

Europaian Studies¹

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Many circumstances can conspire to extinguish scientific discoveries, especially those that cause discomfort about our culture's sacred norms. As a species we cling to the familiar, comforting conformities of the mainstream. However, 'convention' penetrates more deeply than we tend to admit. Even if we lack a proper name for and knowledge of the history of a specific philosophy or thought style, all of us are embedded in our own safe 'reality'. Our outlooks shape what we see and how we know (Margulis, 1998: 3).

Why is there no European theory?

This article is written for the special issue on European Studies and reflects on 45 years of theorising contemporary Europe, within the context of broader developments in the social sciences. What is immediately clear to anyone reading this article, the *Journal of Contemporary European Studies*, *Journal of Common Market Studies*, *Journal of European Public Policy*, *Journal of European Integration*, or any of the many other established journals of contemporary Europe, is that there is no 'European theory'. And perhaps there should not be.

This is not to say that there are not theories which seek to explain – the disciplines of politics, sociology, economics and law, amongst others, are abundant with a plenitude of theories about contemporary Europe. But this cosmos of theories is largely discipline-dependent; they generally make no attempt to straddle the social sciences in order to tell a story about contemporary Europe. And perhaps this is a good thing. Any all-encompassing narrative, or meta-narrative, about contemporary Europe is undoubtedly liable to be totalising, universalising, over-determining and undifferentiating and thus deaf to cries of 'uniqueness', 'individuality', 'context' and 'difference'.

What motivates me to write this article, and to run the risk of compromising my own principles by suggesting a meta-narrative for Europe, is my concern regarding the 'normalisation' or 'mainstreaming' of European studies into its various contributing disciplines without reflection on recent broader developments in the social and natural sciences. As European studies ceases to be the study of contemporary Europe and becomes the collective term for discipline-

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specific study on Europe, so interdisciplinarity, synthesis, or integration of knowledge is lost in the social sciences:

This claiming of 'Europe' by the mainstreams of individual disciplines has brought many gains in terms of the quality and range of interesting research across the social sciences. One possible corollary is that this may have raised the barriers to cross-disciplinary insights (Wallace, 2000: 99).

I do not think I will reverse this trend, or even convince the reader that this is new or necessarily problematic. The 'area studies' versus 'discipline studies' problem which so debilitates European studies in the U.S. is now undoubtedly central in this trend towards 'normalisation' and 'mainstreaming' (see Rosamond, 2000b, 2001b). Indeed, I am uncertain as to whether anyone who might read this article will comprehend or accept the argument that contemporary European studies requires convincing cross-disciplinary narratives for the health and well-being of both (European) area studies *and* the contributing disciplines. In spite of these risks of meta-narrative and disciplinary-orthodoxy, I will suggest here that European studies does actually have a number of cross-disciplinary approaches on which to draw. Many of these approaches are familiar to us as representing differing philosophical or methodological ways of thinking about different facets of social and natural science. But what I intend to suggest is that their reconsideration within the context of European studies actually provide us with a means of thinking thoroughly about European theory and the way it may contribute to furthering our understanding of contemporary Europe, and in particular its relationships with the rest of the world.

'Political theory' is a phrase that in general requires no explanation. It is used here to denote speculation about the state, which is its traditional meaning from Plato onwards. On the other hand, the phrase 'international theory' does require explanation By 'international theory' is meant a tradition of speculation about relations between states, a tradition imagined as the twin of speculation about the state to which the name 'political theory' is appropriated. And international theory in this sense does not, at first sight, exist. (Wight, [1966] 1995: 15)

For many the study of international relations theory began in earnest when Martin Wight first asked the question 'why is there no international theory?' In many ways, I would like to ask a similar question of 'why is there no European theory?' However, I do not intend to bifurcate, as Wight did, the study of international relations from politics. In fact, I would hope to do quite the opposite — to integrate the study of international and political theory, and the study of the social and natural sciences, in a way appropriate for an understanding of 'European theory'. By 'European theory' I mean, to paraphrase Wight, a tradition of speculation about Europe, a tradition that has been lost to the disciplinary orthodoxies of the constituent parts of the whole.

In order to do this, I intend to compare and contrast four cross-disciplinary approaches to the social and natural sciences within the specific context of the

tradition of speculation about Europe. As we will see later, I have termed the three conventional social science approaches ‘civilisational’, ‘categorical’, and ‘cultural’ Europe. My innovation is to suggest a fourth approach drawn from the natural sciences — that of ‘co-constituted’ Europe. As Lynn Margulis suggested in the extract at the start of this article, as a species we cling to the familiar, comforting conformities of the mainstream — a mainstream that often determines what we see and how we know. By challenging ‘convention’ head-on in this article, I intend to argue that it is possible to engage in European theory through an understanding and appreciation of broader developments in the social and natural sciences — an engagement I will term ‘Europaian studies’. What I intend to do is speculate about Europe from four radically different cross-disciplinary approaches, a speculation that will lead me to conclude by reflecting on what Europaian studies means for the understanding of contemporary Europe.

Civilisational Europe

[T]he European Community rests on the shared foundation of European culture and Western Christianity (Huntington, 1993: 27).

The first cross-disciplinary approach to European studies is found in the characterisation presented, for example, in the work of Samuel Huntington. For Huntington, political and economic factors are no longer relevant in the study of contemporary world politics — what matters now are ‘civilisations’ defined in terms of culture and most importantly, religion (Huntington, 1993: 23). For civilisationists, an understanding of contemporary Europe is to be found in ‘the interactions of seven or eight major civilisations’ (Huntington, 1993: 25). Although they stress culture as important, their definitions of identity are always to be found essentially fixed categories — ‘Western, Confucian, Japanese, Islamic, Hindu, Slavic-Orthodox, Latin American and possibly African’ (Huntington, 1993: 25). From this perspective, culture and identity are pre-givens, something one is born into and will die with (see also Smith, 1992):

[D]ifferences among civilisations are not only real; they are basic. Civilizations are differentiated from each other by history, languages, culture tradition and, most importantly, religion These differences are the product of centuries. They will not soon disappear. They are far more fundamental than differences among political ideologies and political regimes. (Huntington, 1993: 25).

It would be easy to dismiss such an approach to civilisation Europe as essentialist primordialism — ‘poisonous theories of post-Cold War confrontation between the west and Islam, heightening perceptions of racism and hypocrisy’ (Milne, 2001). But the civilisational approach does need to be seriously considered in order to be able to differentiate and understand the other three approaches. As importantly, the extent to which such an approach actually provides the foundation for far more work in European studies than is healthy. The observation that the EU has a Christian cultural foundation is often

implicitly, and sometimes explicitly, spelt out in ways which needs much greater reflection:

Europe's destiny is not inherently Eurocentric, but one of universality. It should therefore reassert its role as the 'beacon for world civilization' Such a role could eventually revive the Christian soul of Europe which is the basis for unity (Prodi, 2000: 46).

Romano Prodi's European Union is founded on the 'Christian soul of Europe' — a soul or essence which is portrayed as being fixed at the heart of the EU spirit. This portrayal provides the rationale for observations such as '[the] European powers make it clear that they do not want a Muslim state, Turkey, in the European Union and are not happy about having a second Muslim state, Bosnia, on the European continent' (Huntington, 1996: 126). From this perspective EU policy is supposedly shaped by religion (in particular the 16th century boundary between western Christianity and orthodox Christianity/Islam), but with Greece already a member, and Cyprus, Romania and Bulgaria undergoing the process of accession, such assertions are both disturbing and untenable (see also Roudometof, 1999).

Similarly problematic, although apparently more innocuous, are discussions of Europe's uniqueness as a civilisation which gives it a 'missionary' role in the rest of the world. Jan Ifversen notes in his discussion of 'Europe as a civilisation' that Commissioner Viviane Reding talks of Europe as 'the home for the development of an exceptional civilization that has influenced the rest of the world ...' (Ifversen, 2002: 10). For Ifversen, this serves as an example of 'Europe's missionary role in the world. Although ... the idea of a mission certainly has a eurocentric ring to it' (Ifversen, 2002: 12). Larry Siedentop's acclaimed work on *Democracy in Europe*, although acknowledging the 'not only very dubious but dangerous' assumptions of 'inherited or natural attributes as the basis of association' (Siedentop, 2000: 202) also plays on the idea of the uniqueness of European Christian morality:

These are the primordial truths on which Europe was raised — slowly, painfully, fitfully, incompletely. They are the truths which originally endowed Europe with a kind of constitution, as sense of the limits of the legitimate use of public power, limits established by moral rights [T]he original constitution of Europe — the foundation provided by the egalitarian norms of Christian morality, with their implications for the role of conscience and a private sphere — differed from the religious foundation of most human societies even at the outset (Siedentop, 2000: 196–8).

European culture is rightly considered to be Judeo-Christian-Greco-Latin. Jewish, Christian, Greek and Latin sources appear to have come together to form a harmonious synthesis, which is at once the specific substrate of Europe and its common denominator. It is starting from this base that Europe has produced an original civilization, marked by spirituality, humanism,

rationality, and democracy — virtues and values, that is, superior to those of any other civilization (Morin, 2002: 131).

Despite the similarity of Siedentop's and Morin's arguments, that latter is actually a parody. Edgar Morin suggests that it serves as an example of the sort of myth in which much civilisational Europe discourse is founded — '[i]ts nature is to color with euphoria and self-satisfaction a delusive truth' (Morin, 2002: 131).

I would suggest that, although deeply worrying, the notion of civilisational Europe represents an approach which *can* be found in the study of contemporary Europe. In particular, the extent to which 'quintessential traits' such as religion, language, heritage, and race are considered the sole determinants of our understanding of European studies is an approach that finds *some* support across the social sciences. Since the end of the Cold War such discussions 'cluster around a concept of Europe which is white, racist and much more powerful than any post-war individual state' where 'European-ness will stay a symbolic identity, in danger of symbolizing whiteness, Christianity enlightenment and modernity' (Pieterse, 1991: 6; and Lutz, 1997: 107). More worrying is when the civilisational approach, with its simplistic primordialist logic, can be found legitimating, and legitimated by, work from the second approach. A rare example of this appears to be found in a highly positivist article which argues that:

A useful starting point for classifying countries is thus the distinctions between civilisations drawn by Huntington At this political cultural level, Huntington's thesis of a cultural dividing line within Europe is confirmed to a certain extent' (Fuchs and Klingemann, 2002: 27–8, 52).

Categorical Europe

In contrast to civilisational Europe, the second cross-disciplinary approach appears to offer objective scientific relief through the study of Europe grounded in facts and evidence. From this approach Europe is a place, a space, a setting — in sum, Europe is a category. This approach undoubtedly represents the *mainstream* of European studies — a place where the certainties of knowledge and the powerful tools of science provide the foundations for our understanding and categorisation of contemporary Europe:

There are many maps of Europe... maps of geography, historical epochs, languages, religions, alphabets and of economic and political organisation The argument of the book is that a good setting of these rules [of governance] and maps, now at a time when so much is fluid, could virtually set Europe on a path to a new golden age in the early decade of the 21st Century (Emerson, 1998: 1)

[T]he discipline of political science has developed a vast array of theoretical tools and analytical methods to answer exactly these sorts of questions [about how the EU works] [T]o understand how the EU works we need to think

about it in a more structured, systematic and scientific way (Hix, 2000: 1 & 365).

From Michael Emerson's perspective finding ways of mapping and categorising Europe is part of changing Europe — 'as if on automatic pilot' (Emerson, 1998: 1). From a different perspective, but expressing a similar confidence in the normative implications of modern science, Simon Hix argues that with the correct 'tools, methods and cross-systemic theories ... we may learn some new things about the world of politics at the start of the new century' (Hix, 1999: 2 & 365). For the categorical Europe approach many of the more difficult questions about what is or is not acceptable to the study of contemporary Europe have already been settled — Europe *is* a place, *an* era, *an* organisation, which is subject to rules, tools, methods and theories without any ambiguity. Questions such as 'what is Europe?', 'how do we define Europe?', 'what is acceptable knowledge about Europe?', or 'what is a more structured, systematic and scientific way to study Europe?' really never arise. These questions have already been answered, the categories classified, the rules agreed, the discipline defined — the world of politics at the start of the new century can only be understood by applying the agreed disciplining tools, methods and cross-systemic tools of an earlier era.

Such categorical statements about European studies would not be so worrying if they did not actively seek to discipline work in such an unsubtle way. One of the defining features of many attempts to categorise Europe is not as much the (often problematic) scientific basis for this approach, but the way in which claims are made about the importance of such work and the irrelevance of other approaches. Such categorical work often shrouds itself in the discourse of the natural sciences, as if chronically insecure of the self-worth of its own reasoning — terms such as 'systematic', 'models', and 'scientific' are all part of this process. Similarly, continual policing of the individual disciplines is another reflection of such insecurities. Finally, work at the extremes of the categorical Europe approach is both unreflective in its claims and inconsiderate in what it seeks to exclude. For examples of such claims which are hugely self-important and inconsiderate, examine the discourse of these two extracts:

We present a unified model of the politics of the European Union (Tsebalis and Garrett, 2001: 357).

We believe that the past dispersion of European Union research in different fields and in nearby disciplines is increasingly obsolete. On the contrary, what we observe at the moment is a cross-disciplinary convergence towards a unifying approach (Schneider, Gabel and Hix, 2000: 6).

The opening statement to an article by Tsebalis and Garrett makes one of the most untenable assertions of the categorical Europe approach — a claim to have modelled all of the politics of the European Union in a single article. Simply to make such a statement raises some very big questions about the standard of social science being conducted within such an approach. More problematic still

is the corresponding claim that such a model can be unified. What exactly is being unified in such an article? Clearly what is taking place is the categorisation of such work as *the* politics of the EU, and all other work as unscientific. The Schneider, Gabel and Hix editorial takes these weaknesses one step further by arguing that the study of the EU in all other disciplines is ‘obsolete’ — something that scholars working in law, economics, sociology, cultural studies and many other disciplines would undoubtedly disagree with. They re-emphasise Tsebalis and Garrett’s claims to own a ‘unifying approach’ — that of 20th century American comparative political science. Both these categorisations share similar weaknesses of unreflective and inconsiderate scholarship — the more they proclaim their own importance, the more they sound radically out of touch with contemporary social science. But worse still, as we will see under ‘co-constitutional Europe’ below, the rational-individualistic scientific foundations on which they claim to be built are collapsing around them.

Ultimately, as Margulis suggested in the opening quote, the more claims there are to own and define the category of ‘normal science’, the more unscientific such claims sounds. If the philosophical and methodological outlook of categorical Europe is the main determinant of what it sees and what it knows, then this is not particularly scientific. As these two quotes help illustrate, if any work on Europe claims exclusive ownership of the category of ‘normal science’, then it is undoubtedly the case that the category is fallacious:

Institutional rational choice has revolutionized the study of the EU by bringing formal techniques to a subject which previously had been subject to mostly descriptive accounts ... rather than models proposing explanatory mechanisms In short the paradigm shift in EU studies has occurred; now is the time to start settling down to normal science (Dowding, 2000: 139). [O]ur main goal was to strengthen the systematic study of regional integration [T]he field is developing quickly and, to our satisfaction, is moving more and more in a scientific direction. We hope that *European Union Politics* has contributed to this progressive turn towards ‘normal’ science in the study of regional integration and EU policy-making (Schneider, Gabel and Hix, 2002: 5).

Cultural Europe

[S]ocial science in the contemporary world bears the strong imprint of ideas worked out in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries in Europe The theory of structuration begins from an absence: the lack of a theory of action in the social sciences (Giddens, 1979: 1–2).

The third cross-disciplinary approach to European studies is found in the development of social theory from the 1970s onwards. In particular Anthony Giddens’ structuration theory is a focal point for an approach to the study of Europe as the outcome of social processes involving social actors and social structures in mutual dependence. In contrast to the essentialism of civilisational

Europe, and the claims to objectivism of categorical Europe, the approach of cultural Europe is to suggest that our understanding of Europe is both the medium and the outcome of social practices. From this perspective both the idea of European civilisation and scientific knowledge about Europe are the cultural productions of structuration. For Giddens '[t]he concept of structuration involves that of the *duality of structure* which relates to the *fundamentally recursive character of social life, and expresses the mutual dependence of structure and agency*' (Giddens, 1979: 69).

Notions of social reproduction and determination of society, culture or science were by no means 'discovered' in the 1970s — Kenneth Gergen (1999: 52–3) identifies the works of Karl Mannheim (1929), Ludwig Fleck (1935), Peter Winch (1946), Thomas Kuhn (1962), George Gurvitch (1966), Peter Berger and Thomas Luckmann (1966) as all making important contributions towards the understanding of the social production of knowledge. What makes Giddens' structuration theory important is the extent to which it seeks to develop a theory of action in the social sciences which has now become widespread as a cross-disciplinary approach to European studies.

As we would expect, an approach which was developed to overcome the weakness of 19th century European social theory has been used widely in the social sciences for the study of Europe. Within sociology Giddens (1979, 1984), Cohen (1989), and Stones (1996) have all contributed towards the use of structuration theory and the cultural Europe approach. Outside of sociology, examples of the use of structuration theory can be found in European gender studies (Sackmann, 1998), European regional studies (Macleod, 1999), and European financial studies (Baines, 2002). However, I will choose to focus on the use of structuration theory through works that study cultural Europe, and which challenge the civilisational Europe and categorical Europe approaches. As Ben Rosamond makes clear, the structurationist position presents a critical challenge to assumptions of rational interests and essentialist identities often implicit in the categorical Europe and civilisational Europe approaches — '[i]nterests and identities do not exist exogenously to a context of interaction between structures and agents' (Rosamond, 2000a: 122).

Many of these cultural Europe approaches can be found in the collective works of scholars across Europe familiar with social theory and comfortable with the challenges which structuration theory brings to civilisational and categorical European approaches. Examples of some of these collective outputs can be found in Jørgensen (1997), Christiansen, Jørgensen and Wiener (2001), and contributions to Hay and Marsh (2000), as well as Hay and Rosamond (2002). As Knud Erik Jørgensen puts it, '[t]he hitherto neglect of Giddens' structuration theory in studies of European governance is most unfortunate' (Jørgensen, 1997: 9). For Thomas Christiansen this neglect is particularly problematic in the study of European space:

... different approaches to the understanding of the region-building process ... is an expression of the agency/structure problem which is of concern

to all the social sciences. While perhaps no final resolution of this basic dilemma is possible, efforts have been made towards this end by conceptualizing actors and structures as co-constituting each other in the process of structuration (Christiansen, 1997: 55).

However, it is not only European space, but also European time which requires a cultural Europe approach, as Magnus Ekengren argues in his study of the time of European governance (Ekengren, 1997, 2002). Ekengren argues that '[d]ue to the fact that Bourdieu and Giddens see action as the outcome of a structuration process *over time*, there is a need to theorize about time as an *integrated part* in all analysis of human action' (Ekengren, 1997: 72). Christiansen and Jørgensen go further to challenge the instrumental-choice assumptions of treaty negotiations in European governance through their structuration analysis of the Amsterdam process. They argue that such an approach provides 'a constructive critique of inherently actor-centred approaches such as intergovernmentalism. At the same time it helps produce an account of integration as a constitutive process that is more rigorous than neo-functionalism, the more process-oriented integration theory' (Christiansen and Jørgensen, 1999: 4).

Structuration theory also encourages analysis of European 'foreignness' through the study of bureaucratic socialisation and diplomatic identity found in Kenneth Glarbo's work on common European foreign policy: 'self-reflection describes a general disposition with human agents ... it should also be expected from diplomatic agents within the social setting of European political co-operation' (Glarbo, 2001: 154). An extension of such critical reflexivity encourages the observation that not only European 'foreignness', but also notions of globalisation and Europeanisation are also shaped by structuration:

'Globalization' may be used to signify market liberalization, but this may induce radically opposed interpretations of its significance and what policy options may follow. Both 'embrace' and 'resistance' are possible. Moreover, 'globalizing élites' may engage in strategic theorizing about globalization, but this does not mean that they are immune from the shaping capacities of the intersubjective structures that their discursive practice creates (Rosamond, 2001a: 164).

Thus for Rosamond 'discourse and rhetoric matter as (respectfully) structural and agential variables in the discursive construction of interests, rather than being simply directives or echoes of underlying interests' (Rosamond, 2002: 157). Daniel Wincott supports Rosamond's structuration approach when he argues that the debate on the relationship between European integration and globalization 'is likely to be moved forward fruitfully by focusing on the episodes which *both* sides of the debate agree are key, and examine in detail the intersection of structures and the interplay of actors ...' (Wincott, 2000: 188). As a European theory, the cultural Europe approach has been likened by some to Ernst Haas' neo-functionalist approach, as Ole Wæver suggests:

That process can shape structure was a key theoretical feature of classical

neo-functionalism; neo-functionalism in its ‘spill-over’ version was structuration theory ahead of its time ... Ernst Haas argues that integration must always make sense to national decision makers in order to be pursued (but the process of integration reshapes the determination of national interest, the proto-structurationist Haas adds) (Wæver, 1995: 412 fn. 50 & 427).

Neo-functionalism is indeed a precursor of a certain type of Constructivism, but not of all the IR studies that currently claim that label A constructivist who takes the principle of structuration very seriously, without bending it in favour of agency as most of us do, will part company with NF [neo-functionalism] (Haas, 2001: 22 & 29).

Haas’ response to claims to that neo-functionalism is a precursor of structuration theory and the cultural Europe approach contrasts with that of Wæver — a position apparently shared by Giddens: ‘[t]he theory of structuration elaborated in the present book could be read as a *non-functionalist manifesto*’ (Giddens, 1979: 7). We could, of course, disagree on the specific differences between functionalism, neo-functionalism and structuration, but Giddens seems keenest on the question of outcomes and consequences: ‘*[a]ny explanation of social reproduction which imputes teleology to social systems must be declared invalid*’ (Giddens, 1979: 7). Hence, I would argue that the cultural Europe approach is a step beyond the neo-functionalism of early European theory.

Like civilisational and categorical Europe, the cultural Europe approach has its critics, in particular on questions of privileging, discourse, and psychology. Margaret Archer’s *Realist Social Theory* (1995) criticises structuration theory because ‘its meta-theory has an in-built tendency to direct one towards the micro, or the immediate moment’ (Stones, 2001: 178). Interestingly, one of Thomas Diez’s criticisms appears to veer in the other direction: ‘structurationists eventually privilege structure by making it their ontological starting point’ (Diez, 2001: 90). Diez’s second criticism is that ‘Giddens does not take language seriously enough ... whereas a focus on discourse attributes a central importance both to the practice of speaking and the linguistic context in which articulations emerge and are read’ (Diez, 2001: 90). From a psychological perspective structurationist approaches fail to take account of psychoanalytic factors such as a sense of self, the unconscious, and emotions: ‘while different sociological approaches conceptualise the relation between individuals and society in different ways, they all tend to be based on a cognitive view of social actors in which feelings are either overlooked entirely or reduced to the social’ (Vogler, 2000: 21).

Co-constituted Europe

We have since defined Gaia as a complex entity involving the Earth’s biosphere, atmosphere, oceans, and soil; the totality constituting a feedback or cybernetic system which seeks an optimal physical and chemical environment for life on this planet. The maintenance of relatively constant conditions

by active control may be conveniently described by the term ‘homoeostasis’ (Lovelock, [1979] 2000: 10).

There is one more criticism of the cultural Europe approach which, intriguingly, is rarely heard — structuration theory is anthropocentric. The fourth cross-disciplinary approach to European studies coincides with that of the development of structuration theory from 1979 onwards, but can provide an antidote to anthropocentrism as well as challenging conventional social science. This final cross-disciplinary approach is found in work on ‘earth systems science’, or the ‘Gaia hypothesis’ as it is more commonly known. This approach to the study of Europe is based on an understanding of Europe as just part of a global system of social and physical processes in a condition of homoeostasis or active feedback. Because this approach involves Europe and Europeans in processes which both constitute Europe as an entity, and other regions as entities (and vice – versa) I have used the phrase ‘co-constituted Europe’. In contrast to the cultural Europe approach, this form of co-constitution does not reflect the mutual structuration of social agents and social structures, but the symbiotic relationship between Europe and the environment which sustains it. From this perspective Europe is co-constituted both by its actions and the reactions of the global milieu. But this appears to be restating the structuration argument that any individual, group, or entity is a function of both its own actions and its social environment. The difference with the co-constituted Europe approach is that the earth system has a homoeostatic effect on the environment and all that constitutes it — the effects are physical, but the implications are social.

Despite having its intellectual roots in the natural sciences of atmospheric chemistry (Lovelock) and molecular biology (Margulis) the scientific foundations of early Gaian work (Lovelock, 1965, 1972, 1979; Hitchcock and Lovelock, 1967; Lovelock and Margulis, 1973; and Margulis and Lovelock, 1974, 1975) were not socially acceptable when *Gaia: A new look at life on Earth* was published in 1979. The scientific establishment of normal science reacted with increasingly hostility to the idea of the Gaia hypothesis — climaxing with a 1988 American Geophysical Union conference on Gaia and its published papers in Schneider and Boston *Scientists on Gaia* (1992). During the 1990s the social conditions changed, in particular through Lovelock’s 1990 article for *Nature*, followed by a 1994 conference on ‘The Self Regulating Earth’, and culminating in Timothy Lenton’s 1998 article for *Nature* on ‘Gaia and Natural Selection’. Despite being embraced by normal science, Lovelock and Margulis’s term Gaia still finds itself unpalatable without the neologisms of ‘geophysiology’ or ‘earth system science’ (see Nierenberg, 1992; Veizer, 1992; Graedel and Crutzen, 1993; Schellnhuber and Wenzel, 1998; Schellnhuber, 1999; and Schneider, 2001).

Although slow to wake up to the socio-political implications of earth system science or the Gaia hypothesis, social scientists and political philosophers such as Gwyn Prins (1990), Vaclav Havel (1994), Brett Fairbairn (1994), Marcia Bjornerud (1997), Daniel Deudney (1997), and Mary Midgley (2000, 2001) have

been writing on the subject over the past decade in journals such as *International Affairs*, *American Historical Review*, and *Review of International Studies*. Although the natural science of earth systems science and the metaphor of Gaia are important in their own right, I would like to focus on their implications for social science in general, and co-constituted Europe in particular. To do this I will look at four particular implications for the study of Europe — ‘holism’; ‘homoeostasis’; ‘symbiosis’; and ‘atomism’.

The first and most obvious implication for all the sciences in the era of globalisation, is that a holistic approach is really a pre-requisite for our understanding of contemporary Europe — without which we are only examining a decontextualised Europe. This means, in particular, that if we are to analyse European society, European economy or European politics, it must be within the context of an awareness of the other social sciences and the rest of the world. As Lenton and Midgley put it:

Gaian models suggest that we must consider the totality of organisms and their material environment to fully understand which traits come to persist and dominate (Lenton, 1998: 446).

Much of the difficulty about grasping the concept of Gaia is not scientific but comes from this fragmented general framework of our thought Our moral, psychological and political ideas have all been armed against holism. They are too specialized and too atomistic (Midgley, 2000: 33).

The second and most complex implication for the social sciences, is that the processes of homoeostasis are not for the benefit of humans, but for the totality of life on earth. Although Scannerini (2001) goes too far when arguing that there is ‘[n]o place for man [*sic*] in Gaia’, it is correct to argue that homoeostasis not only displaces an anthropocentric view of life but will undoubtedly, through a response to global warming, make life very difficult for human lifeforms (Prins, 1990: 719). Homoeostasis then, is not only the reason for life on earth, but it is also the most important feature of the earth system — natural science, like social science, is shaped by it:

If life on earth (or any subsystem of it) is understood as a dynamic equilibrium of complex processes, then this view has certain consequences. The idea of *equilibrium* . . . is significant: it implies an order that exists neither by conscious design nor by unchanging or eternal necessity but rather from a temporary balance separating evolving needs and forces (Fairbairn, 1994: 1208)

If the first two implications cause us to ask questions of the macro-nature of social sciences, then the second two achieve a balance by focusing our attention on the micro-assumptions of social science. The third implication is that many common assumptions of ‘human nature’ in the social sciences are radically out of touch with Gaian understandings of human evolution. Whereas the past three decades have seen the ascendancy of the high priests of neo-Darwinism, sociobiology, game theory and rational choice in the natural and social sciences,

all of their claims of competitive individualism or survival of the fittest disintegrate under earth system science:

Gaia suggests that Darwin's theory of evolution by natural selection should be enlarged to acknowledge (a) that organisms actively modify their surroundings rather than merely adapt to them and (b) that symbiosis (mutually beneficial cooperation between individuals of different species), not just competition, has shaped the course of evolution (Bjornerud, 1997: 90).

If we now have to consider modification rather than adaptation, and symbiosis rather than competition, then rational choice notions such as individualism, competitiveness, selfishness, and fitness need to give way to discussions of community, collectivism, cooperation, and stability (Fairbairn, 1994: 1214; Bjornerud, 1997: 89; Midgley, 2000: 30).

The final implication brings together the previous three in an observation about how atomistic approaches to the study of Europe are, ultimately, untenable. By atomistic, I mean methodologies, philosophies, and ontologies that view the human individual as the only, or primary focus of social science. But I also mean approaches to the study of social science that refuse to acknowledge other approaches, disciplines, or views as having valid claims to make. Although this is not a mainstream approach to the study of contemporary Europe, as we have discussed, atomistic scholarship is making increasingly noisy claims to normal science. Such approaches *tend* to champion the individualistic over the holistic, the decontextual over the homoeostatic, and the reductionist over the symbiotic. For example, Prins describes such atomistic scholarship in these terms:

Both types of 'realist' political behaviour are what I shall call 'linear' — based on calculations of self-interest formulated in a narrow context, in isolation from other factors and actors that might be affected by the outcome, and treated as discrete, finite questions (Prins, 1990: 711).

In sum, the co-constituted Europe approach forces us to move beyond the conventions and conformities of linear thinking with their analyses of self-interest, narrow context, isolation, and discrete questions, in order to think about holistic, contextual, inclusive, and global European studies.

Understanding contemporary Europe.

The four cross-disciplinary approaches considered can, in some respects, be viewed as four steps backwards away from the subject in order to attempt to give us some perspective on the philosophical and methodological challenges of understanding contemporary Europe. This is not to argue that by taking these four steps we can somehow claim objectivity in European studies, but simply to suggest that each step reveals a contrasting outlook or thought style. It is the cumulative effect of these revelations which may ultimately lead us towards a greater understanding of contemporary Europe.

The first step backwards was to consider civilisational Europe as an essential

given — an approach which induces us to focus on discussions of religion, heritage, language and race. I would argue that this approach is far too close to Europe, and thus lacks any critical distance from its subject. The second step backwards was to consider categorical Europe as a scientific fact — an approach which leads us to examine the details of geography, maps, boundaries, institutions. Despite being more objective than the civilisational Europe approach, I would also argue that this approach is still far too close to Europe, and thus is unable to critically examine the notion of normal science. The third step backwards was to consider cultural Europe as a socially structured reality — an approach which encourages us to reflect on the roles of culture, society, ideas and knowledge. This approach does enable us to gain some critical distance, but it also causes us to realise that we are all reflexively implicated in the study of Europe. The cultural Europe approach has a weakness because of its anthropocentric focus on human culture and society. The final step backwards was to consider co-constituted Europe as a shaper of, and shaped by, the earth — an approach which expands our intellectual horizons to encompass context, process, dynamics and symbiosis.

My own preference is for a combination of the latter two approaches as a way of improving our understanding of contemporary Europe — a combination of ‘Europe’ and ‘Gaia’ I have termed ‘Europaian studies’. Europaian studies is an attempt to suggest that by bringing the study of Europe, within its Gaian context, to the reflexively informed structuration of human social reproduction, we can think far more thoroughly about Europe within its social and physical context. This, in many respects, is my reading of the social science implications for the study of Europe found in Europaian studies — that the realisation of Europe as a participant in global symbiosis will shape the social institutions of the study of Europe, which in turn will shape the social context of European actors, which in turn ... *etc, etc*.

I have further suggested that it is in this context which we could turn towards the question of European theory. When set within a Europaian studies context European theory, as a tradition of speculation about Europe, requires that we are familiar with both the social and the natural sciences. It does not mean that we must apply earth systems science to Europe in a biological or ecological sense, simply that the scientific implications of the Gaia hypothesis have significant social and political consequences. The focus of European theory is Europe, including its patterns of integration and fragmentation, but within the processes of globalisation and Europeanisation. In this respects European theory may allow us to respond to Helen Wallace’s call for a means to answer the most interesting questions when studying contemporary Europe:

Our paradigms for dissecting both the integration issues and the relationship between the transnational and the domestic are in need of a great deal of reconsideration. Integration and fragmentation patterns coexist in Europe, just as globalisation and Europeanisation coexist around overlapping ‘locations’ for politics and policy-making The study ... of contemporary Europe has

made great strides, but it does not provide us with satisfactory answers to many of the most interesting issues (Wallace, 2000: 110).

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