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Give a Body to Europe: Culture and the Government of the Social

This paper deals with the intellectual efforts related to the dominant political class to make culture a new exploitable sphere for the European community of nation states and therefore make “culture” the imperative of European developmental politics. The materials I gather those strategies from are speeches and papers of the political project “Give a Soul to Europe”. This project – organized by politicians, lobbyists, artists, scientists etc. – enforces to make culture a new resource for developmental politics in order to legitimize, sustain and enhance the project “EU”, which itself is in a deep crisis. By culture, the free distribution of goods, people and work forces shall lead to a new wealth being produced and consumed. What is at the heart of that project is the formation of a sophisticated European consumer rendering the government of the social as a problem of consumption.

To analyze this problem, I investigate (a) the strategies of the organic intellectuals of the European project, (b) the economic exploitation of culture via consumption and (c) the immanent principle of government which I call “governing the bottom-up”, mixing authoritarian and colonizing practices with moral appeals and incentives.