patterns of resonance. The assimilation of traditional forms begins with what has to be avoided, thanks to the threatening anger or shame as pre-emotions of the right (*Vorgefühle des Rechts*).²³ The culture of right (*Rechtskultur*) of different civilizations is built on this emotional ground (*Ergriffenheit*) and any change of norms is tested on this ground. The objective to create new implementing situations supposes the sensitivity for different European modes to be struck emotionally which become occasions for common discourse. This is the competence for situations in the European context, - a capability which relies on positive cultural knowledge, communicative competence and a critical sense but is not a list of finite elements. Competence as a corporeal resonance catches the holistic, internally diffuse meaningfulness (*ganzheitlich-binnendiffuse Bedeutsamkeit*) of a situation.²⁴

The reformulated "EU-agenda 2010" then could be as follows:

"The Union has today set itself a **new strategic goal** for the next decade:

- *The first priority will be to create in schools and universities favourable conditions for the revitalisation of the emotional ties between Europeans by the means of implementing and inclusive common situations, to recapitulate in a critical way the groundings of European democracy and to give to the European citizens the opportunity to realize a fair life here and now.*
- *The second priority: The Union will endeavour to become a competitive and dynamic knowledge-based economy, capable of economic, ecologic and social sustainability with more and better jobs, - the latter priority contributing to the first priority and vice versa."*

²³ Cf. Schmitz, Hermann (1997b): *Zorn und Scham an der Wiege von Rechtskulturen*. In: Idem (1997): *Höhlengänge. Über die gegenwärtige Aufgabe der Philosophie*. Berlin, 153-166.

²⁴ Cf. Schmitz, Hermann (2005f): *Steuerungsfähigkeit und Kompetenz*, in Idem (2005): *Situationen und Konstellationen*, 263.

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Max Beckmann: Der Raub der Europa (1933)