

**Speaking 'Europe':  
The Politics of Integration Discourse**

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## 1. NAMING THE 'BEAST'

Suppose a zoologist reveals the existence of an animal so far unknown to mankind. In an article, she describes its features and gives the beast a name. It is classified and categorized, put into the framework of zoological knowledge. In recent years, there have been many attempts at 'exploring the nature of the beast' (Risse-Kappen 1996) in European integration studies. In many of them, the European Union (EU) is dealt with as if it were our zoologist's unknown animal. It is compared to other polities and other international organizations, its organizational mechanisms are described and categorized. And there is much effort to name this unknown beast. Debates abound whether it is a 'postmodern' or 'regulatory state' (Caporaso 1996), a 'confederatio,' 'consortio' or 'condominio' (Schmitter 1996), a system of 'multi-level governance' (Marks 1993) or a 'multiperspectival polity' (Ruggie 1993).

But as long as there is such a proliferation of names, and of conceptualizations of what the name 'EU' means, the EU remains beyond the framework of our political knowledge. While the efforts of categorization and naming most often are presented as pure descriptions, i.e. as mirrors of reality, the discrepancy between the existence of the beast and our knowledge of it suggests that reality is not so readily observable as it may seem. Instead, even the zoologist needs a given system of language, constituting the body of zoological knowledge, for her categorizations. Language is thus central to our knowledge of reality. It does not only serve as a 'mirror of nature' (Rorty 1979). Rather, it is possible to know of reality through linguistic construction only.

This article explores the role of language in the construction of the European Union. Its main argument is that the various attempts to capture the Union's nature are not mere descriptions of an unknown polity, but take part in the construction of the polity itself. To that extent, they are not politically innocent, and may themselves become subject of analysis, along with articulations from other actors. My plea is therefore to include discourse analysis in the canon of approaches in European studies. With a few exceptions, and in contrast to the field of International Relations, such work is currently missing. Closing that gap would both enlarge our understanding of the integration process, and insert a reflective moment in our analyses. First, it adds an important dimension to the predominant focus on ideas and institutions within social constructivist studies of European integration, arguing that they cannot exist apart from discourse. Secondly, it introduces a new 'face of power.' Analyses of European integration have so far by and large focussed on (absolute or relative) material capabilities as power, and on the interests behind the application of such power. Against such an understanding, Steven Lukes once put his 'radical' view of power that works through preventing individuals or classes from realizing their 'real' interests in the first place (Lukes 1974). The notion of power that is employed in this article follows the line of Lukes but doubts that there is such a thing as a 'real' interest independent from the discursive context in which interests emerge. The power of discourse then becomes crucial.<sup>1</sup> Thirdly, it allows for an analysis of the contestedness of certain concepts, and thus points towards possible integration alternatives. Finally, it brings with it a reflective dimension to the research processes, particularly necessary in a field in which many researchers have traditionally been directly entangled with the political process of integration.

Throughout the article, I will restrict myself to providing some illustrations of the argument and not conduct a discourse analysis as such. Instead, my aim is to lay down the theoretical groundwork that relates a constructivism focussing on language (variously called 'radical' or 'epistemological' constructivism, among other labels) to European studies. The argument proceeds in three moves, each of which I associate with the name of a certain philosopher or social/political theorist whose writings have contributed to the elaboration of these moves. The first move is labeled 'Austinian' and introduces the notion of a performative language. The second move is called 'Foucauldian' and points to the political implications of the

performativity of language through the definition of meaning. The third move takes up 'Derridean' themes and discusses the possibilities of change, opening up space for the articulation of alternative constructions of European governance.

I introduce these moves as a way of developing and introducing a certain approach. There are various problems attached to such a procedure. Most importantly, it is not at all clear whether the work of the respective theorists are compatible. To the contrary, it has been claimed that lumping together Foucault and Derrida, for instance, is to ignore the disagreements both of them expressed *vis-à-vis* each other (see Marti 1988: 167, fn 2). The exchange between Derrida and Searle (who uses an Austinian understanding of language) has become a linguistic classic (Derrida 1977; Searle 1977). It is, however, also the case that the works associated with each of the three moves are, at least in part, shaped by the others. The order in which they are presented here roughly follows the historical chronology of their development, in particular in relation to when each move was taken up by the social sciences in general, and International Relations in particular. Thereby, it will become clear how the debate proceeded from insisting on the relevance of language *per se* to clarifying its power and potentials to change. Each move will therefore refine, transform and thus move somewhat away from the insights gained from earlier steps. All of them push the argument in a certain direction, with other paths available. Readers may thus want to leave the proposed tour of inquiry at a certain point, and prefer other possibilities opened up by then. Nonetheless, I propose that the approach I will have elaborated in the end is valuable in that it provides a new perspective on the development of European governance.

## 2. THE AUSTINIAN MOVE: THE PERFORMATIVE LANGUAGE

The common sense of language is that it describes or takes note of a reality outside language. It is, in other words, 'constative' (Austin 1975: 3). The search for the nature of the beast EU is in this tradition: European governance is something 'out there' the nature of which needs to be captured by language, i.e. by the definitions and observations entailed in our analysis. But there are several cases in which language, even to the casual observer, seems to go beyond its constative function. Examples are the declaration of a child's name at her baptism, the issuing of an order, or the formulation of a treaty through which a new political organization comes into existence. In his lectures at Harvard in 1955, J. L. Austin thus introduced the notion of 'performative' sentences (Austin 1975: 6). In the examples above, language is performative in that it does not only take note of, say, the founding of the EEC. Instead, it is *through* language that this founding is performed. Apart from the act of speaking itself (which Austin labeled a 'locutionary act'), in these cases it is '*in* saying something [that] we do something' (Austin 1975: 94). There is an 'illocutionary force' to language. Furthermore, what we say may have an effect on other people; by saying something, we may not only act ourselves, but also force others to do so.

Austin and his student John Searle contributed significantly to the development of a theory of 'speech acts'— acts performed through speech. On the basis of this theory, Jürgen Habermas was later to develop his theory of communicative action (Habermas 1984), the influence of which one may still trace to his concerns for a European citizenship linked to a European politico-communicative space (Habermas 1992a, 1992b). It is, however, important to note the 'through' in the above definition of speech acts. In contrast to the following moves, the Austinian move does not locate action on the level of language as such. Instead, language serves as an instrument of will and intention: The question posed by Austin is, 'how to do things with words,' and not, 'how are things done by words.' To the extent that this presupposes language as a carrier of meaning, the 'principle of expressibility,' formulated by

Searle (1969: 19-21), is of crucial importance: It is 'in principle' possible to say what one means. Habermas's discursive ethics, after all, relies upon exactly this possibility of expression in a discursive space ideally situated outside coercive power relations (Habermas 1990).

Although speech acts are never purely particularistic but rule-governed and thus performed within a certain social context, they nonetheless flow, seen from this perspective, from the individual. But to the extent that they are conceptualized as rule-governed, meaning already in Searle's work is 'at least sometimes a function [and not the origin] of what we are saying' (Searle 1969: 45). Speech act theorists are concerned with politics *through*, not politics *of* discourse. But they recognize that language is not always a neutral and purely descriptive device. Instead, it may contain evaluations and serve political purposes (Searle 1969: 132-6).

When it comes to politics, it is probably uncontested that most articulations, in the form of negotiation statements, laws, treaties or the like, do or at least intend to do something. Introducing speech act theory to International Law, Nicholas Onuf cites the statement of rules as an example of typical illocutionary acts (Onuf 1989: 83-4). The signing of the treaty on the European Coal and Steel Community, for instance, founded the first European institution on the way to what is now the European Union, and served France's interest of controlling an important base of German industry, while it helped Germany to return to the international scene. The system of governance established since then can be presented as a remarkable collection of speech acts and their effects, be it in the form of declarations, further treaties, decisions by the European Court of Justice, or Community legal acts.

In contrast to other attempts to analyze European governance, an approach informed by speech act theory would pay more attention to language. In looking for the nature of the beast, Thomas Risse-Kappen, for instance, is mostly concerned with the domestic structure of certain policy fields and their degree of 'Europeanization' (Risse-Kappen 1996). The role of language in governance seems to be as much underplayed as it is in social constructivist scholarship in International Relations more generally speaking, starting with Alexander Wendt's focus on state interaction through 'gestures,' not speech (Wendt 1992: 404; see Zehfuß 1998: 125-128).<sup>2</sup>

A most interesting story in this respect is how citizenship developed from concerns about Europe's political future and role in the world, via the necessity to regulate membership of a Single Market to being a response to questions about legitimacy and democracy within the EU. During this process, speech acts performed by a variety of actors, often with different intentions, not only led to the establishment of EU citizenship, but also to the reformulation of the concept of citizenship, with consequences for the shape of the Euro-polity.<sup>3</sup> More generally speaking, the whole history of European integration is a history of speech acts (following Onuf: rules) establishing a system of governance (which, after all, is about rules that are binding for the members of the system; see Kohler-Koch 1993).

We should not, however, overstate the distinction between locutionary and illocutionary acts. In fact, one of Austin's central propositions concerned the practical difficulties in distinguishing between constative and performative sentences (Austin 1975: 94). First, even locutionary acts are performative to the extent that to state something is to do something: It is to locate something in a specific context, following certain rules and depending on the given circumstances (Austin 1975: 146-7; Searle 1969: 22). Second, the notion of locutionary and illocutionary acts is an abstraction. Speaking more generally includes both acts (Austin 1975: 147). In the same vein, Searle insisted that the idea that descriptive statements could never entail evaluative ones amounted to what he called the 'naturalistic fallacy fallacy' (Searle 1969: 132).

Consider that it was common in the British debate of the 1960s to refer to the EEC as the

'Common Market', whereas in Germany, the term most often used was '*Gemeinschaft*' ('Community').<sup>4</sup> One can reasonably assume that to most people, the utterance of these words seemed innocent and descriptive, but they were not. First, in locating the EEC in different contexts according to the rules and circumstances of their respective national debates, they established a specific reading of the Treaties of Rome. Secondly, in the case of Britain, this partial fixation of meaning, together with a referendum as a means of legitimization, served to structure the evolving debate about possible EC membership, dividing the broad spectrum of opinions in two simple camps: 'pro-' and 'anti-marketeers.'<sup>5</sup>

Even if their illocutionary force is not as readily visible as in the case of rules, speech acts have important social and political consequences. Whereas the Austinian move helped us to understand that speaking Europe is to do something, the Foucauldian move will help us to understand better the political force of such performative language.

### 3. THE FOUCAULDIAN MOVE: ENABLING EUROPEAN GOVERNANCE

#### Discourse, Power and Reality

The British example is, of course, well known and not very original. But it seems that its implications are rather rarely understood. More often than not, the British are taken to be 'natural' Euroskeptics, due to their history or geographical status.<sup>6</sup> But on closer inspection, the problem is less to do with different attitudes towards Europe, but with the concept of 'Europe' itself. It has to be stressed that neither the 'Common Market' nor the '*Gemeinschaft*' conception was 'correct' or 'false.' Rather, they were possible readings of the system of Western European governance. In other words, 'Europe' is not a neutral reality but a 'contested concept' the meaning of which is not (yet) fixed (Connolly 1983; see Schäffner et al. 196: 4). Even assuming (as I will do in the following) that it is somehow related to a system of governance does not help that much: There are still numerous ways to construct such a system, in content, nature and scope. It is such constructions that the speech acts discussed at the end of last section were about.

'Europe' might be one of the most typical examples of contested concepts, but the argument can be made on a more general level. The central proposition is that 'reality' cannot be known outside discourse, for the moment broadly defined as a set of articulations. In the words of Michel Foucault (1984: 127):

We must not imagine that the world turns towards us a legible face which we would have only to decipher; the world is not the accomplice of our knowledge; there is no prediscursive providence which disposes the world in our favor. We must conceive discourse as a violence which we do to things, or in any case as a practice which we impose on them.

In many ways, this is merely a more radical reformulation of Austin's observation that to state something is to do something. But to phrase it in such radical terms brings to the fore the political relevance of language beyond the concept of rhetoric as a means to political ends, and towards a power that rests in discourse itself. This power makes us understand certain problems in certain ways, and to pose questions accordingly. It thereby limits the range of alternative policy options, and enables us to take on others. The contest about concepts is thus a central political struggle (Connolly 1983: 30) – not only between individuals and groups defending one meaning against another, but also between different ways of constructing 'the world' through different sets of languages. These different languages are not employed by

actors in a sovereign way. It is the discursive web surrounding each articulation that makes the latter possible on the one hand (otherwise, it would be meaningless), while the web itself, on the other hand, relies on its reproduction through these articulations.

Discourse in this Foucauldian reformulation is thus more radical than the speech act tradition in that more emphasis is put on the context in its relation to the individual actor. Although it is 'we' who impose meaning, 'we' do not act as autonomous subjects but from a 'subject position' made available by the discursive context in which we are situated (Foucault 1991: 58). The speech act tradition emphasized the rules and contexts of speaking; the discursive tradition furthermore emphasizes the constitutive role of discourse in the production of subject identities. Discourse then takes up a life of its own. It is not a pure means of politics – instead, politics is an essential part of discourse. The struggle to impose meaning on such terms as 'Europe' is not only a struggle between politicians but also between the different discourses that enable actors to articulate their positions (Larsen 1997a: 121-2).

In a way, this notion amounts to what one may call a 'linguistic structurationism,' adding to Giddens' theory the crucial importance of language (see Giddens 1984). Giddens' central aim, shared by Foucault, was to move beyond structuralism and to reconceptualize the duality of structures and agency. His theory of structurationism, imported into International Relations by Alexander Wendt (1992), argues that both, structure and agency, were mutually dependent on each other. Whether Giddens was successful in this endeavor is contested. It has been argued, for instance, that structurationists eventually privilege structure by making it their ontological starting point, whereas in a Foucauldian perspective, more emphasis is put on practice in that structures are always reinterpreted and thereby transformed (Ashley 1989: 276-7). The major point in the present context, though, is that Giddens does not take language seriously enough (Zehfuß 1998), 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.

Before I move on to show the relevance of this to European integration studies by way of some more examples, I need to clarify that to say that any talk about reality will always be a specific construction of the latter is not to deny the existence of reality itself (Laclau and Mouffe 1985: 108; Potter 1996: 7). When entering a different country, one has, often confronted with very 'real' physical barriers, to present a passport. While the Schengen agreement has eliminated borders between some of its signatory states, it has led to the intensification of such controls at the outside borders of 'Schengenland.' But there is no 'neutral language' to convey the meaning of these 'real' borders. Their construction as guarantees of welfare provisions or illegitimate walls depriving people from their right to move both are speech acts within a specific discursive context. Furthermore, discourse itself is part of reality. In that sense, discursive approaches do not fit into the old dichotomy of idealists versus realists. In fact, the example of 'Schengenland' nicely illustrates this: It emanates from and reifies a specific discursive construction of European governance.

### **'Euro-Speak'**

After the Foucauldian move, any 'description' of European governance participates in the struggle to fix the latter's meaning, and thus is a political act. This is hardly ever recognized. Philippe Schmitter, for one, explicitly acknowledges the role of language in European integration. He identifies the development of a 'Euro-speak' defining the space for political action within the EU, while often being hardly comprehensible to an outsider (Schmitter 1996: 122-7; see also Schaeffer et al. 1996: 8). 'Ingredients' to this 'Euro-speak' range from '*acquis communautaire*' to 'co-decision,' from 'subsidiarity' to '*supranationalité*' (Schmitter 1996: 137). At the same time, however, Schmitter sees a need 'for labels to identify the general configuration of authority that is emerging' in the case of the EU, and doubts that this

can be done by a mere aggregation of currently existing 'Euro-speak' (ibid.).

But following the Austinian and Foucauldian moves, the 'new vocabulary' that Schmitter is looking for cannot be used to simply 'pick up such developments' as the emergence of 'a new form of multi-layered governance,' and to 'describe the process of integration' (Schmitter 1996: 132-3). Instead, such developments are only knowledgeable to us within specific discursive contexts, and to label them from our various subject positions is to engage in the 'struggle for Europe' (Wæver 1997). This struggle is not restricted to the realm of political 'practitioners' – as academics dealing with matters of European integration, we are also part of it.<sup>7</sup>

Consider the conceptualization of the EU as a system of 'multi-level governance' (e.g. Marks 1993; Christiansen 1997). The image that is created by this account is one of a set of various separated levels of governance (local, regional, national, European) that interact with each other in some issue areas and follow their own course in others. This has by now become something of a 'textbook image' of the EU. It would be naïve to assume that this image directly becomes the ground on which politicians in the EU base their decisions. This is not what is claimed here. Rather, the point is that such conceptualizations are part of a wider discursive context and do not 'stand aside' from their object of analysis. They take up the claims made by German *Länder* about their role in the overall system, or by various national governments leading to the specific construction of subsidiarity in Art. 3b TEC.<sup>8</sup> It is these 'multi-level' representations *taken together* that reify a notion of politics working on separate planes. The development of the EU towards such a system that way becomes a self-fulfilling hypothesis.<sup>9</sup>

The power of discourse is that it structures our conceptualizations of European governance to some extent, rather than us simply employing a certain language to further our cause. The multi-level language gives preference to actors on various 'state' levels and is linked to an extension of the classical federalist practice of territorial representation on the 'highest' organizational level, now with three representational bodies instead of two. What happens, if for a moment we employ a different language and speak of a 'network polity' instead? Our conception of the EU changes, and instead of 'levels,' we find a more open political space, both geographically and functionally diversified, undermining the territorial notion of politics that is still upheld by the multiple levels concept (Kohler-Koch 1999).<sup>10</sup>

Which of the two languages should be preferred is contestable, and need not be discussed at this point. Both have their own political consequences in that they enable different kinds of political actors to claim legitimate existence in different kinds of decision-making processes. A functional body such as the Economic and Social Committee does, of course, not simply disappear once the multi-level language is employed. But it does not figure too prominently in our representations of the EU, and this quasi non-existence is being reified.

The language of neofunctionalism provides a second illustration. One of the distinctive features of neofunctionalism was its proposal to bridge the gap between functional and political association in classic functionalism by transforming the concept of 'spill-over' (i.e. the notion that integration processes, once started in a field of 'low politics,' will create a dynamic of their own and sooner or later affect other policy fields) by adding to it an explicit political content and agent, working towards the eventual establishment of an overall federal, or at least supranational, system (Caporaso and Keeler 1995: 33-4; Kelstrup 1998: 29; Zellentin 1992: 70-71). Again, the question is not whether those expectations were right or misplaced. Instead, my proposition is that while neofunctionalism might thereby have closed one gap, it opened up another one, and that this is due to the language employed.

On the one hand, the reformulated spill-over concept had to include democratic processes at one point or another. Economic policy might well be legitimized by references to economic

output – the guarantee of welfare. But this leads to the construction of Europe as an ‘Economic Community’ (Jachtenfuchs 1997; Diez 1999; Jachtenfuchs et al. 1998): While legitimation through output already is a position hardly accepted universally in relation to economic policy, things become even more problematic if one moves into other policy fields. Thus, the inclusion of participatory elements was unavoidable if spill-over was to be sustained. But on the other hand, the language of neofunctionalism was all very technical, the name of the approach itself being no exception. Accordingly, the central institution in the emerging polity was given the name of a ‘commission,’ and the means of governance were called ‘directives’ and ‘regulations’ (Art. 189 TEC). Such terms are hardly reconcilable with the current language of democracy without a redefinition of democracy itself. That, however, was not what was proposed – in fact, classic functionalism might have been more apt to such a redefinition by changing the territorial organization of societies into a functional one, whereas neofunctionalism proposed using the latter to achieve the former.

The ‘democratic deficit’ charge that has haunted the EU ever since its inception at Maastricht seems to be directly connected to this problematic. Its citizens claim that the EU is far too bureaucratic, technical, distant and its decision-making procedures too intransparent (see Weiler 1998: 78). This might be the case or not – it seems at least questionable whether politics in any of the national capitals is more transparent. But the institutional language of neofunctionalism has prevailed until today, and provides the ground to continuously reconstruct the EU as a monster bureaucracy concerned with technical matters that increasingly affect the everyday life of its citizens without their formal consent, while the nation state carries with it the ideals of self-determination and democracy.

In such a setting, it is hard to make the case that the initiative for a substantial number of directives can be traced back to member state governments, or that the size of the EU administration is smaller than that of a single member state such as Germany’s federal bureaucracy (Wessels 1996: 182-4), or that non-governmental organizations are heavily involved in the making of EC policies (Jachtenfuchs and Kohler-Koch 1996: 24; Kohler-Koch 1998). Surely, none of this makes the EU a heaven of democracy – not on the basis of the predominant current understanding of democracy, in any case. Instead, the point of this discussion is that the language of neofunctionalism enables one reading of the EU rather than another. And furthermore, this language seemed right and innocent (in the sense of being the objectively best available way) at one point in time – much in the same way as the language of multi-levelism today.<sup>11</sup> In each case, the Foucauldian move points to the politics involved in discourse, a politics that we are often unaware of and that does not come to our attention as long as we equate politics with interests and intentions.

#### **4. THE DERRIDAREAN MOVE: CONCEPTUALIZING CHANGE AND OPTIONS FOR ALTERNATIVES**

Within a universe of discourses, change is only possible if meaning is not eternally fixed and if the lines of contestation between various discourses are allowed to shift. Only if this is the case will there be a chance for the development of a new ‘Euro-speak,’ and thus for the development of alternative constructions of European integration. On the other hand, the meaning of words needs to be relatively stable in a given context for communication to be possible. In his structural theory of language, Frédéric de Saussure argued that national languages ‘work’ because they represent crystal grids in which each word has its proper place. It takes on meaning through the firm opposition in which it stands towards another word in

this grid (Frank 1983: 32-4). In such a 'crystal grid' model, change is hard to conceive of. But we all know that meaning is not eternally fixed: Dictionaries provide us with contested meanings of a single word, and once in a while, such entries have to be changed because the word is now used in a different or additional sense. Furthermore, we do experience breakdowns of communication.

This is the reason for a third and final move, which I will call Derridarean. Change was not absent from the Austinian and Foucauldian moves. They emphasized the role of action in a continuous reconstruction of and struggle for meaning. But in order to conceptualize the interplay of structure and agency in linguistic terms, the Derridarean move will be more helpful. In contrast to Saussure, French philosopher Jacques Derrida conceptualized language not as a closed and more or less rigid grid, but as a series of open-ended chains (Derrida 1977). With each articulation, there is at least a potential of adding new oppositions to the already existing chain, and thereby of altering it (see Potter 1996: 84). This does not necessarily result in a breakdown of communication. In fact, communication does not have to rest on a concept of 'understanding,' assuming the correspondence of what is said and received in the speaker's and receiver's minds. Instead, it can be conceived of as operating on the level of language, where the decisive factor is the affinity of discourses and thus their mutual translatability (see below). Furthermore, change and continuity always go hand in hand with each other. Although the overall discursive space is not as volatile as Derridareans sometimes suggest, and each addition to a linguistic chain seems to be minor at first, it may indeed be part of a major transformation, the importance of which becomes clear only in the long run.

An example for such a change is the development of the construction of European governance as an Economic Community in form of a 'common market' in the British case. There, the predominant concept of European integration in the 1950s was indeed a classic 'Euroskeptic' one of pure intergovernmental co-operation. But at the same time, economic considerations played an increasing role in the overall political debate. This led to the reformulation of co-operation as a Free Trade Area. The language in which this Area was constructed centered around economic output. Its basic mechanism was still intergovernmental, but this economic focus laid down a trace that soon made it possible to articulate supranational governance in the economic realm. And indeed, this is how Macmillan presented his 'bid for membership' in August 1961 (Hansard 1961: 1481, 1490; see Diez 1999: ch. 3).

Put in a simple way, we all enter into a conversation with a set of preconceptions from which we set out to reconstruct other articulations. Thus, we do not only receive them passively, but regularly add to the linguistic chain unless our set of preconceptions (or at least those relevant for the given conversation) are exactly the same as the ones of the speaker. Borrowing a conceptualization from the radical constructivist branch of systems theory (Hejl 1987), we may think of ourselves as being situated in, and our preconceptions resulting from, a node of discourses providing the basis for our interaction in communication. In other words, our preconceptions are nothing else than objects of particular discourses, which in turn are linked to a number of other discourses in what I call a 'discursive nodal point' (Diez 1998, 1999: ch. 2). There is a simple reason for such linkages between discourses: The conceptualization of objects in one discourse follows a set of rules, which, in turn, result from 'metanarratives' providing meaning to the latter, etc. This creates a web in which discourses are bound up with each other, and which is held together by nodal points.

The latter, given the Derridarean move, are potentially unstable, but will usually not change in a radical way. Shifts seem most likely if there is a considerable overlap between the rules (and therefore the metanarratives) of the two discourses in question, both in terms of content (that is, concerning the objects of the metanarratives) and in terms of structure (that is, some overall principles to which the rules adhere). This overlap makes articulations translatable. On

the basis of such similar 'languages,' it is possible from one nodal point to make sense of articulations resulting from another one, so that the latter are not rejected right away, opening up the possibility of (ex)change. Seen from such an angle, the language of a Free Trade Area in the British case facilitated the move towards the articulation of an Economic Community that would otherwise have been much harder, if not impossible.

Finally, the Derridarean move also allows us to address possible alternatives to the Federal State and Economic Community conceptions that currently dominate the debate (see Jachtenfuchs et al. 1998). Recent years have witnessed an emerging 'Euro-speak' that focused on subsidiarity and flexibility.<sup>12</sup> Most well-known are the introduction of the principle of subsidiarity into the Treaty of Maastricht, accompanied by the establishment of the Council of the Regions, and suggestions ranging from the '*Kerneuropa*' and 'concentric circle' visions by German Christian Democrats Karl Lamers and Wolfgang Schäuble and former French Prime Minister Eduard Balladur to the demands for more flexibility by former British Prime Minister John Major. All of them, in one way or another, are set in opposition to 'centralization' and a further unitary development of the EU, either because the latter are linked to hindrances for further deepening and widening of integration, or because they are associated with a neglect of nation state identities. While potentially undermining the *acquis communautaire*, the emergence of this new 'Euro-speak' in parts also serves to reify the 'nation state' as a central concept in politics. Nowhere is this clearer than in the way 'subsidiarity' is invested in legal discourse through Art. 3b and its sole stress on member states' competences.

In terms of the centrality of territorial statehood in political discourses, the change brought about by these terms thus seems to be of a rather marginal kind. It is easier to see the problems they pose to the construction of European governance as a Federal State in the making, than to the territorial organization of politics as such. Rather, their usage seems to follow rules similar to those of 'multi-level' constructions. But seen from the perspective outlined above after the Derridarean move, these seemingly marginal changes might bring with them more fundamental transformations in that they lay out a linguistic trace that can be seized upon by alternative constructions.

Consider the rules of the Network discourse. It, too, is set against centralization, but also against purely territorial politics, and includes both territorial and functional divisions. Network-like constructions of European governance have traditionally been marginalized in the overall integration debate. Members of the Integral Federalists, for instance, argued at the Congress of The Hague in 1948 for the encouragement, 'regardless of frontiers, [of] the spontaneous articulation of interests, energies and hopes' (Lipgens and Loth 1985: 49), and stated their 'wish to be as far as possible decentralized, both regionally and functionally; not a superstate but a real democracy, built up of self-governing communities' (Lipgens and Loth 1985: 45). But their influence within the federalist movement was never strong, and if anything became weaker over time.<sup>13</sup> Their construction of 'federalism' was too far apart from that of the dominant discourse, the discursive nodal point from which they argued too different and outlandish for those used to talking in terms of modern territorial statehood. The language of the latter is clear, orderly and relatively parsimonious – the waters of the Network discourse are much more muddled. They do not provide a clear outlook and focus on terms such as 'spontaneity' or 'living, supple complexity' (Lipgens and Loth 1985: 50). From the discursive nodal point of a Federal State conception, it is hard not to see this as a deficiency. To put it simple, the language of vagueness did and does not translate well into a language of clear borders, hierarchy and uniformity. The language of neofunctionalism, in contrast, was in a much better position, having a clear overall program. In the same vein, 'multi-level governance' is still a pretty much ordered one in that it implies, for instance, the clear separation of a minimum number of levels.

But remember that the exact meaning of a term is context-bound, while at the same time it can be transformed through the reinvestment of the terms in question from different discursive positions. Hence, it may turn out to be of some significance that the terms 'subsidiarity' and 'flexibility' are contested concepts that are not alien to the Network-language. Instead, they are much more closer to it than, for instance, neofunctionalist language. This increases the translatability of Network articulations into dominant 'Euro-speak.' Much like the movement from Free Trade Area to Economic Community in the British case, there is a trace that can be seized upon by actors working from the Network's discursive nodal point.

This is, of course, not to say that in due course the debate will have changed so much that it becomes common to construct European governance in such terms. The notion of 'linguistic structurationism' reminds us of the need that these terms be reinvested by actors from such a discursive position. What is important, however, is that the current transformations in 'Euro-speak' allow for such a reinvestment. Thus, the language of day-to-day politics may well be ahead of our minds trying to figure out the 'nature of the beast.'

## 6. THE IMPORTANCE OF LANGUAGE

My attempt in this article was to make a case for the importance of language in the process of European integration. By way of three moves (Austinian, Foucauldian and Derridean), I argued that language does more than describe; that all our accounts of the world (and thus of European governance) are embedded in certain discourses; that the meaning of words is dependent on their discursive context; that this context is not rigid but in constant, if only slow, flux; and that recent transformations of the discursive context enable the construction of Europe as a 'Network.' I have illustrated this string of arguments with a number of examples, but there is no doubt that there needs to be more research into the workings of each of the moves in the context of European integration. Among the research questions that emanate from the above line of argument are the following:

- What are the terms with which we speak about European integration? How did 'Euro-speak' evolve?
- What are the political predecisions implied in those terms?
- What are the alternative meanings of these terms in various contexts?
- How are these terms invested? Which rules do they follow? From which contexts (discursive nodal points) do they emanate?

Substantiated by such research, there are at least two further 'practical' implications, besides the enablement of the Network alternative:

First, the future development of the EU will not depend solely on member states' interests, but also on the translatability of the discourses on European governance that the relevant political actors are embedded in. It seems that the EU is a 'multiperspectival polity' not only because of its lack of a single center of decision-making, but also because it allows for conceptualizations from various angles. The issue for institutional development is not whether these conceptualizations are identical, but whether they can make sense of the Treaties and other basic texts at the core of integration (Wæver 1990).

Secondly, there might be too much focus these days on the change of institutions in the narrow, organizational sense of the term. The change of institutions, from the perspective developed above, is not interesting as a fact in and of itself, but as part of a broader set of practices in which language plays a crucial role. Institutions cannot be separated from the discourses they are embedded in, and rather than a formal change of institutions, what seems necessary is a change in the discursive construction of these institutions, of which the former

would only be one particular component. Such change is obviously problematic, for no one can control language, but everyone contributes to it in each new articulation.

The academic attempts to categorize the EU and give it a place in our order of political systems are nothing but such contributions. They are attempts to fix the meaning of European governance, so that we know what the latter 'is,' but they are not just 'objective' analyses of a pre-given political system. This does not make them worthless; to the contrary, they are as essential for our knowledge as the zoologist's classification of her 'beast' is, and they are probably more relevant to our daily lives. Eventually, a further difference to what the zoologist does with her words is that while it may be relatively easy for her to take the lead in constituting the first dominant discourse on the newly discovered animal, the many voices involved in the construction of European governance will ensure that the fixation of meaning in this case is much harder.

What is the politics involved here? On one level, the answer that this article has given is that it is a politics *of* discourse, that within the language in which we operate lies a set of choices about the political decisions of our day. Since I started out from the observation that this discursive dimension is largely neglected, it was my attempt to bring the latter to our attention by focussing on these predecisions. But are we then, according to the above line of argument, *dependent* on the discourses of the nodal points in which we are situated? Addressing these questions is a thorny undertaking, and I can only sketch my (preliminary) answer. But however thorny, they are of utmost theoretical and practical relevance. After all, the poststructuralist work in the theory of international relations, from which my argument is largely derived, set out as a critique both of individualized conceptions of political agency and of the structuralism of neorealism, which seemed to undermine any attempts to change the anarchical inter-national system (Ashley 1989: 273-4).

My sketch draws on two distinctive features of discourse as it was set out above. First, I pointed out that discourses do not 'cause' but *enable*. They do have a structural quality in that they are more than the sum of individual acts, but they are at the same time dependent on the latter. They set limits to what is possible to be articulated (Wæver 1998: 108), but do also provide agents with a multitude of identities in various subject positions, and are continuously transformed through the addition and combination of new articulations. In spite of all the epistemological and ontological differences, their working is thus nonetheless similar, for instance, to the structures in Robert Cox's work on international relations, in which structures predispose, but do not determine (Mittelman 1998: 76). There is room for creativity on behalf of political actors in the model of discursive nodal points. In Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe's conceptualization, stressing the practice of articulations, the latter are even the means to link various metanarratives in order to fix meaning (Laclau and Mouffe 1985: 113). But this creativity is not unlimited, and it does not *originate* within the individual because the latter operates from a subject position that is in itself discursively produced (Laclau and Mouffe 1985: 109, 115), and so each articulation will already flow from a discursive nodal point. Neither need articulations that lead to a reformulation be consciously conceived of as such. Their meaning cannot be fixed, and thus they might induce changes beyond original intentions – actors, as Foucault once remarked, may well know what they do, 'but what they don't know is what they do does' (quoted in Dreyfus and Rabinow 1982: 187).

Second, it needs to be recalled that, following the Derridean move, discourses are different from traditionally conceptualized structures in that they are not rigid. Their contents can thus only be approximated, and not be once and forever determined. The concept of discourse itself might help us to think in novel ways of structure and agency, since each articulation (a political *act*) is in itself constitutive part of discourse. It is essential to note the extent to which articulations combine linguistic elements in novel ways, or whether they largely reproduce the prevailing rationalities. In that respect, the social constructivisms of Alexander Wendt (1992),

or Jeffrey Checkel (1998; this volume), stressing the co-constitution of structure and agency and asking for greater attention being paid to the processes of this co-constitution, are closer to the discursive constructivism espoused in this article than is often assumed, again despite their differences. Surely, I cannot claim to have finally solved the general puzzle of transcending the duality of structure and agency. But the purpose of this article was a more limited one. It was to foster in European studies on the ground of theoretical reflections largely taken from the current debate in International Relations, the awareness of the power of language, and of the discursive situatedness of our articulations and their readings. Speaking 'Europe,' I hope to have shown, is always to participate in a struggle, as much as it practiced from within a discursive context. The politics of integration discourse should not be underestimated.

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## NOTES

- 1 For a discussion of these various kinds of power, see Hindess 1996. The latter are not necessarily mutually exclusive, but my point in this context is to introduce the notion of discursive power. A discussion of how the different 'faces of power' are related is an interesting task beyond the scope of this article.
- 2 Generally though, the use of speech act theory is more widespread in International Relations than in European Integration studies. Examples are the already quoted work by Nicholas Onuf on international norms, Friedrich Kratochwil's study on international law (Kratochwil 1989), or more recently the conceptualization of security as a speech act called 'securitization' by Ole Wæver and the so-called Copenhagen School (Wæver 1995; Wæver 1997; Buzan, Wæver and de Wilde 1998; see Huysmans 1998). Wæver and his colleagues have also been among the so far few to analyze the role of language in constructing European governance (Holm 1997; Larsen 1997a, 1997b; Wæver 1990, 1997, 1998)
- 3 This builds upon Antje Wiener's work (Wiener 1997), although she does not use speech act theory explicitly in this context.
- 4 Until today, the major British-based political science journal dealing with European integration is called 'Journal of Common Market Studies,' and the major law journal 'Common Market Law Review,' whereas the major German journal dealing exclusively with European integration simply bears the name of 'Integration.'
- 5 The pro-/anti-dichotomy may be seen as an effect of having a referendum as such. On the other hand, referenda themselves depend on the prior formulation of alternatives.
- 6 This is analyzed in greater detail in Diez 1999: ch. 1.
- 7 On the question of the problematic division between a realm of practitioners and a

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- purely 'theoretical' academic realm, see Ashley 1989: 280.
- 8 TEC: Treaty establishing the European Community, as amended by the Treaty on European Union.
- 9 A more general example is even more intuitive: The notion that we live in an age of globalization has become one of the most important justifications for economic policies, nevermind the question of whether the phenomenon itself is 'real' or not; see Hirst 1997: 206-214.
- 10 Schmitter suggests the network-like 'condominio' as one possible future development path of European governance. However, in the line of the above argument, he does not treat it as a different reading of what the EU is (Schmitter 1996: 136). For other conceptualizations of the 'network,' see Diez 1996, 1997; Jachtenfuchs et al. 1998: 421-2.
- 11 It should be recalled that in the heydays of neofunctionalism, trust in technology and science reached a peak in Western development, for instance in relation to nuclear energy.
- 12 Out of a rich literature on this issue, see Adonis 1991; Endo 1994; Hüglin 1994; Stubb 1996; van Kersbergen and Verbeek 1994; Wilke and Wallace 1990; Wind 1998.
- 13 Integral federalism experienced a small renaissance, though, in the European governance models of Green Parties in the 1980s, see Diez 1996, 1997.

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