A black and white photograph of a protest scene. Several people are running through a cloud of white tear gas. One person in the foreground is wearing a gas mask and a dark jacket, running towards the left. Another person is running towards the right. The background shows a city street with buildings.

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The Future of Europe

Frank Ruda & Agon Hamza

Today it seems to be one of the most traditional and trivial, because so often repeated and therefore even literally boring, things to say about Europe that it is in a state of crisis. Since its very conception, this seemed to be the case. And because it appears rather to be a natural condition of Europe, one may immediately wonder if a permanent and perpetual state of crisis is still and should still be called a crisis? Is a crisis still a crisis when everyone got used to it and expects nothing else, nothing less or more precisely: nothing more? One could assume that if something is permanently in ruins and people start to inhabit the ruins as if they were the only imaginable living vicinities, they simply get used to the ruins, as they do not seem to change anyhow. After a (often rather short) while what appeared to be broken at first, ultimately appears to be the only imaginable state of the world. The crisis then would not be a crisis, but the very name of the structure of Europe, of its real constitution. And if the crisis in Europe could be said to be structural in this sense, if Europe thus could be said to have a crisis-structure, as paradoxical as this may sound, the crisis would in another words just be (the new and maybe already old) normal for Europe. Europe by being in a state of permanent crisis, would not be in a crisis, it would just be Europe.

Yet, what would one do with such a diagnosis? One option is to assume that the crisis that is Europe therefore does need to reach a new level of intensity to become really (visible and felt as) what it is, to become truly apparent as crisis. If it reached the highest crisis-state yet, things and structures may change and maybe then everything will finally fall into the right place, so that a change for the better becomes possible. The crisis that is Europe must, this would be the assumption, become so radical that one cannot accept it as normality any longer. Where the structural collapse lies, there also grows the true European saving power. The true catastrophicity, to use this neologism, of the crisis would force everyone out of their European comfort zone. But this assumption, shared by some on the left as well as on the right, appears to be just another version of a metaphysical hope - a hope that things ultimately will turn to the better, a hope that crystallizes in the belief that things just need to get really bad, so that they can then finally turn to the best. That we are dealing with metaphysics here already becomes apparent in the difficulty to determine the moment, the point when and where we finally and actually reach this ultimate crisis-peak. Will everyone immediately know and be able to identify this moment? Will the phenomena themselves tell us (and will we easily be able to understand)? How will we be able to recognize it - is there method in catastrophe?

As to now, everything seems crisis-business as usual - even though there are increasing symptoms everywhere that the current state of the crisis might be a particular and special one - but this may be the trick with a crisis-structure that everything seems to be particularly bad and nothing ever is bad enough to truly change things. Maybe because things being bad never per se changes any-thing. So, does the current state of

the crisis present us just another version of the same-old? Maybe another layer of regression that does not change anything and appears as if it were the (old and new) normal? What if there is a tendency or practice of normalizing things not being bad, but even getting worse? Or does this indicate, as Walter Benjamin noticed almost a hundred years ago, that “suspicious views from afar [verdächtigen Fernblicke]” see in Europe and European culture “not much more... than its nameless endangerment?”¹ Maybe Europe is nothing more than and exists today only as the threat of its own disappearance? To answer this question it is instructive to take a look at the current crisis manifestations, at Europe’s symptoms. What are those symptoms?

One can certainly think of the ongoing turmoil produced by and around the so-called refugees, i.e. the refugee-crisis² that remains a determining political factor in the current state of affairs (it determines and overshadows inter alia the present relation of the European Union to its some of its members, members such as Greece or Malta that suddenly are forced to or voluntarily accept to take over a very particular function, it also created a particular political situation in which right-wing parties significantly gained in most member states of the EU electoral grounds, but it also generated an external determining effect concerning the (in) dependence of the EU vis-a-vis some of its closest neighbors, consider for example the EU’s relationship with Turkey and Turkey’s role in stopping the refugee-“flow”). The refugee(-symptom)-crisis is bound together with further symptoms: the perpetuated politics of austerity measures (that is certainly not applied everywhere, but where it “must” be). It is also bound together with the silent economic politics of weapon trade between influential member states of the EU and extra-European countries that limit the strategic and political options of the EU in certain and quite significant areas in advance - as if economic growth and gain cannot but produce political castration and incapacitation. And it certainly has a connection with the already mentioned rise of the far-right movements and parties throughout Europe, too, and their consequences (as in all the exit-“movements”).

It is not at all our intention to attempt here or in the following to present a complete list of symptoms of the current crisis(-structure) of the EU or Europe in general. Yet, we deem it interesting to note that these symptoms are often or mostly treated and represented as if they are problems caused by external circumstances outside of the EU, as if the crisis they seem to be indicating is a crisis that does not have any bearing on, pertinence, or significance for the very structure of the EU at all. The situation is thus peculiar: on the hand hand side it seems we have

¹ Walter Benjamin, “Drei Bücher: Viktor Schlowski - Alfred Polgar - Julien Benda”, in: *Gesammelte Schriften*, Vol. 3, 113, our translation, FR/AH.

² Krecic 2017

a structure of a collective of states that is almost indistinguishable from a crisis; on the other hand side this very collective treats the crisis as something that strangely remains external to it and does not belong to it.

Yet, it seems that there is also an increasing number of people who appear to believe that these symptoms are actually only an indication, a by-product, maybe a necessary or even disorienting one, something like a collateral effect of a more profound trembling of European political foundations. And this is certainly what up till now mainly the right was able to translate into novel reactionary political agendas. But does this impression change the situation? The answer to this question strongly depends on what we think the just mentioned foundations are. Does the EU have a solid political framework and is it just struggling in a globalized world against the sudden, irrational and groundless eruption of the blind multi-faceted forces of capital from under the veneer of conciliatory financial negotiations? Or might the EU itself just be one of these forces or even symptoms? For, what is actually this “Europe” that we were referring to in the syntagm “Europe is in a crisis”? In most discourses, from the one we encounter in the media to what nowadays is called “political” discussions, even those within the EU, the difference between Europe and the EU is silently, even though rarely explicitly present. The EU does clearly exist - even if in a rather weak state of health -, but does Europe exist? And if (not), what does it want (as Slavoj Žižek actualized the famous Freudian question already years ago)?

Is the EU, as has often been claimed, the embodiment of a general and far reaching mutation of politics into technocratic management? Is this what was and is at stake when speaking about the relation between Europe and the EU - the survival or rather the very existence of politics? Are these symptoms actually pointing and embodying not only a crisis of the EU but rather a crisis, or the potential return of (the crisis) of politics? Or are we dealing with symptoms of an a-politicization?

The many questions - and maybe there are only questions - of and in the present introduction all emphasize that with this issue of “Crisis and Critique” we want to examine if there is still something unfulfilled, a promise or potential in the very concept or idea of Europe that can be mobilized or is at least worth thinking and working through. Maybe this answer(s) will be negative. But maybe, just maybe, we are not condemned to remain within an interpretation of the current European condition that forces us to accept the given boundaries of what is referred to as European politics and whose agent is mostly identified as the European Union. What if Europe were an idea? But if so, would it be worth fighting for? What would such a struggle would look like (conceptually and politically) and who would we be fighting it? If it were an idea Europe would have to be different from the complex trade complex that facilitates capital circulation. But to say more about this different Europe one would have to say something about what might be able to generate a mobilizing power beyond and apart from what seems

politically possible and opportune in the present situation. But all this is an old hat, an old problem. Since, at least within European philosophy Europe has been the name for a “problem” for a long time. But we raise this old and often raised, almost boring question in a specific historical conjuncture in which Europe stands today. Since this today does not present the “problem” that is Europe only with internal and local, structural and localizable problems. So, the problematic nature of Europe does not spring from internal European problems, referred or alluded to before. Rather - and maybe this might also not be per se a novelty - the European problems are today clearly problems of and on a global scale. Foreign powers are, even if hostile to one another, strangely united in their opposition and enmity toward Europe - a fact that is also often immanently represented in their repeated (think of Bannon and others) support of far-right forces in Europe, supporting the dissolution of the European Union. If a situation seems to complex or multi-layered, to convoluted or disorienting, it helps to introduce clear lines of demarcation and clear-cut distinctions. The task is sometimes not to make things more complex, but to simplify.

The present issue starts from such a simplifying assumption – an assumption that must be verified and can certainly also be falsified. This assumption is that all of the current (crisis-)symptoms are(in) direct effects and results of the crisis and lack of any international(ist) emancipatory vision linked to the signifier “Europe”; to the impotence, if one wishes, of the Left in Europe. How to combat this crisis under the present conditions and under the conditions in Europe? The present issue of “Crisis and Critique” will certainly contribute to answering this question.

Dundee/Prishtina, December 2019

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Volume 7 /
Issue 1

Seven Propositions Concerning Internationalism

Judith Balso

Abstract: This article aims to examine the possible current content of an internationalist thought and practice within a present belonging to Europe and to a world “globalized” by capitalism. The assumptions that led to the founding of the “Internationals” and their history will be examined from the perspective of this inquiry. Internationalist action, both past and present, outside these organizations will be included in the review. It is suggested that approaches that seek to formulate and establish the political principles that may be of value today for any situation, regardless of the country concerned, be identified and designated as “transnational.”

Keywords: Internationals – Laws of people’s lives – Globality – Workers – Migrants – Transnational –École des Actes

I am going to attempt to speak under the guiding principle that a present should be thought about and built right here, in Europe as it is.

Proposition 1

Capitalist organization today is global. This situation is not all that old: everyone agrees that the turning point of this generalized expansion occurred in the 1980s. There are some crucial reasons for this, completely unrelated to the strictly economic sphere and on which, by contrast, there is no consensus: the political failure of the Cultural Revolution in China paving the way for the full capitalist development of that country, the collapse of the socialist states in Europe, the failure of the innovative political efforts by young people in the 1960s and 1970s – such are the situations that gave it free rein.

Despite the recentness of this expansion, the fact that capitalism is global is not in itself something new. As far back as the mid-19th century Marx had analyzed and described this situation as being an intrinsic part of it. He had also identified its subjective consequences: the standardization of ways of life, the predominance of private interests and selfish calculation in every sphere of existence, the weakening of national differences, the so-called “developed” countries’ colonial plundering of the rest of the world, and so on. We are still dealing with all the same things.

The greater this expansion across the world, the more powerless it is to create a world that can accommodate all people’s lives. Indeed, it divides them, through wars, the building of walls and fences, and statutory and police operations prohibiting people from moving freely, and, worse still, from remaining where they are.

Chamoiseau is right to note that “globalization” cannot be equated with, nor does it lead to, globality¹: it is even the opposite, if by globality is meant a world truly set up for those who live in it.

.....
¹ Patrick Chamoiseau, *Migrant Brothers*, tr. Matthew Amos and Fredrik Rönnbäch, New Haven: Yale University Press, 2018.

Proposition 2

There are an infinite variety of international organizations in the service of global capitalism: whether it is in the economic, financial, military, institutional, or state sphere, the world is literally teeming with inter- and supranational organizations. The ones that give today's Europe its institutional consistency are only a small portion of them.

International organizations whose purpose is to bring together and defend a particular population group also exist, but there are an infinitely smaller number of them, perhaps even a smaller number today than of organizations dedicated to protecting the endangered species of animals and plants that inhabit the earth, the air, and the sea.

This suggests that capitalism has an extraordinary need to be organized, beyond the constraints of national spaces and contrary to what the ideologues of neo-liberalism say about the natural development of the international market. This kind of "nature" needs to be helped along! Meanwhile, in the current circumstances, the nations of the great powers rely on government figures who try to impose limits, prerogatives, and areas of intervention that will impede this or that aspect of the global expansion. With a growing risk of opposition and tension that could lead from already existing local conflicts to a war that would itself be rapidly globalized.

Proposition 3

Marx's idea of an internationalism of workers probably developed as an echo or reflection of the international nature of capital. I think that is what can be read in these lines from the *Communist Manifesto*:

"National differences and antagonism between peoples are daily more and more vanishing, owing to the development of the bourgeoisie, to freedom of commerce, to the world market, to uniformity in the mode of production and in the conditions of life corresponding thereto. The supremacy of the proletariat will cause them to vanish still faster. United action, of the leading civilized countries at least, is one of the first conditions for the emancipation of the proletariat".²

If capital has no country, then workers, even more so, cannot have one: *"The Communists are further reproached with desiring to abolish countries and nationality. The workers have no country. We cannot take from them what they have not got."*³

However, to be well-founded, this symmetry also requires a very strong asymmetry: the hypothesis that the proletariat, unlike all the other previous classes, will only be able to rule the world in its turn if it works

2 Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *The Communist Manifesto*, Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2005, p. 67.

3 *ibid*, p. 66.

toward ending all domination and oppression. Putting an end to its own situation, "freeing itself from its chains," requires it to demonstrate an ability to free humanity as a whole. This hypothesis is that of an absolute singularity of the proletariat as a political subject.

We think we can rightfully object that that ability was not demonstrated, far from it, by the regimes that espoused Marxism and the dictatorship of the proletariat. But we need to take a closer look at this, because the proof can be reversed: indeed, having failed to work toward the liberation of humanity as a whole, the workers have nowhere freed themselves from their chains, and particularly not from those of the factory. If the question addressed to the Chinese socialist state by the working-class rebels, during what was rightly called the Great *Proletarian* Cultural Revolution, concerned how the socialist factory differed from the capitalist factory, it is precisely because that was the red-hot political core of that revolution: the real test of the egalitarian (or not) organization of life, of the reduction (or not) of the main differences on which inequality had been based from time immemorial (cities/countryside; men/women; manual /intellectual labor).

It is no coincidence that, from the new Chinese factory-cities, the strongest, truest voices are now being heard of workers who, through the unprecedented means of their poetry, are raising the question again at the very point in politics where it had foundered: what should be done about the factory if the factory is a place incompatible with human life, a place where life is denied and withers away, leading young people to commit suicide rather than suffer such annihilation?

I would like to draw attention to one poem among hundreds of others that insistently raise this question as a matter of absolute urgency, that is, one that cannot be put off till later because we don't put off living to later, we can't; living is all we have, and it is soon gone:

September 17, 2013⁴

*I speak of blood, because I can't help it
I'd love to talk about flowers in the breeze and the moon in the snow
I'd love to talk about imperial history, about poems in wine
But this reality only lets me speak of blood
blood from a rented room the size of a matchbox
narrow, cramped, with no sight of the sun all year
extruding working guys and girls
stray women in long-distance marriages
Sichuan chaps selling mala tang
old ladies from Henan manning stands
and me with eyes open all night to write a poem*

4 Xu Lizhi, "I Speak of Blood," tr. Lucas Klein, in *China Labor Bulletin*, <https://clb.org.hk/en/content/i-speak-blood-poetry-foxconn-worker-xu-lizhi>

after running about all day to make a living
I tell you about these people, about us
ants struggling through the swamp of life
drops of blood on the way to work
blood chased by cops or smashed by the machine
to speak of blood, of the sky crumbling
I speak of blood, my mouth all crimson

Proposition 4

“Proletarian” means someone who has no place in their own country, who is counted only as a force capable of work. That is what not just this poem but many other poems written by young Chinese workers also say. In France, other workers, from Africa, call themselves “*world workers*.”

That is why “proletarians” or “nomadic proletarians,” as Alain Badiou suggests, remains a possible name for all those whom the European countries, to varying degrees, reject, but also take in, under the inappropriate name of “refugees” or “migrants.” There are voices among the people concerned that say clearly and distinctly that such names are inappropriate and are even seriously obscene and offensive. There is, for example, this very young man from Guinea who gives us a lesson on vocabulary and firmness.⁵

He begins by wondering why they use that name rather than using the names that already exist. Why not call people simply by the name of their country? “[In our country, in Guinea,] *people call him by the name of his country. They don’t say he is an ‘expatriate.’ They don’t say he is a ‘migrant.’ They don’t say he is a ‘refugee.’ Even if you are a political refugee, because many years ago, there were wars in the subregion of West Africa. All the people from those countries sought refuge in Guinea, but they were not called ‘refugees.’ [...] People say: ‘They’re Leoneans’ or ‘They’re Liberians,’ quite simply.*” The word “foreigner” could also be used, he says, if need be. It is a neutral word, an objective word, that indicates that the person is no longer in their homeland, in their country of birth. It is also a word that defines a legal status, the one that distinguishes between “nationals” and “foreigners.”

He then points out that “migrant,” on the contrary, is a word for animals, which comes from what has been observed about them, namely, their seasonal migrations. And indeed, there is no connection between what controls animals’ movements and the arrival of men, women, and children who are seeking a place on earth where they can begin to build a better life. That is why that name – which, the same young man remarks, has never been said to a White person, which is reserved for “*Black people who leave Africa to go to Europe*” – is inappropriate for human beings and actually places them outside the human world.

.....
⁵ Cited in Badiou, Alain, *Méfiez-vous des blancs, habitants du rivage*, Paris: Fayard, 2018.

Various segments of humanity leave the place on earth where they were born and become part of our existence, enlarging it. This constitutes our world, too, and we need to be able to approach it as the possibility of a new world rather than as a threat. In France, during the years 1997-2007, two slogans had emerged in the demonstrations of the Rassemblement des Collectifs des ouvriers sans papiers des foyers [Rally of the Collectives of Undocumented Workers of the Hostels] and the Organisation politique: “A country is everyone who lives there” and “We’re here, we’re from here, we’re not going anywhere.” They were clearly not the slogans of migratory birds!

That is why I think that, especially in Europe, even before forging country-to-country links, the first internationalist task for our present is to connect with the different groups of people who come to each of our countries, to learn from them, and to share with them the concern as to how life together could best be organized, by counting them and including them fully. We must do this knowing that today, as in the 1970s, if we want to get to know people, we have to accept to distance ourselves from the experts of all kinds who are supposed to tell us who we are, what we think and want. The only way to make this a reality is to meet the people themselves, to talk with them about how they think about their own situations, and to work together to develop the potential principles of a new life.

As a Malian worker in Paris put it, the contemporary form of the alliance between intellectuals and workers is the one that unites:

“*someone who has traveled in a hundred countries*” with “*someone who has read all the books.*”⁶

Proposition 5

Anyone who speaks with the men and women who have come to Europe from Asia or Africa quickly discovers not just the heroic nature of the trajectories of most of these lives but also that leaving always begins with the refusal of an unacceptable situation. Such a refusal may have to do with the fact that continuing to farm the land, the way one’s parents did, has become more difficult because the climate is changing, because drought dramatically exacerbates the lack of water, but especially because it does not in itself constitute learning a trade or the promise of education or training, only the repetition of the harsh existing world. And what young person would not aspire to make a different life for themselves, even at the cost of facing great hardships? There may also be the desire to break free of stifling or appalling traditions: marriages arranged against the will of the young man or woman; children wrongfully deprived of the inheritance of their father when he dies and with no

.....
⁶ Mahamadou Tounkara, 2012, cited in *Déclaration du Collectif Ouvriers du monde/Architectes de paix*.

recourse in the courts of the country; family pressure to continue the profession of fetishist or female genital exciser. There are also situations in which war leaves such devastation in its wake that civil society is impossible, weapons and bandits are the only law, and, as a result, the physical and moral integrity of an individual may be threatened. We often imagine that it is the lack of work in a country that leads a young person to leave it, but we may discover that, even more than the lack of work, it is the conditions of such work that may be experienced as unacceptable.

I have in mind the remarkable story told by a man who came from Mauritania, where he used to work as a woodworker on construction sites.⁷ He had witnessed a terrible accident during which the concrete formwork collapsed, killing three people and injuring seven, whom no one bothered to take to the hospital, and then whom no one at the hospital would bother to treat until the families arrived to pay. There are deaths on construction sites all the time, he added, and the bosses couldn't care less and do nothing to help the people, to take them to the hospital if they are injured. This man decided that it was impossible for him to go on working under such conditions, and he got a job in a carpentry workshop where he learned the trade of cabinetmaker and made beautiful furniture. But he had so few orders that he only earned 20 or 50 cents a day. It was impossible to feed his family and raise his children with that. That is why he left, and here, even earning (as undeclared work) 20 or 30 euros a day, he manages to save and send something to his family.

I told this story in detail because I think it shows us that a second internationalist task today should be to work to identify the problems that everywhere ruin people's chance for a decent life and peace. In other words, to seriously examine the problems facing humanity, wherever these problems arise, and assuming that the answers to them are probably essentially the same everywhere.

Proposition 6

Taking this approach, the declarations below, drafted over the course of a long period of work by assemblies in the École des Actes⁸ in

.....
⁷ Assembly of the École des Actes, October 12, 2018 (see note 8).

⁸The École des Actes was created in Aubervilliers on the initiative of Marie-José Malis, the Director of the Théâtre de la Commune. This school is open to everyone without distinction of age or nationality or administrative status. We work on French with the people who arrive, and we hold assemblies in the belief that we have a vital need today for new hypotheses and ideas about a situation shared by all the countries in the world: the movement of people who have no choice or desire other than to move in order to live. We all need collective life to be organized in a fairer and better way for the greatest number of people. We do not start from the assumption that people are here to help others. We propose to share the situation created by the arrival of people who now live among us. We start from trust in an ability that people themselves have, and our hypotheses and proposals develop from people's thinking about their own lives. Many workshops have been created within the School – on theater, architecture, work, the problem of love – as well as an assembly of women and one of children. The School is constantly evolving.

Aubervilliers, state the absolute need for “rights,” which are completely non-existent today but which clearly should exist and have value everywhere, whatever the country. These declarations are part of a much longer document written over the years 2017 and 2018 and made public in May 2018 under the title *Premier Manifeste* (First Manifesto):

“We all need a right of the land where we live, a little humanity in the place on earth where we are.”

That is why we are writing this manifesto, to make suggestions that are good for everyone, for the collective organization of everyone's life:

“Everyone needs a right to be here, to be able lay their head down somewhere.”

“Everyone needs a right of fraternity because fraternity binds humans together and fraternity is about what was great and good about France.”

“Everyone needs a right to work because no one likes to live with assistance. And work is the basis of life: it provides men and women with food, clothing, shelter, and medical care. Giving someone something to do is what can be called a job. It means: “you are one of us, you count.”

“Everyone needs a right to shelter in any way possible, by building their own home, by occupying an uninhabited house, because being homeless is not normal, is not acceptable.”

“Everyone needs a right to move freely, because the world doesn't belong to anyone, and goods arrive on big ships now, while humans are deprived of the freedom of movement and cross the water on dinghies, the desert like packages, and the snow-covered mountains at the risk of their lives.”

“Everyone needs a right to have people know who they are: because to know someone is to be able to know what is good about them; anyone who arrives somewhere should be able to say that they are there, and what their background is and their plans are.”⁹

These are the kinds of statements that I feel should be worked on everywhere, and very urgently, today. It will only be possible to do so, however, if what we in the École des Actes have identified as “*laws of people's lives*” are taken as a basis.

These laws pre-exist the laws of states. They have the power of the real, which is why police forces around the world are powerless against them. It is also because the laws of states are now as remote as can be from these laws of people's lives that there is widespread persecution of all kinds, which take a heavy toll on people, especially those who

⁹ École des Actes, in *Premier Manifeste*, May 2018: publication of the École des Actes

continue to die on the Mediterranean, in the desert, or in Libya because the European countries won't allow them to use the official avenues to which the issuing of visas previously led.

Proposition 7

When we talk about “internationalism” we inevitably think about the “Internationals” that represented that category and project. When Engels and Marx wrote *The Manifesto of the Communist Party*, they did not have any particular national attribution of that “party” in mind. They sought to define the specificity of what it would be more accurate to call the “party of the communists” inside the then-existing workers movement. In every situation, working in the overall interests of the proletariat was its basic task. Even before the foundation of the First International, also known as the International Workingmen’s Association (IWA), in London in 1864, the Communist League founded by Marx and Engels in 1847 had brought together intellectuals and workers from several European countries. Even though it was closely monitored and repressed, that International soon had sections in Switzerland, Belgium, France, Germany, and later in Italy, Spain, the Netherlands, Austria, and the United States. What destroyed its existence was the bloody crushing of the Paris Commune in 1871 and the endless disputes over the assessment of the disaster between supporters of Marx (who argued that the Commune had been unable to complete the destruction of the bourgeois state apparatus) and supporters (in the majority) of anarchism according to Bakunin (who argued that only a revolutionary global strike would be able to destroy state power). This organization self-dissolved in 1876, while the anarchist, splinterist current, continued to maintain its existence for a while on the basis of the tactic of “propaganda by the deed” inspired by the practice of political assassinations carried out by the Russian nihilists.

What it can be given credit for are its positions in favor of the reduction of working time and for the 8-hour workday, against child labor, and for the establishment of universal suffrage.

A Second International was re-established in 1889 on the initiative of Engels and some European socialist and workers’ parties. About twenty countries were represented in it. It quickly split between a current that was faithful to the First International’s injunction according to which “workers’ emancipation is the task of workers themselves” and “reformist” currents according to which such emancipation could only be achieved gradually and through participation in the parliamentary system.

The outbreak of World War I sounded the death knell for this organization since all its sections (with the exception of the Russians and Serbians), after pacifist campaigns against war in general, went along with their governments when they entered the war, voting in favor of war credits and calling the conflict a “war of aggression” against their

respective countries. At conferences in Zimmerwald in 1915 and Kienthal in 1916, Lenin denounced the “social-chauvinism” of this betrayal and called for pursuing a policy that rejected any subjective enlistment in the war, which he in turn called a war between imperialisms for dividing up the world. This contributed to the victory of the October 17 Revolution.

Marx, who had repeatedly shown how the division among workers is re-established again and again on account of the competition that capitalism imposes on them, had anticipated that it would not be very easy at the country level, either, to unite the workers of the world: “*Since the proletariat must first of all acquire political supremacy, must rise to be the leading class of the nation, must constitute itself the nation, it is so far, itself national, though not in the bourgeois sense of the word.*”¹⁰ The experience of World War I and many other experiences since then, including the German workers’ overwhelming support for Nazism, have demonstrated the potential power of “the Nation.”

Following the victory of the revolutionaries in Russia in October 1917, the Bolsheviks called for the creation in 1919 of a new and Third International that would include, among others, the Spartacists regrouped around Rosa Luxembourg and Karl Liebknecht, who had refused to comply with their party’s (the SPD) support for the war. Lenin had high hopes for a potential revolution in Germany, convinced as he was that it would be very difficult to maintain a communist government in Russia if the proletariat of other European countries did not take power in their turn. The terrible defeat of the Spartacists was a very serious setback in that respect. The Third International took the name of “Communist International,” or “Comintern,” an abbreviation of its name in Russian. Under Stalin’s leadership, this organization set up active, often clandestine, sections in almost every country in the world. Its “agents” brought with them everywhere a political line developed within the Communist Party of the USSR and often cut off from the reality of the countries involved. One of the most striking cases is that of China, where the Comintern representatives supported a policy of insurrection in the cities, leading to repeated defeats and massacres, whereas, contrary to that policy, Mao Zedong would construct and develop an approach of patient encircling of the cities by the countryside and the creation of a Red Army capable of carrying out this long war, with the success we are all aware of.

I am certainly not saying that the history of these Internationals was insignificant. But Brecht, in these words reported by Walter Benjamin, pointed out, not without humor, their major defect:

23 July. Yesterday a visit from Karin Michaelis, who has just returned from a trip to Russia and is full of enthusiasm. Brecht remembers

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¹⁰ *The Communist Manifesto*, p. 67.

being shown around by Sergei Tretiakov, who gave him a tour of Moscow and was proud of everything his visitor saw, no matter what. "That's not a bad thing," Brecht said. "It shows that what he showed me belongs to him. No one is proud of what belongs to someone else." After a while, he added: "But in the end, I did become a bit tired of it all. I couldn't admire everything, nor did I want to. After all, they are his soldiers and his trucks. Unfortunately, they are not mine."¹¹

I mention these facts briefly to show that the none of these organizations of proletarian internationalism had a compelling record. The first was powerless to explain the bloody defeat of the Communards. The second lapsed into chauvinism in the face of a war that would lead to the killing of tens of millions of soldiers and civilians. The third dogmatically propagated the repetition of the insurrectional figure as the absolute model for the action of the other communist parties.

So I don't think the contemporary keys to an internationalism are to be found in the Internationals but rather in the political episodes in which real international ties existed. I am thinking of at least two sequences: the insurgent Parisian workers' relationship to Poland in 1848 and, of course, the International Brigades in the Spanish Civil War, to which I will add a contemporary example.

May 15, 1848¹² is a little-known day, even though what happened on it is crucial for understanding the revolution's bloody outcome in June. On that day, a massive workers and popular demonstration took place to demand that the National Assembly offer French assistance to the Polish Republicans, to help them achieve victory. A large number of workers barged into the Assembly's proceedings to demand that this issue be discussed immediately and that the decision be made by a public vote by acclamation. This present segment of the people represented a whole new political capacity, which forced a separation between electoral representation and presentation of a demand. This capacity came not out of nowhere but from a long development of the concepts in the clubs that had been organized between 1830 and 1848. Its sudden emergence literally petrified national representation because it went beyond parties and political affiliations. Its demand gave a precise content to "Republic" in both the national context and the international context of assistance to Poland. From then on, there was a clear division with respect to the true political contents of the category of "Republic." This is what was so remarkably perceived by Aloysius Huber, who instigated the action and who, when he saw the Assembly engaging in all sorts of dilatory speeches so as to refuse to decide, declared "The Assembly

¹¹ "Notes from Svendborg, Summer 1934," in *Walter Benjamin: Selected Writings. Vol. 2, Part 2: 1931-1934*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2005, p.785.

¹² See Chapters X and XI in Louis Ménéard's *Prologue d'une révolution*, Paris: La Fabrique, 2007.

is dissolved." This was also something for which the "Republicans" would not forgive the insurgent workers. The dominant historical interpretation of 1848 holds that after the insurrection, worker action was concerned with the social field, with labor demands. But the day of May 15 reveals a different possible interpretative framework: the expression of a republican political capacity in the sphere of internationalism and the division of the category "republic" by an international issue that was crucial for the freedom of peoples, which the republican government tried to eliminate by the June massacres. From then on, "Republic" became the name of an inegalitarian and repressive state, which, as is known, the workers would not rise up to defend during Louis-Napoleon Bonaparte's coup d'état.

The episode of the International Brigades is far better known, but it has not been sufficiently emphasized that it concerned a movement that was based on ordinary workers, intellectuals, and artists, whose decision to go to Spain and fight alongside the Republican combatants was often a decision people made alone, or at least as individuals, and at a distance from the governments of their countries, most of which were opposed to any intervention in that war. Sometimes entering Spain had to be done clandestinely, and leaving Spain after the defeat was just as difficult for those who had survived. What seems essential to me is that, here, too, it is above all people, activists but also isolated individuals, who courageously bore the consequences of the inertia that surrounded and criminally weakened Spain when it was confronted with the powers of fascism.

A third situation, about which I don't have sufficient knowledge, deserves to be examined, it seems to me, in this connection: the Kurdish district of Kobanî in Syrian territory draws its strength, despite its formidable isolation, from the fact that it has rejected the Kurdish national framework as the framework for its politics of liberation. What is proposed is proposed as well to all the national and religious actors in the region.

What conclusion can be drawn for today from these three episodes? I note, first of all, that internationalists are still often ordinary people – fishermen, mountain guides, or inhabitants of border areas – who take in people in danger when they arrive where these other people live. People who are themselves very poor, such as the people of Greece, Tunisia, and Jordan, are the most welcoming. At times, activists are also involved, such as the ones who supply boats to mitigate the murderous indifference of governments, or such as that female captain who defied the Italian state by unloading without authorization people picked up at sea. I also conclude that there is no Republic or true democracy in any states that, by the most devious administrative, juridical, and legal means (such as the Dublin agreement), shirk their duty to make room for the people who come to Europe wanting to build a better life there and contribute to the development of the country in which they can live.

In conclusion, I think that deploying a “transnational” political strategy more accurately identifies both what has already been done and the additional tasks, for it is less a question of establishing ties between people of different nations than of ensuring that, from country to country, in Europe and around the world, similar convictions and new principles circulate and gain influence, demonstrating that the keys to a just politics are not nationality and especially not national identity.

Judith Balso, September 2019
English translation by Susan Spitzer

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Le Dernier Metro. Europe on the Edge of the Abyss

Riccardo Bellofiore &
Francesco Garibaldo

Abstract: The article develops a Marxian perspective, stressing class relations, especially within production, and a Financial-Keynesian one, stressing the crucial role of finance. Analysing the financial flows and understanding how they are originated, financing production, and the different components of effective demand is more and more necessary. The critical point is to reverse the causal chain of the dominant approaches. In our analysis, the two critical facts are the 'making' of a transnational European integrated industrial system, due to the freeing of the movements of capital within the European Common Market, and the North-Atlantic integration of the financial markets. The idea that the crisis in Europe originated from an account imbalances crisis mainly due to the existence of the Euro is wrong. The crisis was triggered from the contradictions of the export-led model of European growth, which made the area dependent from foreign commodity demand, and the financial circulatory system between Europe and the United States, which, as Tooze affirms, is quite independent of the trade connections between the two. The crisis was due to the collapse of the funding of the circulatory system, while the production system was in a situation of structural overcapacity because of the export-led model. The artificial and unnecessary restrictions on monetary fiscal policies asked by Germany aggravated the crisis. In this perspective, what is needed is not exiting the Euro or just pushing for expansionary policies. The problem is a general reform of the macroeconomic governance. What is needed is a European-wide structural reform based on a targeted program of expenditure, what Minsky called the "socialization of investment", managed by an entrepreneurial State planning active deficits.

Key words: financial and industrial integration, real subsumption of labour to finance, common currency vs a single currency, active deficits, socialization of investment

Earlier this year we have published, expanding on a paper co-written with Mariana Mortágua on the crisis in the eurozone and published in 2014, a book on Europe: *Euro al capolinea? La vera natura della crisi europea*. [Euro at the end of the line? The true nature of the European crisis]. Here we want to stress a few key arguments of our discourse.¹

Our starting points are two. On the one side, we witness the victory of capitalism in the late 1980s, culminating with the fall of the Berlin Wall and the crisis of the so-called "actually existing socialism" in Eastern Europe and Russia. People however don't realise very often that the Berlin Wall collapse also announces the exhaustion of the *raison d'être* of European Social Democracy to represent an alternative "reformist"

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¹ Bellofiore, Garibaldo, Mortagua 2015 and 2016; Bellofiore and Garibaldo 2019.

version of capitalism. Starting from the 1980s in Europe, a critique of capitalism and proposals for its overcoming have no significant political representation.

On the other side, we recognise the contemporary new successful capitalist phase which started at the beginning of the 1980s with the rise of so-called Neoliberalism. In our conceptual framework, Neoliberalism is a misnomer. Neoliberalism has not much to do with Monetarism or the return to free markets: quite the opposite. Analogously, the view in terms of a renewed “financialisation” is reductive. What materialised along the 1980s was what Minsky labelled as a money manager capitalism², which may be more precisely defined a real subsumption of labour to financial capital³. More and more, the most secure way to push effective demand up was boosting the expenditure coming from indebted consumers, thanks to the inflation of capital assets (including housing). The value of savings escalated, the share of current saving in income went down. Household debt was related to the dominance of (pension, investment, hedge) funds, which were on the rise since mid 1960s, and which exploded after 1980. The capital market inflation allowing the growing household indebtedness was driven by a very activist economic policy, especially a new kind of monetary policy. It is a privatised financial Keynesianism.

**The transnationalisation of production:
European value-chains**

It is in this historical context that the ‘making’ of what will become the European Union and then the single currency must be understood. We have also to consider the fact that in Neoliberalism the global players in manufacturing and services run a destructive competition against each other, boosting an excess of supply through worldwide investment. The production value chains are neither purely global or just inter-national, they are trans-national, blurring boundaries across nations. In the industrial networks there may be a stratification of power according to the relative powers of the single components of the chain.

The first move on the path to the transnationalisation of the European industrial landscape was the freeing of the movements of capital within the European Common Market⁴. It was established as one of the fundamental rights. Full freedom of capital movements allowing industrial and financial investments within the union without constraints (except for the limits posited to monopolistic practices) had originally to be sanctioned by the Maastricht Treaty in 1992, but it was in fact anticipated to 1990, July 1st.

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2 Minsky, 2008 a and b

3 Bellofiore 2013a, Crouch 2011

4 Bellofiore, Garibaldi 2011, also for what follows.

We can discern here the opportunity, which was fully exploited, to build an integrated European industrial system, mainly through acquisitions and company mergers, but also through greenfield investments. The most dynamic and competitive companies in a specific sector – called Original Equipment Manufacturers (OEMs) – occupy the new European space by erecting around them integrated systems of suppliers. The OEMs’ network of suppliers is organised on many levels, depending on the complexity of their product. These integrated manufacturing systems evolve progressively incorporating an area of services and giving rise to mixed systems, now known as “industrial ecosystems”. The new configuration is not only structured hierarchically but entrenches important horizontal relationships.

This can be recognised as a process of strong ‘centralisation without concentration’ of the industrial structure⁵. As a consequence, in every industrial sector and also in the services sector, a limited number of transnational companies control the market. The integrated industrial structure allows the OEMs to determine dimensions, structures and regulatory framework for each of the companies that are hierarchically ordered. The horizontal relationships are complex and cannot be captured in a too simple hierarchical logic. The integrated industrial structure is rooted in the differences in pay levels, in the legislative and trade union protections within the workplace, in the different taxation systems and infrastructures in Europe.

On some of these differences – infrastructures being one of the most relevant examples – the thrust dominating the EU is a tendency towards homogenization at the most advanced level possible. If we look instead at the work dimension, the variables affecting it on the labour market and in the production process are considered all elements which is decisive to attack so that production costs are compressed and profitability is raised. The EU territory is itself a strategic resource: OEM can, indeed, organise their networks taking advantage of all kind of non-uniformity of the legal, fiscal, social obligations, as well as of the accessibility of skills and competences, as a way to fine-tune their own internal division of labour.

The result of the fact that the industrial structure is not evenly distributed in the various territories of the European Union is a fragmentation of the world of work along geographical lines as well as a stratification of the competitive positioning of companies. There are areas in which the presence of leading companies and specialised suppliers with high levels of innovation is substantial, but there are also regions in which the industrial structure is trapped in activities characterised by low added value production, with little or no technological innovation. Over time these uneven realities tend to

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5 Bellofiore 2013a, among the many possible references.

polarise, giving origin to processes of industrial degradation in less specialised or marginal areas⁶. The key role here is that of Germany, which acts as the centre for entire significant value-chain manufacturing processes disseminated in European Union space.

It is easy therefore to understand how in the area new transnational powers emerged. If their “core” is in the industrial structure, they also have gained significant social influence matched with heavy political weight: a reality which could not but distort democratic life, in the absence of a central political government of the Union. The parallel “deconstruction” of the working class and the rise of the new transnational powers led to a weakening of the Trade Unions, since they are less and less effective in bargaining working conditions within national boundaries and in companies whose decisions are taken at an upper level⁷.

The growth model of the European industrial system has been defined since the elaboration of the White Paper of Delors on growth, competitiveness and unemployment, which was instrumental in the path to the Maastricht Treaty. In short, the main idea is that the only true competitive chance for the EU economy was moving ‘upstream’ in the value chain, and at the same time achieving a high factor mobility and a high flexibility in combining factors of production, according to the specific necessities of each industry and, more and more, of the individual firm⁸.

This kind of industrial structure is constructed around a primary foundation given by an advanced sector that, both technologically and organisationally, is positioned at the top of the value chain and achieves a strong competitive position allowing to conquer world markets according to an export-led scheme. To strengthen the potential to export, and thereby to support the model, the European OEMs started to expand their industrial capacity on a global scale, mainly in Asia. Around this core we find traditional sectors less exposed to international competition or entirely sheltered from it. The efficiency and profitability of the advanced sector give support to the lower productivity and profitability of the sector more focused on the domestic market. The first sector has a lower occupational intensity offset by the higher intensity of the second.

In this scheme, domestic consumption must always be disconnected from the growth of efficiency and productivity to feed the growth path. During negative conjunctural phases, a policy which

6 Simonazzi, Ginzburg, Nocella, 2013.

7 Garibaldo, Baglioni, et al. (eds.), 2012

8 Garibaldo, 2014

could be used is what in the Anglo-Saxon world is called *pump priming*, that is stimulate the economy through an expansive fiscal policy or a monetary policy aiming to interest rate reduction. The development of this structure, so this approach says, generates the resources needed to feed domestic consumption and all kind of welfare costs.

Let us add, against too simplistic arguments on the left, that it is not true that the competitive advantage within the Eurozone depends mainly from the change in relative prices, in its turn dominated by the rise of labour unit costs at the periphery.⁹ It is also only a partial truth that Germany owes its dominance to wage deflation: and may be that is not the most important part of the truth. German competitiveness is due to the quality of the output in which it is specialised (machines, high quality manufacturing, and so on). It is a “monopoly capital” dynamics which makes Germany partially independent from the dynamics of relative prices and exchange ratios. The point is rather, as we have shown, that in the last 20 years or more Germany has been revolutionised by a profound restructuring of production and a reorganisation of the labour process, such that what was once its compact internal matrix of production has been extended in a transnational value change going East. Germany imports more from Eastern countries and less from Southern Europe, though Italy still maintains a rich part of the supply chain¹⁰.

The process of industrial integration we have described would not have been possible to be constructed without the financial integration which has been pursued since the early 1990s through the creation of a “single market” also for capital and financial services. The financial flows have direct effects on the various sectors, following the structure of the various value chains. Here we see also why the active monetary policies favouring a capital market inflation constitute in fact a real subsumption of labour to finance. The subaltern inclusion of households within financial capital through financial markets and banking debt determines both an increase in the labour supplied, potentially pushing production up, and an increase in effective demand, actualising that rise in production. The “subsumption” is real, and not just formal, because it affects both circulation and production.

This line of industrial development, in a framework of unleashed competition, has led in the first place to the growth of large pockets of installed industrial capacity whose utilisation rate is below the minimum

9 As Ginzburg, Simonazzi, Nocella, argue in their 2013 *Cambridge Journal of Economics* article, the aggregate measures about labour unit costs are very ambiguous, and they depend on the price index (and hence on the commodity basket) which is chosen as a reference. In particular, the results about the Italian case may change in a substantial manner.

10 In Italy the ‘district’ model went into crisis, though there was a rising ‘fourth capitalism’ of pocket multinationals. What is sure is that both are thriving at the margins, without being able to become a self-propelled’ system (this was Minsky’s criticism of Piore and Sabel already in the 1980s). Low productivity in Italy substantially depends from 1990s policies of privatisation and casualization of labour, whatever the government. Italy was the vanguard of this process in Europe.

profitability standards. The most macroscopic case is that of the automotive sector. From a macroeconomic point of view, this translated into recurring risks of overproduction crises. Secondly, the system is exposed to international market cycles for extremely significant segments: something which in unfavourable economic times usually had negative repercussions, but that of course could not but produce dramatic magnified destructive outcomes in a global crisis such as that started in 2007 and exploded in 2008.

Thirdly, from an analytical point of view, a transnational structure that is so densely intertwined cannot be understood with old interpretative schemes, such as the balance of payments and current account imbalances analysis. First of all, the new value chains are characterised by a continuous “coming and going” of product and service flows that cross national borders. On the other hand, the same industrial structure originates and changes according to financial investments that originate in a country but come about in one or more other countries.

The Economic Consequences of Brexit

A good case in point as to the necessity of a European horizon to reach the right dimension for alternative policies is the UK decision to leave the European Union. The government document¹¹, released on the 2nd of August, in case of no-deal – the so-called operation Yellowhammer – describes a worst-case scenario that is the plan leaked to the *Sunday Times*, qualified at that time as the base case scenario. According to the document, there will be serious problems for months because of the EU mandatory controls on UK goods starting from Day 1 of the no deal leave, and this will affect all kind of supply from food to medicine. However, it seems to us that the key points are not the transitory problems due to the custom barriers, but the reliance of essential parts of the UK and Irish industrial and agri-food on the EU supply chains of products, parts and services. These are not transitory problems but structural ones.

To understand the rigidity that the United Kingdom must face, and which renders an adjustment problematic, consider that the UK has real 'holes' in its national supply chain. This happens in very different sectors, such as agri-food and the automotive industry.

The *Guardian* refers to the situation of the bread supply to the Republic of Ireland. One of the consequences of the no-deal Brexit is to push up the price of bread in Ireland. Probably, the investment to build some bulk commercial mills is affordable. It is not easy to imagine a similar thing in the case of the automobile industry. A large automotive company materialises in a chain organized hierarchically

11https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/831199/20190802_Latest_Yellowhammer_Planning_assumptions_CDL.pdf

in hundreds of first-level plants, which supply the final assemblers with the fundamental components, and thousands of second-level production plants, which feed the first-level production. To get an idea of the complexity of such a production system, think of the fact that in a car, beyond the structural components, there are 20,000 detail parts with about 1000 key components and several thousand product combinations to manage.

Take the weight of imported parts that are needed to assemble the vehicles being produced in the UK ultimately. In 2017, compared to an output of 1.175 million vehicles, of which 1.67 million were real cars, 14.1 million parts and components were imported. The United Kingdom exported 80% of its production, contributing to its overall economic result for 0.8%, and even more substantial to that of manufacturing, for 8.1%. The value of imports, however, exceeded that of exports. Almost half of these cars are produced in factories owned by Toyota, Nissan and Honda.

The logic that presided over these incoming Foreign Direct Investments was precisely the possibility of being able to export to the countries of the European Union. According to the rules in force in the EU, the cars that can be sold in the area must be authorized by an agency in one of the countries belonging to it. The English authority will cease to be recognized as soon as Brexit is completed. For new models, companies have to turn to agencies in other countries that remain in the Union. According to the 2016 Atlas of Economic Complexity, Germany plays a prominent role for all the imports (almost 30%) of parts and components into the United Kingdom, followed by the other countries of the Centre and East Europe (with almost 19%), and then the South (with 23%).

It should be remembered that the division of labour within the automotive industry does not derive exclusively from cost reasons, but finds its reason also in economies of scale. It is not always feasible to replace European productions with national productions. This explains the recent cancellation of numerous planned investments.

A macro-financial perspective

To understand the reality of Europe within the world economy, under Neo-liberalism and its crash, requires new analytical and interpretative tools than those to which critical left thinking of any kind is accustomed. In our perspective we are combining a Marxian and a Financial-Keynesian perspective: as Marxians, we stress class relations, especially within production; as Financial Keynesians, we stress the crucial role of finance, which is like production more and more transnational. We have now to shift attention to this other side of the discourse.

One of our key arguments is to stress the role that financial flows play in the growing imbalances. Instead of being just amplifiers

of trade disequilibria, financial flows are the crucial factor in building the current-account imbalances. One reason is that they can have an impact on the way production is structured and on the direction of investment. Moreover, in a world of highly integrated financial markets, where trade transactions capture only a small fraction of transactions across jurisdictions, net flows and current accounts might not be the best accounting device to understand the way production and demand are financed. Current-account imbalances, rather than being the causal factor, could, instead, be the way financial capital has autonomously circulated in Europe.

Nowadays, developing an authentic ‘monetary analysis’ – in Schumpeter’s meaning of the expression: namely, an analysis where money and credit are included in the essential foundation of the theorising about the capitalist economy – involves looking far beyond a supposedly prior transfer of real resources, recorded in the current accounts in the net capital flows. To investigate the structural dynamics of capitalist economies, it is rather more and more necessary to reason reversing the causal chain of the dominant approaches: dominant not only in the mainstream but also in the alternative economic approaches. The point is to understand how financial flows are originated, financing production and the different components of effective demand: and this may well be disconnected from the export/import situation. “Taking financing seriously”, and looking at it as the primary factor, may help understand how apparently stable conditions are not only fragile, but unsustainable in the long run.¹² And this was exactly what happened world-wide, and in Europe.

We need to go back to the essential point put forward by Minsky¹³, where the economic system is looked through the interconnection of balance sheets and consequent portfolio flows: a system of “flow of funds” that can confirm, but also disconfirm, the story apparently told by current accounts. Taking this financial point of view it is possible to observe that the current international system witnesses a high level of integration between the European and US banking (and shadow-banking) systems, also conveyed by the investments of the European actors in the highly profitable sub-prime mortgage market in the US already before the crisis, and leading to it.

Indeed, the 2007-2008 crisis was North-Atlantic and financial in nature, and spread through the integration of financial markets in the area, with the paradox of a supposed crisis born-in-the-USA affecting first of all, and with particular violence, European banks and financial

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¹² For this section and what follows the analyses of Borio and the BIS are very important. See Borio 2011, 2015. The family resemblance with Graziani’s monetary circuit approach should be evident.

¹³ Minsky, 2014

intermediaries. This aspect is convincingly presented and documented by Adam Tooze¹⁴. The financial circulatory system between Europe and USA was deep and quite independent of their trade connections. This is true also within the European Union. The collapse of the international goods market activated by the subprime crisis, and made even more dramatic by the Lehman Brothers bankruptcy, put the European export-led growth model under stress. The weakest part of the production system was liquidated with a deadly loss of industrial capacity. In this way the same financial explosion, which was involved in the acceleration of the upswing, in the downswing further polarised the uneven development of the different territorial areas, both within each nation and among nations. The polarisation is not mainly due to intra-European trade imbalances, but to the concrete functioning of the specific value-chains and the financial connections.

Adam Tooze underlines with particular perspicuity what is at issue here, and it is useful to quote him here at length:

If we are to grasp the dynamics of this unforecasted storm, we have to move beyond the familiar cognitive frame of macroeconomics that we inherited from the early twentieth century. Forged in the wake of World War I and World War II, the macroeconomic perspective on international economics is organized around nation-states, national productive systems and the trade imbalances they generate. It is a view of the economy that will forever be identified with John Maynard Keynes. Predictably, the onset of the crisis in 2008 evoked memories of the 1930s and triggered calls for a return to “the master.” And Keynesian economics is, indeed, indispensable for grasping the dynamics of collapsing consumption and investment, the surge in unemployment and the options for monetary and fiscal policy after 2009. But when it comes to analyzing the onset of financial crises in an age of deep globalization, the standard macroeconomic approach has its limits.

The limits have to do exactly with the increasingly trans-national nature of the economy, in production and finance:

What drives global trade are not the relationships between national economies but multinational corporations coordinating far-flung “value chains.” The same is true for the global business of money. To understand the tensions within the global financial system that exploded in 2008 we have to move beyond Keynesian macroeconomics and its familiar apparatus of national economic statistics. As Hyun Song Shin, chief economist at the Bank for International Settlements and one of the foremost thinkers of the new breed of “macrofinance,” has put it, we need to analyze the global economy not in terms of an “island model” of international economic interaction—national economy to national economy—but through the “interlocking matrix” of

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¹⁴ Tooze 2018, p. 16.

corporate balance sheets—bank to bank. As both the global financial crisis of 2007–2009 and the crisis in the eurozone after 2010 would demonstrate, government deficits and current account imbalances are poor predictors of the force and speed with which modern financial crises can strike.

Exactly the Minsky point we raised above.

Not a current account imbalances crisis

Most of what we have described so far had its origins before the introduction of the Euro, and was accelerated by the partial extension to the Eastern countries of the single currency and the larger inclusion of many of them in the European Union. It is however implausible to see in the euro or the trade imbalances the cause of the crisis.

The introduction of the single currency, as it is well known, has a political origin. At the time of the working of the Delors Commission, the project looked dominated by a French view, according to which Germany (with France) would provide the manufacturing core, France the military *force de frappe* and the political leadership, and the United Kingdom was hoped to provide the financial leg. Germany however resisted the project, and to renounce to the D-mark asked for a strong German-style set of fiscal rules limiting public deficits and setting public debt ceilings: the (in)famous Maastricht parameters. When the Maastricht Treaty was signed that world was gone. France was still able to enforce the euro as if to balance the German reunification. This was possible – and actually even succeeded in revitalising the project – only because Europe had lost in the 1990s any self-propelling impulse.

In fact, European growth was in that decade driven by the US, and partially Russia and Latin America: strange as this may seem looking backwards, Germany was then deemed to be the “sick man of Europe”. The previous game was played once more in the second half of the 1990s. On this occasion Germany’s recalcitrance materialised in the Amsterdam-Dublin so-called Stability and Growth Pact, which asked for tendentially balanced public budgets. As we know the Pact was broken in the early 2000s by Germany and France, which were not sanctioned. There has been a third round of the game: and there is always one round more. Each time there is a push forward towards an economic-political stronger union, Germany asks for stricter budgetary rules. The third time the prize was the so-called Fiscal Compact and the attempted constitutionalisation of the rule of balancing the public budget. Once more, nothing was concretised as planned, and there is talk of revising the Fiscal Compact, as should have been expected. All this notwithstanding, the stagnationary and disciplinary force of the austerity policies were and are in full vigour. The target of cutting the government deficit and public debt is a political and not a technical necessity: foolish, or at least irrelevant, to fight it on merely economical “technical” grounds.

In fact, in Europe, and well before the 1990s, profits were already earned thanks to the operativeness of a Kalecki-Luxemburg Neomercantilist model, that is *via* net exports. This export-led way to profitability made European growth increasingly dependent from foreign commodity demand, in particular from the US and Anglo-Saxon capitalism. Demand collapsed in 2007-2008, and the suggestion made at the time (between the subprime crash and the Lehman Brothers collapse) that a delinking was going on was a mirage¹⁵. That is, the European crisis of the real economy in 2008 was not due to the single currency (euro) but rather resulted from the diffusion of the global financial crisis. What should be explained is therefore how and why the originary deep contradictions of the single currency were concealed in the years before.

The single currency was created to strengthen and consolidate the construction of an integrated European capitalist system. Its weakest point is the absence, alongside the European Central Bank, of a political government at the ‘centre’. The introduction of artificial and unnecessary restrictions on monetary and fiscal policies, as asked by Germany, have certainly deepened the dynamics of the crisis that began in 2007 in the world, and in 2008 in Europe. The absence of a substantial federal government alongside the ECB has aggravated and prolonged the crisis also because of the “mission” of the ECB, with its bias against price and wage inflation.

Trichet was mostly faithful to the original policy setting of the ECB, and managed the dubious success of raising the base rate of interest even in August 2008, when the European crisis was well under way, globally but also (it soon turned out) in the same Europe. A similar thing happened again in 2011. But it must be recognised that since 2009 the ECB engaged in new forms of monetary policies. The most substantial and effective was the policy announced, and never actually practiced since today: the extraordinary manoeuvre of the ECB labelled Outright Monetary Transactions (OMT). Later on there was the adoption of Quantitative Easing also in Europe. OMT was constructed by Mario Draghi in the course of 2012, with his famous London speech when he declared to be ready to do ‘whatever it takes’ to save the political investment in the single currency, and confidently assuring that ‘it would be enough’. The effect on the expectations was forceful and it truly marked an inversion, but it came at the zenith of the crisis, and – as the same Draghi repeatedly often evoked – monetary policy can never be decisive if left alone.

The crisis of the Eurozone is not a current account crisis, as in the ‘global imbalances’ narrative. In a single currency area, internal imbalances cannot but be the norm. One of the main reasons the EMU

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15 See the articles by Bellofiore and Halevi in the references.

had been built has been to permit countries to pile up current account imbalances towards other members of EMU without having to deflate their national economies¹⁶. Eurozone countries share a single clearing and settlement system: a cross border payment between banks in two countries in the euro zone automatically generates balancing credit claims between the national central banks (NCB) and the ECB. The mechanism irrevocably unifies former national currencies, converting a set of currencies with fixed exchange rates into a single currency. 'Target 2 was well conceived', has been correctly pointed out by Marc Lavoie: 'northern banks are declining to provide loans to the southern banks through the overnight market or other more long-term wholesale markets, still, the clearing and settlement system continues to function.'¹⁷ The point is the same well understood by Randall L. Wray¹⁸: imbalances balances. The serious issues to be looked at are those "behind" the financial imbalances, in the power relations, and behind the power relations the class relationship (as a trans-national reality).

Summing up: it is an illusion that through current account imbalances we 'see' and measure the significant flows of finance between the countries of the centre and those of the periphery. A nation can have a balanced account and still finance completely outside the country his transactions and expenditures. That finance may be pretty precarious, and may evaporate overnight. Not only finance cannot be identified with saving, as actually many heterodox analysts still do: the substantial point is that the focus should go to the gross flows, instead of the net flows.

In a system more and more akin to pure credit, and where money (and shadow money) is debt, these imbalances may be postponed at will. It depends on the central bank: if it stops the refinancing of the economy, what follows is simply the collapse of the economy. Reserves are endogenous: rather than a multiplier of base money, there is a *diviseur* of bank credit.

The single currency and its contradictions

It is a fact that the architecture of the euro was faulty: the Italian choice to enter the single currency at the end of the 1990s can be considered a mistake. It is worth considering if there were alternatives to the euro – alternatives, we mean, relative to the mere prolongation of the status quo of separate national currencies.

An alternative proposal was set forth in the mid-1990s: the so-called *monnaie commune* (the "common currency"), not to be confused

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¹⁶ As it has been argued by De Cecco 2012.

¹⁷ Lavoie 2013, p. 20.

¹⁸ Wray 2012.

with *la monnaie unique* (the single currency). It was suggested by Suzanne De Brunhoff and Jacques Mazier in the second half of that decade.¹⁹ After the Great Recession it was again put forward by *Le Monde Diplomatique*, and a very vocal proponent was Frédéric Lordon. The design behind the original proposal of the common currency was an actualisation for Europe of a 1944 idea by Keynes: like *bancor*, *la monnaie commune* had to be a non-circulating reserve currency for national central banks, within a fixed but adjustable exchange rate system among national currencies, inserted in an expansionary architecture meant to avoid the accumulation of trade surpluses. An essential requirement to the viability of the project were, of course, capital controls. The common currency had to be integrated within a coordinated management of target zones among the exchange rates of the main currencies, to downplay instability²⁰.

La monnaie commune was not discussed, as it should have been, in those years, before the euro was actually adopted. No force on the political or trade-union left seriously endorsed it. Unfortunately, what was a good idea in the 1990s is not by itself a good idea in the 2000s. It is not easy to imagine some agreed harmonic transition from the single currency to the common currency, but it is instead perfectly easy to anticipate the chaotic *bellum omnium contra omnes* of a dissolution of the euro: how to build a common currency from there is a mystery. Nowadays, like it or not, the transition from the single currency to the common currency is blocked. It is not enough to look at the viability of a project on paper. Consider also that, if the coordination among nations needed to make that transition possible would be there, also a reform of the architecture of the euro from within would be viable.

After the 2008 crisis hit Europe, many changes have been introduced in European monetary policy: already at the end of Trichet's mandate, and more significant under Draghi's authority. The ECB has found a way to act, whatever the form, as lender of last resort, of banks and of the states; the ECB can now indirectly finance governments through the commercial banks or through shadow banking. We think that Draghi's project, in fact very often with the support of Angela Merkel, was to build up a definite (though variegated) capitalist subject, on a continental scale, with a European unitary governance (if not a government), changing the material constitution of the European social model. A design like this may only proceed through a slow, contradictory, violent process. We have to remember, however, that

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¹⁹ See de Brunhoff 1997, but also de Brunhoff 1999.

²⁰ Something like this is in fact quite coherent with one of the very few forays of Minsky in international monetary economics: cf. Minsky 1986, an article which does not fit very well with the positions currently put forward by the Modern Monetary Theory.

'monetary unions' like the dollar, the mark, the lira etc were themselves constructed in a long lapse of time, through war, repression, crisis.

That is why, even considering the dramatic limits of the single currency, when we wrote the article in 2014 together with Mariana Mortágua, our opinion was that the euro was here to stay – even though this may not be true in the long run (when we are all dead). We also argued against exiting the euro in that article and in the book. One thing is not to enter in a monetary union, a completely different thing is to pursue an individual exit strategy: and it is a phantasy to juxtapose an exit 'from the right' and an exit 'from the left' in the current economic and political environment, characterised by the resurgence of protectionism and xenophobic authoritarian populism. Unfortunately, protectionism and populism created the condition of the last few years when, though the euro seemed to survive 'economically', was (and is) about to explode for 'political' tensions. Brexit and Italy's difficulties are two examples.

From the economic point of view, devaluation is not a solution to problems like those experienced by an economy like Italy: in the past, weakening the lira favoured small firms and industrial districts, and fostered some exports, but was disjointed from medium-term industrial and structural policies making for a better productive configuration, and it favoured some regions against others (a point underlined by Graziani)²¹. The difficulties are even more if we consider, not only the trans-nationalisation of production (to which we referred in the first part of this article), but also the import and raw material contents of our production, or our dependence from Germany's monopoly capital dominance.

A reasoning predicated just in national terms, and looking mainly at the current account and the international trade position says relatively little. For example: what is a good exchange rate? Weaker, to encourage exports? Maybe – but if, for example, you are a country importing raw materials, and technologically dependent for sophisticated means of production, it is not necessarily the case that the positive consequences are winning over the negative effects. A better situation could be the one with a stable, or even stronger, exchange rate, such to favour the position in the capital account, maintain its own financial agents in a healthy condition, be able to be safe in the management of its own public debt²². Going "out" from the single currency is not an analogue to abandoning a fixed exchange agreement: exiting the euro is not exiting the European Monetary System. And those who imagine that a move like this would conquer margins of sovereignty, which can be exploited from a left perspective, should remind that in 1992-1993 exiting the EMS was preceded and followed by huge anti-labour policies.

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²¹ Graziani 1994. The Italian title given to the transcript is misleading.

²² This latter is a point repeatedly submitted by Jan Toporowski, as in Toporowski 2013.

A single currency is a completely different animal than a fixed exchange rate agreement. If in Italy the 1992-93 turning point was simultaneous with the destruction of the last remnants of trade unions' power, and was not followed by inflation because it was accompanied by more and not less austerity, this time it could be much worse. The Ital-exit longed by some would happen in the middle of a long structural capitalist crisis. A great crisis is not a conjunctural crisis: it demarcates two different stages of capitalism, one dying and one on the verge (but not yet) emerging. The only similarity, we fear, would be the opening of a phase of a stricter austerity. Of course, this time the break-up would be accompanied by the heightening of the crypto-fascist tendencies, anti-migrant sentiments, aggressive nationalisms, and so on.

Also, the argument about a euro at two (or more) velocities does not seem promising, since it meets the same difficulty of the transition we discussed before. It is very often recommended on the wrong idea that the European periphery is a homogeneous area, since Southern Europe and Ireland all share a trade deficit within the area: but the 2001-2007 interlude showed that almost each country in the periphery had a different economic model.²³ A similar suggestion has been to create an alternative single currency for Southern Europe: but it would obviously reproduce the same contradictions of the euro as we have it now, with some country holding the position presently occupied by Germany in the new arrangement.

In the first part of this article we highlighted how the European industrial landscape has gone through a deep change, where peripheral Southern Europe and Ireland are characterised by non-homogeneous economic models, but all are exporting consumer goods to the Central-Northern Europe, and subject to increasing competition from emerging countries and especially China. On the production side, a German manufacturing production chain has been built since the early 2000s, looking Eastward: it includes the manufacturing core of Northern Italy. The various countries of the periphery are distinguished by unequal and asymmetrical structural conditions (such as dissimilar corporate monopoly power, different degrees of energy dependence, and so on).

All this confirms that neither the dilemma about exiting the Euro or not, nor the dilemma about pursuing austerity policies or expansionary policies, are exhaustive. Exiting the Euro is not only not a sufficient condition, but neither it is a necessary condition for the emergence of the eurozone countries from the crisis. Expansionary policies of aggregate demand are undoubtedly needed, but certainly they are not adequate to escape European difficulties. In particular, an increase in demand in Germany is important, but it is not enough to induce a recovery in Europe, especially in Southern Europe, since most of the

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²³ For an expansion about this see our papers with Mortágua in 2015 and 2016, or our book.

impulse will not go to them for the structural reason that there is no horizontal integration within the Southern European countries: those countries rather separately depend from Germany, which is the core.

In the meantime, it must be recognised – with some horror – that contrary to the expectations of the critics of eurozone policies, the export led model plus budgetary austerity actually seemed to work after 2013-2014 and at least until 2018. It is enough to look at the fact that – from the point of view of the whole eurozone towards the rest of the world – the ratio of the net exports over GDP, which were quite limited before (the eurozone used to stay still in a situation of substantial external balance) became rather positive, reaching the 4%. All the countries in the area were in surplus towards the rest of the world: of course, this happened in a very uneven way, still it was generalised also to the “periphery”. We recognised that novelty in the second part of our book, but anticipated it was not good news, quite the contrary.

The European crisis and the public debt

If the economics narrative about the crisis based on the current account imbalances, ubiquitous both within the mainstream and among alternative economic thinkers, does not seem to get the central factors of the current capitalist conjuncture, also the political narrative about the crisis going on in the European institutions (which is the rationale for the austerity policies) does not seem convincing, as long as it pretends that the focal issues were government deficits and public debt. In fact, the ultimate factor behind the ascent and crash of neoliberalism has rather been the banking “funding” supporting private indebtedness²⁴.

The seriousness of the crisis has brought to light the weakness of the political strategy, and consequent practice, of the trade union movement, in fact absent at the ‘continental’ European dimension, and its increasing corporatist tendencies.

In Europe policies to expand internal demand have been quite limited, with a few exceptions: paradoxically, the most Keynesian policy has been Germany's in 2008-2009 – and it may well be Germany again the next European Keynesian episode, for the need to answer the recessionary phase hitting that country. The stimulus to demand, and in particular in favour of consumption, is of course necessary. About raising consumption, however, the dominant rhetoric insists on tax reductions (that of course depends if on capital or on labour, and on how the decrease in taxes is designed) rather than on wage struggles (objectively difficult), or on a possible role of the governments in raising their own labour remuneration (definitely easier). We think, on our part, that an expansion in private consumption would be inadequate to

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²⁴This is again a key theme for Tooze: and rightly so.

solve the employment problem in the European Union, since it is strictly intertwined with the structural dimension of the European crisis.

The general point to be made is the following. There are limits to indebted consumption driven by collateral, as vividly shown by the crash of Neoliberalism. There is a strict impossibility of imagining world net exports. We don't think that a private investment push could anymore been thought to be sufficient to propel the capitalist monetary circuit, because of the tendential declining prices for capital goods. If these aforementioned considerations are sensible, the only possible driver of capitalist developments is government expenditure, embodied in some (at least temporary, but sensible) deficit spending. As long as this policy would be able to originate a “big push”, giving way to development, it would be positive from the point of view of the same debt dynamics. Indeed, it is well known that the way out of the debt is through remission, or default, or inflation, or growth/development (or some combination). In US after a while the mortgage debt expire, one way or another. Instead in Europe we witness the eternity of it, *perinde ac cadaver*, with the blockage of any attempt towards the reduction of its weight or its cancellation.

A permanent austerity leading to permanent stagnation is an unsustainable situation: a way out has to be devised, and it cannot but include a new role for higher public expenditure. This was the main concern since the crisis exploded. It is not granted, however, that a more active government spending will be set in motion from the left. The signs of the last few years show the course is towards the other extreme.

In our logic, what is needed is to turn upside down the logic of Delors' *White Paper*, which was absorbed by the matter about “how to produce”, but in a vision where labour had to be totally passive, alternatively shifting attention to organisation (Lean Production) or technology (Industry 4.0). Rather than leaving the definition of the (level and) composition of output to the market and finance, a European political impulse should drive a radical change of how to produce tying it with the associated dimensions of “how much”, “what” and “for whom” to produce. Changing the priority over what and for whom to produce implies the selection, through the State, of the communal and private consumption that must be developed and satisfied.

The alternative agenda to be developed is articulated. Overcoming the imbalances would require a genuine banking union and a real fiscal union; a substantial increase in public investment, not only in large infrastructures, financed with Eurobonds. Reflation is not enough. We should go beyond the simple realignment of wages and productivity, anchoring the former to the latter, as somebody suggest. The point is to conquer the realignment while raising productivity. This means that we have to go beyond the delusions of the Keynesians, which tends to reduce economic policy to a boost to demand. An active intervention on the supply side and in the production structure is an integral part of an

alternative economic policy: in fact, as Mariana Mazzucato has shown the entrepreneurial State has been an essential ingredient of growth even in the last decades, under Neoliberalism.²⁵ The point is how to qualify an active intervention of the State from a left perspective.

The inspiration could be a renewed New Deal, as a structural basis for a qualitative development in which the State intervenes on the composition of output (what and how to produce), and acts as the employer of first resort. This vision was at the heart of the Italian *Piano del Lavoro*, to which Ernesto Rossi and Paolo Sylos Labini contributed²⁶. But it is in a sense nothing else than Minsky's socialisation of investment and employment²⁷. An intervention which is at the same time on demand as well as on supply, like this, could be put forward only through the promotion of what Alain Parguez has aptly described "active" deficits in the public budget. These deficits are active because they are planned in advance, and they will stimulate an economic development which will reabsorb them: the policy in the short-term pushes up the deficit/GDP ratio because of the rise of the numerator, but it lowers it in the long term because of the rise of the denominator. From this point of view they are the opposite of the "passive" deficits typical of Neoliberal policies: the paradoxical outcome of these latter, aimed at cutting government deficits, is that they determine recessionary tendencies which end up in an ever-increasing unplanned deficit loop, with a ballooning public debt²⁸.

From a Marxian point of view the crucial point here is that Minsky's socialization of investment and employment plus Parguez's good deficits creates "social use values". Investment long term horizon, innovative capabilities, productivity increases in the economy, all depends here from a government targeted big push. It is on this structural nature of state activism, and on its content in terms of social use values and social allocation of employment, that the issue of gender and the issue of nature comes out as key intersectional transversal issues.

A perspective like the one we have sketched cannot be "packed" and rejected as a "return to Keynes" perspective, and anyhow it is much more radical than what Marxists dare to propose when they just stop invoking revolution. We have rather to go back to the New Deal, with a class twist. Consider that Roosevelt was not a Keynesian (he was against

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25 As Giovanna Vertova has shown, the position by Mazzucato on the State as innovator could be radicalized in the same way that Minsky radicalized Keynes on the socialization of investment. At the very least in a period of crisis the state should direct innovative activities toward more basic and social needs, thus becoming an "innovator of first resort." Cf. Vertova 2014.

26 Rossi 2008 introduced by Sylos Labini.

27 Minsky, 2014a, 2014b..

28 Parguez, 2014

the government deficits), while Keynes insisted first of all on a policy management of the effective demand. We need a structural "reform", the perspective of Roosevelt, but very different than the one advocated by the mainstream, that is affecting the conformation of output and the allocation of employment. And we need a "recovery", the perspective of Keynes, which today cannot but pass through a rise in effective demand. The left policy should not be framed in two steps: reform and recovery must be simultaneous. The stress must be on a targeted program of expenditure, instead of just priming the pump.

The idea of a basic income, which is positively seen by some on the left, could be accepted, but only within a policy horizon of full and good employment, and of a political command over the structure of production, not as an alternative which accepts the inevitability of unemployment. Moreover, a basic income must be conditioned, to some "social work" spent for the community in the lifetime horizon (as in the *esercito del lavoro* proposed by Ernesto Rossi). Otherwise basic income will repeat the negative experience of Speenhamland, chastised by both Polanyi and Marx.²⁹ Anyhow, the role of basic income must be quite limited. The welfare system must not be built around a principal dimension of money subsidies (like the traditional basic income), but be designed around an "in kind" provision to population of goods like education, health, and so on. According to us, this is not far from what Minsky meant as "communal consumption"³⁰.

In sum, the left way out does exist. It is a radicalisation of Minsky's views about the socialisation of investment, which were originally articulated by this economist as a critique of Keynes's perspective.

The only framework in which a class New Deal proposal like this becomes thinkable is the European horizon, not the national horizon. As Andrea Ginzburg and Annamaria Simonazzi have pointed out, a common tax authority that issues debt in a currency under its control would be able to prevent destabilising capital movements within the Eurozone and to protect member states against the threat of bankruptcy coming from financial markets. The recovery of the real economy itself would be the guarantee of repaying loans and settling debts. As these authors observe, "there is still too little hope that a radical change of policies will occur along these lines, which would require changing the rules of the Eurozone. The desire to move in the direction of a budgetary and political union is non-existent today"³¹. Moreover, in this sense, there is no doubt that, in its current form, it is the Euro that is hindering the European project, and that this logic should be broken at the root

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29 As Giovanna Vertova argued in 2006 in a debate in *il manifesto*.

30 Cf Minsky 2008b.

31 Ginzburg, Simonazzi, 2017

since corrections "on the margin" are not possible.

What precedes amounts to no less than a new "constituent" phase. In the *Manifesto for an egalitarian Europe*, by Karl Heinz Roth and Zissis Papadimitriou³², outlines the proposal of a construction of a European Federal Republic. In their outlook, which we share, a federal Europe must be built through a "bottom-up" social mobilisation that crosses borders. But we also think that a redefinition of the structure of demand, of production and of distribution of the scale required can only come from a concentrated and powerful political intervention "from above".

Conclusion

A perspective like this is not part of the program of any political force today, and the European trade union movement does not leave much hope at the moment to take on a similar vision. The left arrived unprepared at the 2007-2008 crash. The collapse of Neoliberalism has been governed by Neoliberals, and the "new normal" is considered by some, like Larry Summers, as nothing but a "secular stagnation". The prospect of turning the Great Recession in a new Great Depression is far from wiped out.

As for Europe, it must be considered that the chances for falling again in an acute crisis like that of 2010-2012, if not even more serious, are mounting. We already referred to Brexit, which may be a detonator. The same is true for Italy, which may fall prey again of right-wing populism, if there is not a drastic turn-around in European policies as well as internal ones. At the same time, we observe that the changes in the eurozone have always been forced on the main protagonists, from ECB to Bruxelles, against their will. And it looks as the conditions of a perfect storm are gathering together.

We argued before that in the last few years the way out of the eurozone crisis has been the marrying of internal austerity with an export-led towards the rest of the world: Germany written large. It was a situation about which we contended that it made the area more fragile, exactly when the appearance was that the danger of the dissolution of the EU and the single currency was not anymore economic but it was mainly coming from the political menace of populism and protectionism.

For European as well as for international factors – from Trump aggressive policies, to the wings of war against China: not to name Putin and Middle East – world growth is at risk, and as a consequence Europe is imploding. The same Germany faces the prospect of recession. This is the worst of times. This is the best of times. It is possible that at least part of the changes to the architecture of the euro may, willy-nilly, be born here: including an at least partial retreat from austerity. It may be time borrowed for the left: in case, let us hope it does not waste it again. But nothing is granted, and a positive outcome is still unlikely.

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32 Cf. Roth, Papadimitriou 2014

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Europe at Weimar

Franco Berardi

In the years that followed the break-up of the Berlin Wall and the crumbling of the Soviet Empire, the Maastricht Treaty became the general framework of the European policy, and the Union officially converted to the neoliberal agenda. At that point I felt my pro-Europe sentiment shaking, and I tried to silence my intimate doubts telling myself that the Union was the only protection against a comeback of nationalism.

I was wrong.

Having been turned into a financial machine whose purposes were privatisation of social services, precarisation of labor and reduction of wages, the Union fuelled nationalism, racism, and aggressiveness. And now, thirty years after, it is still doing the same.

Year after year I repeated to myself as a mantra the words written by Julien Benda in 1933: the European Union will not be the outcome of what Europe is and of what the Europeans are, because Europe is nothing but the product of the our free and rational will. In his *Discours à la nation européenne*, Benda meant that Europeans are so different that no cultural common ground of identity exists; therefore only their consciousness, only their democratic decision can be the foundation of political union.

The concept expressed by Julien Benda was appealing: Europe is the contrary of national identity, it is the free space in which democracy can give birth to a non identitarian subject. Nevertheless I am now compelled to surrender to the evidence: the concept expressed by Benda is beautiful but fake and idealistic: from a materialistic point of view it must be said that a common ground of identity does exist, and it is rooted in the modern history of colonialism, in the privilege that Europeans have gained thanks to violence and plunder of the resources of the world subjugated by them.

Why should we expect that the summing up of French and Italian, German, Spanish and British imperialisms may result into a democratic and peaceful European Union?

In fact the experience of the last thirty years has revealed that the European Union is only the marriage, conflictive as it may be, of financial authoritarianism and ethno-nationalism. The election of Ursula von der Leyen as President of European Commission is proof of this alliance: Orbán and Macron are the two sides of the same coin

The concept of “ethno-nationalism”, in my view, is the best way to define the ongoing neo-reactionary movement that is sweeping the planet, from India to Poland, from Turkey to Russia, from Italy to the UK, from Brazil to The United States, to China. By the word ethno-nationalism I mean a kind of national identification that reflects the emergence of cultural supremacism, and more specifically of supremachisme. Male resentment melts with religious and ethnic aggressiveness. As the national state is more and more impotent to govern financial globalisation, national identification is essentially based on race, and on religion. This explains the ambiguous relation between the Russia of Putin and the Trump’s Us. Behind the geopolitical confrontation that persists, there is a

sense of cultural alliance: christian white males of the world unite against the emerging civilisations.

The European identity is based on the legacy of colonialist privilege, and therefore the prospect of long lasting prosperity has supported the political experiment of the Union, as long as prosperity was rising, until the end of the past Century. Eventually the European experiment lost coherence and popular consent after 2010, when the effects of the financial collapse jeopardised the economy of the continent. The reaction to the crisis was a strengthening of the financial grip on social reproduction: the economy of many countries was seriously damaged and social life impoverished by financial austerity.

Since 2015, since the Summer of the Greek humiliation, when the decision of the majority of Greek voters was crushed by the sheer force of the financial blackmail, the cement of the Union has been twofold: financial austerity imposed by the Fiscal compact and rejection of migrant people, as migrants have been finger pointed as responsible of the social impoverishment. Since Summer 2015 nationalism and racism have been on the rise in every country of the Union, and seem unstoppable, as the prevailing sentiment is fear of a foreign people invasion, and desire of vengeance against liberal democracy and the so called elite.

The year 2016 (the year of the Brexit and of the victory of Trump) was a turning point: ethno-nationalism became the dominant thread in the world and particularly in Europe.

Actually the victory of parties reclaiming national sovereignty is not destined to subvert the neoliberal trend: on the contrary, the vocal opposition of nationalists against neoliberalism and financial power has already shown to be a fake: precarity of labor and social impoverishment do not recede in the countries governed by the "souveranist" right-wing, rather the other way round. So a question comes to the mind: why people are voting for the so called populist parties if they pursue politics of privatisation and precarisation like the neoliberal ones? the answer can hardly be a political one, because the choice of voting for right wing parties is not the result of a rational judgement.

People are welcoming back nationalism for an essentially psychotic reason. Mental chaos is spreading all over in the space of the wired democracy.

People are not really expecting that nationalism will improve their life, nor that the nationalist future will be bright and glorious. Futurism is no more the cultural source of contemporary Fascism. There is no growth in the predictable future, no expansion. So there is no hope, no ideological fervour in the mounting tide of ethno-nationalism: the deep motivation of the nationalist backlash is not hope, but despair and desire of vengeance.

Feeling trapped, people resent the financial blackmail, and regard the centre-left governments of the past as responsible of their present subjection to the global power of finance. So the main target of those

people who have suffered the humiliation of political impotence is the centre-left political class that betrayed the workers interests, imposed the neoliberal rule and destroyed the welfare state in order save the bank system and to increment capital profit despite the stagnation that seems to be the trend of the economy.

Nationalism, fascism, xenophobia and sheer hatred are not (only) the effect of fake news and manipulations, but the predictable outcome of thirty years of financial depredation and of political betrayal of the left. Of course the shit-storm provoked by the techno media whirlwind is part of the story, but there is some ratio in this madness: it is the ratio of nihilist rage.

Contemporary nihilism is based on the cynical perception that devastation (environmental, social, military) is irreversible: people are tempted to think that it is too late, and that salvation for everybody is out of reach: only a small portion of the population can survive, so my family comes first, my village comes first, my nation comes first, my race comes first.

This is clearly a recipe for apocalypse, a self defeating behaviour based upon a nihilist drive.

After World War 2 and the defeat of Nazism, the liberal order was based on the assumption that racism and nationalism are bad things and cannot be exhibited in the political discourse: a sort of anti-racist political correctness acted as an antidote to the deep rooted sentiment of white supremacy. For seventy years a sort of collective Super-Ego has automatically censored the spontaneous expression of the suprematist unconscious, but the pressure of social impoverishment and the fear of the impending migration, have lately broken the filter of political correctness. The psychoanalytic suppression (*Verdrängung*) of identitarian aggressiveness has lost its grip because of the explosion of the Unconscious, and because of the acceleration of the psychosphere.

The place of the Father has been dismantled, and the Super-Ego has lost its grip on the unchaining of the collective Id: therefore the law has lost its force, and politeness has been expelled from the political game.

The liberal democratic culture is trying to reassert the name of the Father, the force of institutions and the rule of law, but this attempt cannot succeed: the father will not be revived, and liberal democracy will not be restored. The law has lost its primacy that was based on consensus and on social solidarity; brutal force is back on the scene of the world, only master of the game.

In a press Conference delivered in Osaka in June 2019, Vladimir Putin expressed the idea that Liberal democracy will never come back, as the triumph of ethno-nationalism in the world is not the temporary effect of a provisional change of electoral preferences, but the effect of something much deeper that has changed the perception of the majority of the population. According to Putin (who probably is the most expe-

rienced and cultivated among the ethno-nationalist leaders), the failure of liberal democracy is linked with the failure of the liberal approach to migration.

"The liberal idea has started eating itself," Putin said "Millions of people live their lives, and those who propagate liberal delusions are an elite segregated from the people." He also charged that the influx of migrants to Europe has infringed on people's rights. "People live in their own country, according to their own traditions, why should it happen to them?"

The emergence of a new order of the world based on the ethno-national identity has accomplished the Huntington prediction of a clash of civilisations, that Osama bin Laden and George Bush together have transformed into a political strategy finally driving the world into a state of permanent war.

What about the European Union, in the frame of this irreversible melting of the liberal order?

In 2011 a Norwegian young man whose name was Anders Breivik murdered 77 young socialist of various nationalities in sign of protest against multiculturalism, and in order to protect the identity of the white race and the Judaeo-Christian culture, as he explained in a voluminous boring collection of trivialities titled "Declaration of European Independence". In that Declaration the murderer asserts that a Muslim invasion is underway in Europe with the complicity of cultural Marxism and of Feminism.

A few days after that murder, a member of the Italian Lega, whose name is Mario Borghezio, told that the Breivik's act was, well... controversial, but his ideas were shared by hundred million European citizens. Scandal followed, of course, and Mario Borghezio was widely censored, but now, only a few years after his provocation everyone is forced to acknowledge that the scoundrel was not totally wrong: the ethno-nationalist rejection of migrants is today the common ground of the political European identity.

The majority of European citizens declare with their vote that the danger comes from the foreign people who want to find a job in the European continent, and that ethnical replacement is planned by Soros and some conspiratorial groups. This notion of a plot aiming to the ethnical substitution is bullshit, of course, but it conveys a truth that, like a phantom, is haunting the unconscious of Europe. The growing inequality, the ongoing climate change and the spread of military violence in so many places of the world are feeding a migration flow whose proportions cannot be fully predicted, but is likely to continue steadily in the years to come.

Let's not forget that in the year 2050 the African population will be strong of 1 billion and five hundred million people, and that it possible to predict a massive deterritorialisation of people following the global climate change (Bill McKibble has recently predicted in the article *Life in a*

shrinking planet that 600 million people may be forced to migrate in the next decades).

In this prospect the irrational fear of ethnic substitution takes a not so irrational sense, and the legacy of colonialism is put in question: the distribution of resources in the planet is an issue that cannot be further ignored and cannot be dealt without a process of global re-distribution of resources.

The European project is on the brink of disintegration because of the inability to face the moral and political responsibility that ensues European colonialism. This is why we are experiencing a comeback of the worst European nightmares: the rejection of migrants in fact is the condition of mass extermination and of a massive diffusion of slavery.

Countless people have been drowned and are daily exposed to the threat of drowning: rejection puts migrant people in a condition of permanent danger, of incarceration and torture in the concentration camps that are disseminated all around the Mediterranean coast.

And those who, coming from Africa and Asia manage to disembark in the Southern parts of Europe, are obliged to accept jobs that cannot be labelled otherwise than slavery. In the agrarian areas of Foggia in Italy, Almeria in Spain, and in many other sites, those who have escaped death by water are forced to work ten, twelve hours per day under the sun for a retribution of two, three euros per hour, because their undocumented condition is a permanent blackmail that makes impossible for them to reclaim their rights.

Amid rumours of economic recession, institutions seem to be stumbling on the brink of an abyss, unable as they are to govern upon humiliation, resentment, and growing aggressiveness.

Spain is taken in the turmoil of opposing nationalisms: Madrid reacts with a furious nationalist vengeance to the wave of Catalan "independentismo", and this is fuelling a nationalist reaction of the Catalans: The sentence against the political prisoners (how can be denied that Junqueras and the others are political prisoners?) is an act of violence, of humiliation that is pushing Catalonia to the brink of civil war.

In the United Kingdom Boris Johnson shuts down the Parliament, the Irish and the Scottish are preparing to break the unity of the kingdom, and the dispute with Europe is turning into open conflict while leavers and remainers look at each other as enemies.

In Italy Fascism has re-emerged from the mix of xenophobia, unemployment and cultural meltdown that follows the massive emigration of students and of intellectuals. Hardly the centre-left government will survive after passing the budget law, and the right-wing have not lost in terms of popular consensus.

In France Macron lost to Le Pen the electoral primacy in May 2019, and in Germany recession is fuelling the right-wing and feeding the desire of reasserting the dominant role of the country.

Weimar is the name of this chaos and of this stumbling.

What strategy can we imagine in such a situation? Can we invest our energy in a sort of united front for the re-establishment of democracy? No way.

If democracy is unable to separate itself from financial capitalism the social humiliation will further increment rage and desire of vengeance. We must be prepared to the unchaining of the destructive energies that financial capitalism has fed and is still unrelentingly feeding.

We must be prepared to divert these energies while the coming storm will be deploying, so to channel them toward a cultural and psychological transformation based on frugality, egalitarianism, and an overall reduction of the exploitation of labour and of the natural resources.

But the storm is here, we cannot avoid it. What we can do is preparing the ground for a psycho-political transformation when the trauma of the storm will reshape the planetary unconscious.

September 6th 2019

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Europe After Eurocentrism?

Chiara Bottici and
Benoît Challand

Abstract: Eurocentrism is nothing but bourgeois ideology, quipped Samir Amin. Does it mean that we should reject European ideals as mere bourgeois ideology or is there a way to rethink the European project after Eurocentrism? This essay revisits some of the left criticisms made against the European project, by emphasising that simply rejecting it on the basis that it is just a tool for capital and labour management risks obscuring the fact that the same holds for nation-states. The critical question is not rejecting or supporting the European project but rather trying to understand the possibilities that such a process opens (or closes) for those who are *inside* as well as *outside* of it. The paper adds therefore another, yet often under-explored layer of criticism, namely a colonial critique. By showing how Europe was created in its colonial peripheries and still thrives there, the article proposes to look at the project of European integration with a double lens. In particular, we will reflect on the theories produced by those who are *in* or in the *margins* of, but not *from*, Europe, to rethink the European project in a global context marked by mass migration, challenges to established forms of citizenship, and the new forms of oppression created by climate change and global warming.

INTRODUCTION

The left has been divided on the question of Europe since its very beginning. The European project has often been ignored, if not openly opposed, as a mere technocratic and capitalist project that has nothing to do with a true democratic process of institution building. The criticism is not without basis. The process of political integration has indeed happened as a mere spill-over effect of economic integration,¹ so that the federalist ideas that accompanied such a process can easily be scorned as sheer ideological cover.² And yet, what is often forgotten in this outright opposition to Europe is that the nation-states that compose it were also projects for capital and labour management – a process initiated only a few centuries before that of European “construction”. We can therefore equally look at the idealism of nineteenth century popular nationalist movements and easily dismiss them along with the European federalists. Alternatively, we can consider the two processes of institution building, equally driven by the integration force of capital, and try to investigate which opportunities they may, or may not, disclose. Yet, in doing so, we should not only consider the opportunities that such a process opens (or closes) for those who are full citizens of Europe, but also for those who are not. When seen in this double perspective, the alternative between Europe and its members states may appear

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¹ Haas 1961.

² Schulz-Forberg and Stråth 2010.

in a different light. To begin with, we should remember that European citizenship is (still) completely dependent on that of its member states, so that being a European citizen today means being a citizen of its member states.³ This creates a very *sui generis* political configuration, which is neither a classical federation, because the EU is not a sovereign state, nor a confederation of sovereign states, because some of the sovereign prerogatives of modern states are now shared at the EU level.

In this essay we would like to look at this process of pooling and sharing fragments of sovereignty not only from the inside, as we mainly did in our previous work,⁴ but also from the outside, that is, from the liminal zones of a putative European center. Given that the very boundaries of the European project are themselves constantly shifting, we would like to ask: How does the project of “Europe” appear when de-centered? How is Europe perceived by those who may be in but are not from Europe,⁵ as well as by those who may perceive themselves to be from but will never be allowed to be in Europe – physically or intellectually? Born out of economic imperatives, but also supported by the federalist movement that saw in the project an attempt to go beyond the logic of European nationalism, the project of European integration has from the very beginning implied a process of boundary thinking.

Arguably, a leftist defence of Eurocentrism can have objectives such as reinforcing social justice and deepening political enfranchisement based on a criticism of the primacy of the economy. In this approach, however, one easily ends up merely defending the default political option for political boundaries, i.e., in the current context, those of nation states. Indeed, when the European left *a priori* rejects the project of European construction, it often does so on the basis that capitalism needs to be undone, but it does so without fully reflecting on (a) the fact that nation-states, upon which their hopes end up landing, are also built on capitalist forces (capital accumulation, labour control and management, tax extraction, or, as Tilly notoriously put it, war-making as state-making)⁶ and (b) on the global nature of capitalism, its interlinking European nation-states with their colonial past and neo-colonial present. For much of the European left, the major acting subject of history still remains the white (often male) factory worker, whose paid labour is intrinsically attached to the formal chains of economic production. Still too little attention is paid to extorted labour, unpaid labour, social reproductive labour, and growing economic and environmental

3 For an overview on the most current debates pertaining to EU citizenship and citizenship in the EU, see Bauböck 2019.

4 Bottici & Challand 2013.

5 Hall 2003.

6 See Tilly 1985.

inequalities that are most often rooted in old colonial geographies or in current neo-imperialist competing centers and dying peripheries.⁷ This is one of the reasons why we think it is pivotal to approach the question of Europe from the perspective of a *critical-colonial* approach. With this expression, we mean an approach that unifies the contributions coming from different field of critical colonial studies, including the post-colonial, the de-colonial and the settler-colonial critiques. We will be drawing from all of them, and therefore we prefer to use the expression “critical-colonial”, to point to the ensemble of critical investigations into the colonial conditions. While the term “post-colonial” may surreptitiously suggest that we are beyond that colonial past, a question that we would like to leave open,⁸ the term “de-colonial theory” performatively reinstates the speaking subject who is authorized to decide how to undo the colonial past, and thus, when used by theorists of European descent, like ourselves, can equally be interpreted as a gesture imbued with colonial hubris and thus reproduce the same coloniality of power it aims to undo.⁹

More broadly, taking a critical-colonial approach is an attempt to enrich theory-making, by emphasizing that in our current predicament, you cannot have one without the other. Inbuilt forms of Eurocentrism – what Ina Kerner aptly calls “methodological Eurocentrism”¹⁰ – automatically makes us privilege theory emerging from European experiences and centers. But at best, “European theory” can only extract facts from the peripheries that are then re-interpreted in the center. Even a certain type of Marxism, despite its alleged internationalism, continues to ignore the different empirical realities of the “peripheries” and negates the theory-making ability of thinkers from the global south.¹¹ We propose a new sensibility that combines both strands of research, the critical colonial studies produced in the “center” and the anti-imperial type of thinking coming from the “peripheries”. Whereas in our previous work we explored the process of European integration through a critical

7 We introduce neo-imperialism here to show that there are now non-European powers (China, Saudi Arabia and the neighboring Gulf countries) leading the political destruction and/or plundering of resources like the former colonial powers did.

8 Ann Stoler (2017) is reluctant to use the term post-colonialism and prefers to speak of (post) colonialism to show that colonialism is still with us (Stoler 2017, p. ix) but we think that the expression (post)colonialism may still suggest that we are in a “post” condition, which is clearly not the case in settler colonial states (USA, Israel, Australia), and also, as such, does not automatically include the insights from de-colonial critique.

9 Although they do not make exactly the same point, settler colonial theorists Tuck and Yang, emphatically underlined that de-colonization is not a metaphor, but the practical act of rendering the land back to those to whom it belonged before the arrival of Europeans, which in the settler colonial context of the Americas, means the indigenous population.

10 Kerner 2018, p. 615.

11 For a discussion of this problem in Marxist theory, see Chalcraft 2018.

lens raised from inside European space¹², we aim now to explore the claim that Europe was actually made in its peripheries, as has long been emphasized by liminal writers such as Frantz Fanon (1925-1961), Albert Memmi (born 1920), Achille Mbembe (born 1957), or Annibal Quijano (1930-2018). Theory is not only the apanage of Europeans, as some Eurocentric philosophical approaches insisted for way too long; rather a philosophy of Europe can only emerge by attempting a relational and multidirectional gaze between Europe and its colonies, thereby insisting on the zones of contention, and the zones of exclusion.

1. Europe was born in the colonies -- and it still thrives there

How can one sustain that Europe, a faltering political project uniting various nation-states in a common political and economic polity, was born in the colonies? Was Europe not born in the 1950s, with a process of “European construction” that began exactly when the former colonial empires collapsed? Is the EU not the result of the attempt to make all wars, including imperial ones, impossible, as the advocates of European federalism hoped?¹³ This is certainly one of the most powerful founding narratives produced by those who advocated for a process of European integration from the inside. As we emphasized in our *Imagining Europe*, the narrative of “Europe born out of the war” worked as a powerful founding narrative for the project of European integration, a narrative that at times merged with other founding myths, such as that of Europe born out of the classical Greek and Roman civilizations (the classical Europe), Europe as the cradle of a distinct religious identity (the Christian Europe), or Europe as the birthplace of the modern project (the Enlightened Europe).¹⁴ Although one can critically engage with those narratives from the inside, we also need to look at them from the outside.

In his *Wretched of the Earth*, Franz Fanon made the case that thinking Europe without its global outer layers does not make sense. He went as far as asserting that “Europe is literally the creation of the Third World”.¹⁵ Knowing the Martiniquais intellectual's focus in that book on conflictual relations between the colonial realms and Europe, one is tempted to reduce this statement to uniquely material terms: without the riches of the colonies and the plundering of natural and human resources by European imperial powers, Europe and its dominant economic mode of production, capitalism, would not have been possible. And without capitalism there would not have been any European modernity. Indeed,

12 Bottici & Challand 2013.

13 See below for one of these early statements on European cooperation, namely the Schuman declaration of May 1950.

14 Bottici & Challand 2013, p. 62ff.

15 Fanon 1961/2004, p. 58.

there is ground to argue that most of the wealth produced by Europeans from the 16th century onwards was accumulated only marginally from internal surplus production, most of it coming from the raw materials and labour force extracted from its colonies.¹⁶ Only by enlarging the focal point to the whole world can we understand why European wealth and well-being emerged at a given historical moment.

Preserving the material control of the colonies, or “the Third World”, was possible only through the creation of a brutal apparatus of coercion, one that morphed from indentured labor to slavery in the 17th and 18th century, from unequal forms of punishment under liberalism in the 19th century to the wars and quashing of nationalist independence movements in the colonies of the 20th century. From the 17th century onwards, European powers managed to eclipse the earlier economic power of Asia, and thrived globally thanks to American ores and lush cash-crops (such as sugar, tobacco, and indigo), and to the African material and labour resources extorted through the Atlantic trade to rule all the way to the East, with Unequal Treaties imposed by European powers on China.¹⁷ In the name of liberalism, new infrastructures of global exchange dotted the global map, with new transportation channels that made the plundering of such resources possible (think of the parallel creation of trans- or inter-continental railroads and the navigation canals such as the Suez or Panama Canal). In the name of their “civilizational mission” and “the new freedom” they brought, Europeans shamelessly managed local populations in order to uproot local agricultures and economic organization and force the adoption of cash-crops such as cotton, aimed at feeding the spinning machines of Liverpool, Alsace and Germany (Beckert 2014). From the point of view of capitalism, that is as a mode of production aimed at the endless expansion of profit, the local subsistence economies of the colonized territories could not but appear under-developed. But we tend to forget that subsistence economy, as culturally perceived poverty, is different from deprivation, that is a low physical quality of life: in the name of “civilisation” and “development”, local natural economies were destroyed in favour of an industrialized system that fed capital accumulation (of the colonizing powers) at the detriment of feeding the local population. This, in turn, has often led colonized populations to move from a subsistence economy to actual misery and deprivation.¹⁸

16 For a global narrative of the emergence of “war capitalism” as necessary condition for the spread of “industrial capitalism”, see Beckert 2014. Among the classical texts, see Luxemburg 1951.

17 On the passage from indentured labour to slavery see Williams 1944. On commodities and the rise of capitalism, see Mintz 1986 or Beckert 2014, on and global colonialism, all the way to China, see Reinhard 2011.

18 As Rosa Luxemburg pointed out a long time ago, the early industrial development in Europe could only happen because of the permanent occupation by colonial powers and the destruction of what she termed “natural economies” (see Luxemburg 1951). Shiva insists on this point by borrowing from

For instance, it is often forgotten that hundreds of thousands died in the last decades of the 19th century in what Mike Davis terms “late Victorian Holocausts”.¹⁹ In that period, hundreds of thousands of people died in Africa and India because of climate phenomena, such as El Niño, the high temperature in the ocean that generated famine and extended drought periods. Davis shows that these droughts were not the first to occur on such a large scale. But what was different this time is that imperial powers *took advantage* of these extreme climatic conditions to push for the cultivation of cotton or other crops relevant for Europe at the loss of local agriculture aimed at feeding local populations. In the name of “free markets”, British authorities decided not to intervene in redistributing wheat or other food that could have saved starving people, but rather continued on crops such as cotton that served Britain’s industrial developments. Supply and demand ruled the day and, according to Mike Davis’s analysis, generated an early example of a planned Holocaust. It also decimated the social fabric and economy in India and Africa, where, among others, Italian colonialism also benefited from a weakened Eritrea, and thus contributed to the making of “the Third World” in the imaginary of capitalist societies.²⁰ The latter term transmits the idea that a part of the world is (fatalistically) unable to provide enough food for itself, and is therefore essentially backward (in respect to the first and second worlds), and thus in need of help to develop. We can start to see here how “development” implies a sort of self-fulfilling prophecy: local economies aimed at sustaining local populations are destroyed in name of “development”, thereby producing a misery that calls for yet more aid and thus for more “development”.

Labels such as the “Third World” work as powerful, unconscious images that establish implicit hierarchies. The above material components of a growing division of Europe *versus* the rest are part of the violence of growing cultural and symbolic differentiations. Fanon captures this schism in his other masterpiece *Black Skins, White Masks*,²¹ in which he shows the psychological damage made in the name of an alleged European cultural superiority. Language, accent, and other embodied cultural dispositions are constant reminders of the power asymmetries between metropolises and colonies, power asymmetries that do not need a police force to enact their brutality: they are the internalized police. The trauma of those who consider themselves good, but then end up in a pervasive colonial imaginary that stigmatizes

the African writer Bahro’s distinction between poverty as subsistence and misery as deprivation (Shiva 2016: 9).

19 Davis 2001.

20 Davis 2001, p. 17-21.

21 Fanon 1952/2008.

“blackness” as “evil” is aptly captured by his description of “the complex of [the] colonized”:²² “There is no forgiveness when one who claims superiority falls below the standard”.²³ Cultural superiority, and with it inbuilt racism, runs not on biological grounds, but on the performance of whiteness and of sense of civilization as opposed to the Other’s primitivism.²⁴ Psychological alienation reached dramatic and traumatic proportion when the natives internalized colonialism and white superiority. The consciousness of the white Europeans was naturalized, made invisible, while blackness was bestialized, hyper-sexualized and constantly ascribed to the native populations of the colonies, who were thus seduced into trying to pass as “white” by adopting their way of life.²⁵

At this point of the argument one could easily be tempted to argue that this colonial past has been overcome by the formal dissolutions of the European colonial empires, and that what we are dealing with today is no longer the past but the present and, possibly, the future of Europe. But has the European project of building a common market (EEC) and, later, a political community (EU) managed to disentangle itself from Europe’s role as an imperial and neo-imperial power? As we have already mentioned, the founding narrative explaining the initial impetus for European cooperation around coal and steel in the early 1950s is built on post-conflict reconciliation between France and Germany, and thus on the overcoming of nationalistic wars that was supposed to spill over to other countries and spread peaceful relations. The Schuman Declaration (9 May 1950) became the symbol of this project: “Europe will not be made all at once, or according to a single plan. It will be built through concrete achievements which first create a *de facto* solidarity”, so stated the French politician Robert Schuman in the eponymous declaration, ritually celebrated as the founding text of the European union. This solidarity was indeed expected to create *de facto* peace: “The solidarity in production thus established will make it plain that any war between France and Germany becomes not merely unthinkable, but materially impossible.” The hope that such a process would lead us beyond the logic of nationalist wars was so strong that not only did it lead the original six members to create a joint political project, but Schuman himself was later declared the “Father of Europe”. Indeed, it does not come as a surprise to learn that, in 2006, the Father of Europe was also declared to be “a servant of god” and candidate for beatification in the Catholic church²⁶ -- a prospected sanctity of which Europeans are reminded every year,

22 *ibid.*, p. 3-5 and 61ff.

23 *Ibid.*, p. 14.

24 *Ibid.*, p. 62.

25 *Ibid.*, p. 16-17, 21.

26 <http://www.robert-schuman.com/fr/pg-saintete/pourquoi.htm>.

since the 1990s, when the EU started to celebrate the day in which the Declaration was given (9 May) as Europe day.

What is often omitted in this (literally) hagiographic narrative, is that Schuman was also proposing French-German reconciliation as a way to calm down internal tensions in the French empire, at the time in the form of the French Union (1946-1958), the watered down version of the second French Colonial Empire. In 1950, less than seventy years ago, Algeria was still a full territory of France, and Algerian nationalists were a thorn in the flesh of France. A sentence of the Schuman declaration reveals that the “European construction” (as we call it) was not immune from imperial hubris and the underlying myth of Europe as the agent of civilization. As we read in the text, the hope was also that European integration would lead to a renewal of its imperial role: “With increased resources Europe will be able to pursue the achievement of one of its essential tasks, namely, the development of the African continent.”²⁷

Schuman foresaw in a nascent “European solidarity” the new and necessary condition for a renewal of the European colonial paternalism. Other statements and projects from the French Foreign Minister in the early 1950s confirm that hopes were laid in transnational and/or intergovernmental organizations, either European or Atlantic (*videte* NATO), to preserve the decaying French Empire.²⁸ Another of the decaying European powers, Great Britain, and its PM Ernest Bevin, were also toying with project of “development” to calm down anticolonial forces, for example in Egypt, Jordan and Iraq.²⁹ The last common European colonial upheaval, and its graveyard, was the Suez crisis of November 1956, but the international context of the Cold War and the tide having swung to an East-West confrontation forced Europeans to acquiesce to their loss of global hegemony. This was also the moment when the divisions between the East and West of Europe rose to prominence and the former colonial world became the “third” world, in terms of Western Europe’s significant other³⁰ and was bracketed in the European imaginary. Only for a while, though.

Europe was not only made by the colonies, but also still thrives there, because European prosperity still depends on them, as it is the by-product of the European nation-states built on their colonial role and of a *sui generis* European entity built as an optimization of an always expanding market. Realist accounts of Europe’s construction underline that EU regulations are at best a negative form of integration, i.e. an integration

27 For the full text, see https://europa.eu/european-union/about-eu/symbols/europe-day/schuman-declaration_en

28 Hanhimaki 2003.

29 Kingston 2002, p. 10-12.

30 Challand 2009.

aimed at generating the best possible conditions for the exchange of goods and services within its borders, and that harsh measures to protect its external borders largely outweigh the pretence of a benevolent empire, willing to export its best norms to its neighbours.³¹

With regard to the former colonies at the southern borders of Europe, the so-called Barcelona process (launched in 1995) was the EU’s attempt to generate cooperation with southern Mediterranean countries. However this turned out to be a vacuous process of “cultural rapprochement” when most agreements were about forcing economic and security collaboration from Northern African states, thereby making sure they would provide cheap early potatoes, bell peppers and tomatoes when the EU internal market could not produce enough.³² The overall objective of a free trade zone managed between the EU and Southern Mediterranean states was abandoned and delegated to privatization and neoliberal diktats,³³ which now also have to accommodate the pressures coming from new seats of imperial powers, such as the Arabian Gulf.³⁴

It is in this context that we should also interpret the questioning of European borders by migration flows from its former colonies. The EU’s inability to deal with the flow of African and Middle Eastern refugees from the 1990s until now is a reminder that the “best norms” of Europe can exist only when the EU’s economic performance is at its best, when they exist at all. “Fortress Europe” is a term originally referring to a defence strategy developed by Nazis during WW2, re-emerged massively in the 1990 to criticize European discourses aimed at presenting the EU as a benevolent “civil power”,³⁵ while its policies were de facto aimed at merely preserving certain economic advantages inside of the EU, as well as trade and economic agreements with former colonies that favoured capital accumulation. No wonder the project of “European development” is still decied by some as a form of “neo-colonialism”.³⁶

Besides the creation of Frontex, the EU agency that has managed its external borders since 2004, we have now a series of aggressive and infringing measures by the EU to outsource “security” management of the alleged “refugee crisis” to non-EU soil, be it Turkey, Libya, or even Saharan states such as Mali, Chad or Niger, as a way to cut the flow of smuggling routes towards the Mediterranean.³⁷ All of this “security management”

31 One of such accounts of the EU committed to norms and standards is in Manners 2002.

32 Pepicelli 2004.

33 Cassarino 2012.

34 Hanieh 2013.

35 Silonen 2016.

36 Rutazibwa 2019.

37 See e.g. Raineri & Strazzari 2019.

is akin to a business model where EU “development” and “emergency aid” feeds not migrants, but an aid industry made of an army of European experts and consultants propagating alarmist discourses on “security threats”.³⁸ Among these “risks”, Muslim “migrants” (and not refugees) have been singled out in the last decades as the greatest danger for Europe. But alleged threats to European security, its jobs, its identity, or even its “identity”, are only the most recent iteration of old intellectual patterns that began with European colonialism and the racial map of the world that accompanied it. Before turning to the question of the future of Europe, we must turn again towards another aspect of its past.

2. Coloniality of power: Eurocentrism and the racial view of the world

The process described above, whereby Europe was made by its colonies and vice versa, was accompanied by the rise of a specific worldview in which we are still largely immersed. It is a worldview characterized by a visual organization of political space that established Europe as its centre and by a racial organization of bodies across the globe that propped up “whiteness” as the norm. It is important to keep the two categories of racism and Eurocentrism separate, because despite the fact that both have their origins in the process described above, they are separate concepts. Also notice that we are here provisionally understanding them in a purely technical way: Eurocentrism being a worldview that literally takes Europe as its center, while racism is the idea that bodies around the globe should be classified according to their racial belonging.

Eurocentrism is a very specific but now pervasive image of the world whereby a globe (the earth) is turned into a bi-dimensional map, with Europe posed at its very centre, a representation that has roots in the time of the so-called “great discoveries”, with all of the economic and cognitive shifts that these generated.³⁹ When people located in the US use expressions such as “continental philosophy”, for instance, without adding any specification, we are implicitly saying that there is one continent and thus, so to speak, a meta-continent through which we look at all the others.⁴⁰ And this is the colonial map of the world we see most of the time on our screens. Europe is “The Continent” because it is the one from which we, literally, look at the rest of the other continents and place them on an East/West divide by using the prime meridian (i.e. Greenwich, UK) as its centre. This is the same image that we unconsciously reproduce

38 Or at least some of the aid apparatus has become this. Some serious work is still done with European monies, often by smaller organizations, more attuned to the needs and to the varieties of constellations on the ground.

39 See Samir Amin 1988/2009 or Wynter 2003. The term “discovery” is obviously imbued with Eurocentrism in the technical sense of the term because it presupposes the European gaze as the standard for establishing what is new and what is old.

40 For a colonial critique of the concept of “continental philosophy”, see Torres 2006.

each time we utter words such as “Far East” or “Middle East”. In a globe, properly speaking, there can be no absolute East and West, and by stating “Middle East” we actually mean the “middle between Europe and its East”, thereby implicitly reinstating Europe as the default focal point for the organization of space. It is here that geo-graphy, the writing of the globe, literally becomes geo-politics, that is the re-production of its power sites.⁴¹

This imaginal organization of space, the so-called “political map of the world”, is also linked to the imaginal past that we reproduce whenever we classify history into “Ancient”, “Medieval” and “Modern” without further qualifications. Again: in the middle of what, if not the modern-colonial system of knowledge that places European history as the implicitly universal History, whereby to classify all histories? Speaking today about “Ancient” or “Medieval History” without further qualifications means reproducing the narrative that sustained the European Enlightenment intellectuals who created it, and thus the idea that European modernity was the destination of history. We tend to forget that this narrative is imbued with the values of those European intellectuals who perceived themselves as living at “the” turning point of history, an attitude that is very well captured by the German term for modernity: the *Neu-Zeit*, or literally the “new” epoch. It is this self-perceived “new” epoch that turns the Greek and Roman civilisations into “Ancient history” and quite a few centuries of Christendom as just its “Middle”.⁴² Besides the (quantitative) irony of naming more than a millennium of history as a mere “middle”, notice here that the narrative of Greece as the cradle of European civilisation was invented by those European intellectuals who rejected Christendom and proposed Ancient Greece and Rome as the true origin of the European spirit, thereby paving the way for an alternative, secularist founding myth.

One may think that after a few decades of invitations to provincialize Europe⁴³ or to unsettle the racist divides generated by the European bourgeois man and “his overrepresentation”,⁴⁴ the Eurocentric map of the world has been overcome. But this is far from the case. Consider the image that Google retrieves whenever we type in “political map of the world”: it is again one bi-dimensional map with Europe as its center, a map that we unconsciously reproduce in our everyday language with expressions such as “Middle East” or “Western civilisation”. From this point of view, one could even argue that Google has become the repository of the global unconscious map of the world.⁴⁵ This map is imbued with what Anibal Quijano

41 Mignolo 2001.

42 Bottici & Challand 2013, p. 122.

43 Chakrabarty 2000.

44 Wynter 2003, p. 260.

45 For instance, this Eurocentric image of a bi-dimensional map with Europe as its center is the image of the world that appears when one searches in google for “political map of the world” from inside the

called “the coloniality of power”, an expression he coined to point out that this organization of space presupposes Eurocentrism and thus the racial classification of people that originated with it.⁴⁶ Hence the importance of focusing on “coloniality”, and not simply “colonialism”: whereas the latter may be perceived as an item of the past, coloniality denotes the relations of power that continue to exist even when the formal process of colonization is over.⁴⁷

Eurocentrism must therefore not be considered as a kind of prejudice, as some sort of sickness that may affect some people but not others. It is an unconscious image of the world (ethnocentrism) that is constantly being reproduced through language and the practices of exploitation and exclusion that began with European colonialism, and thus, literally, favoured the European bourgeoisie’s “perspectives” on the world.⁴⁸ The physical map of the world with Europe at its centre may or may not be present to our minds when we use expressions such as “Middle East” or “Western Civilisation”. Yet, by the very act of uttering those words, we constantly produce and reproduce that image and make it appear natural, as if it could ever be natural to turn a globe into a bi-dimensional map with a very specific geographic location at its centre.

As Quijano showed in his seminal essay, *Coloniality of Power, Eurocentrism and Latin America* (1992) we cannot understand the range and depth of Eurocentrism as a system of knowledge, without keeping in mind how, since the beginning of modernity, the affirmation of a capitalist world system went hand in hand with the emergence of the concept of race, understood as a tool to classify people around the globe and thus for labour control.⁴⁹ This does not mean that discrimination did not exist before, but it is only with the emergence of a world capitalist system based on an international division of labour that separated the centre from the periphery (and semi-peripheries) that the modern concept of race, with its specific biological and hierarchical connotation, became hegemonic worldwide.

The entire history of how we have come to perceive people around the globe as classified according to their racial belonging still needs to be written in detail, with some arguing that it originated in the discussion as to whether the native “Americans” were humans or not, and others pointing

EU or the US (<https://www.google.com/search?client=firefox-b-1-d&q=political+map+of+the+world>) Accessed on 14 October 2019.

46 Quijano 2000.

47 For an argument in favour of this distinction see Quijano 2000 and Torres 2016. Among those who prefer to keep the notion of colonialism, see for instance Stoler 2017.

48 Amin 1988.

49 A similar point was already made by Williams in 1944, but Quijano has the merit of emphasising the distinction between colonialism and coloniality.

to later developments such as the Atlantic slave trade.⁵⁰ But in all of the different accounts, it is now clear that Eurocentrism was fully in place when, in the eighteen and nineteenth century, European philosophers and natural historians sitting in their studies systematically elaborated the notion of “race”, using information that was by that time largely supplied by travellers involved in missionary activities, colonial enterprises, and the slave trade.⁵¹

Quijano and others after him carefully focused on the way in which, during the invention of the Americas, racial classification was first mainly understood in terms of the *conquistadores*’ Christian identity, and then progressively assumed other, and specifically biological, connotations. At the beginning, the main identitarian driving force was the dichotomy Christians *versus* Indians, between the civilized *versus* savages, with its inbuilt allochronisms.⁵² The latter, understood as the placing of the other into another time, here specifically a primitive one that can only exist in relation to a supposed superior civilizational stage, worked as a powerful tool for the justification of genocide and elimination: even when the “savages” were recognized with the status of human beings, by being placed at the infancy of humanity in a pre-civilizational stage, they were also implicitly presented as pre-Christians, and thus as immature Christians to be assimilated either through physically elimination or by cultural transformation.⁵³

Progressively, with the expansion of colonization, skin colour became the phenotype that signified race and thus came to replace the “Christian *versus* savages” distinction as a tool for labour control. In Latin America, for instance, where waged labour was largely reserved for whites, all other races (and skin colours) became signifiers of different sorts of unwaged labour, ranging from serfdom, reserved mainly for *Indios*, to slavery performed by blacks in different parts of the colonies. In Anglo-America, Native Americans were less often reduced to serfdom, but instead mainly exterminated, forcibly assimilated or pushed onto reservations. Blackness remained the signifier for bodies whose labour could be extorted for free, while waged labour was largely performed by the massive immigration of white settlers.⁵⁴

50 Bernasconi & Lott 2000, p. viii.

51 Ibid., p. vii-viii.

52 For the original discussion of allochronism, see Fabian 1983.

53 A good example of how this happened is provided by Penny Weiss, who collected, among other women’s manifestos, a series of petitions by the Cherokee Women’s Council (Weiss 2018, p. 47-50). Cherokee women were at the time more empowered than their European counterparts and used their authority to voice their political ideals. In this context, a comparative reading of speeches given on 2 March 1817, 30 June 1818, and 17 October 1821, shows how Cherokee women had progressively internalized the “civilizational” narrative, and having adopted the customs and social habits of the Europeans they considered themselves as having finally exited “the state of nature” (see, in particular, p. 49).

54 Quijano 2000.

By systematically showing the intertwinement of racism and capitalism, Fanon and Quijano come, in a way, close to one another. Quijano's influential "coloniality of power" thesis connects the critique of Eurocentrism with Karl Marx's concept of world capitalism and Immanuel Wallerstein's world system theory. According to this conceptual synthesis, since 1492, i.e. the moment when European colonialism reached the entire globe, modern capitalist division of labour on a world scale has been and still remains linked to race. The reason for this is easy to understand: as a system predicated on the endless expansion of profit, capitalism needs both the extraction of surplus value from waged labour, and the extortion of free labour and resources from unwaged relations of production. Race, and the claims that some human groups are more apt to certain physical activities than others, is what guaranteed that the latter could happen. Without the slaves and natives, whose labour was extorted for free through colonialism, there could not have been any original accumulation and thus no capitalism.

This explains why Quijano insists on the notion of an intrinsic "coloniality" of modern power. His theoretical move implies distinguishing between colonialism, that is a system of external rule premised on managing differences and which does not, by definition, necessarily imply racism, and the coloniality of the modern system of power, which is unconceivable without taking race and racism into account. It is this centrality of racism to the capitalist world system that explains why Eurocentrism is so pervasive: Eurocentrism, and thus the map of the world described above, is inseparable from a system of knowledge which distinguishes between all different skin colours (black, red, yellow, brown, etc.) from the point of view of an imaginal⁵⁵ European skin colour identified as "white". There is no black nor red skin without a white gaze, in the same way that there is no "Middle East" without the Eurocentric gaze that assumed Greenwich as the point from which to turn a globe into a bi-dimensional map.

That white and black are the two colours that serve to classify all others is something built into the racial thinking from its very inception. In his 1777 "Of Different Human Races", Immanuel Kant explicitly states that "negroes and whites are the base races", with all the other colours (olive-yellow, brown, copper red) being the mere result of the combination of them through the influence of climate.⁵⁶ This is a crucial text in the history of racial thinking because it is one of the first to recognize that all human beings are part of the same species (that of human beings), but adds the qualification that they remain divided into different races. Kant defines race here as "deviations that are constantly preserved over many generations and come about as a consequence of migration (dislo-

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⁵⁵ By imaginal, we mean here what is made of images, understood as re-presentations that are also presences in themselves because they can be both conscious and unconscious. For a longer discussion of the notion of the imaginal and its political relevance, see Bottici 2014.

⁵⁶ Kant 2000[1777], p. 12, 20.

cation to other regions) or through interbreeding with other deviation of the same line of descent".⁵⁷ "Deviations" are, in turn, defined as "hereditary dissimilarities that we find in animals that belong to a single line of descent",⁵⁸ thereby inscribing the concept of race into the realm of hereditary traits and biology. The skin colour thus becomes the definitive trait that names the different races, while the level of iron in blood is identified as the main natural cause of the different colours. As Kant writes:

We now justifiably account for the different colours of plants by noting that the iron content of certain identifiable plant juices varies. Similarly, since the blood of all animals contains iron, there is nothing to prevent us from accounting for the different colours of the human races by referring to exactly the same causes. Perhaps the hydrochloric acid, or the phosphoric acid, or the volatile alkaline content of the exporting vessels of the skin, were, in this way, reflected red, or black, or yellow, in the iron particle in the reticulum. Among whites, however, these acids and the volatile alkaline content are not reflected at all because the iron in the bodily juices has been dissolved, thereby demonstrating both the perfect mixing of these juices and the strength of this human stock in comparison to others.⁵⁹

Kant does not provide any other explanation for why those acids and alkaline content would not be reflected at all in supposedly white skinned people, and he even admits that his opinions on the question of blood composition are only "preliminary",⁶⁰ but he nevertheless continues to set up whiteness as the norm from which all other colours are derived. In his view, since the part of the earth that has the most fortunate combination of cold and hot regions is that between the northern latitude of 32 and 53 degrees, that is where the "Old World" is located, we should also assume that precisely here we find the human beings "who diverge the least from their original form" and who must therefore have been "well prepared to transplant into every other region of the earth".⁶¹ The "Old World" appears thus factually so because, according to Kant's imaginal classification, the people living here were the oldest.⁶² Now, given that, according to Kant, we find here white and brunette inhabitants, they are said to be the first

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⁵⁷ Ibid., p. 9.

⁵⁸ Ibid., p. 9.

⁵⁹ Ibid., p. 19.

⁶⁰ Ibid., p. 19.

⁶¹ Ibid., p. 19-20.

⁶² Ibid., p. 20.

lineal root *genus* of the human beings as a *species*, while the “nearest northern deviation to develop from this original form” is said to be “the noble blond”.⁶³ Beginning with this lineal root genus, Kant develops a full classification of four fundamental human races based on skin colour and the natural causes that he sees as responsible for their origins, presumably because of their influence on bodily juices: “First race: Noble Blond (Northern Europe), from humid cold; Second Race: Copper red (America) from dry cold; Third race: Black (Senegambia) from humid heat; Fourth race, Olive-Yellow (Asian-Indians) from dry heat”.⁶⁴

Notice here that Kant, who notoriously never left his native Königsberg, elaborated his classification of human beings into these four races by basing his theory on biology and the accounts of human groups provided by travellers, missionaries and European merchants who were involved in world trade, which obviously included the very profitable slave trades. It is thanks to texts such as this one that skin colour and other traits that play with the visual register become crucial ingredients for the modern concept of race, which still now is largely defined in terms of fixed biological differences between human groups.⁶⁵ But notice also how the labour capacity, which must have been of crucial interest for the European merchants writing such reports, is explicitly invoked in Kant’s argument. For instance, when speaking about the Native Americans, he observes that they reveal a “half extinguished life power”, which is probably the effect of the cold weather of that region, and stands in sharp contrast to the humid warm weather where the Negro race developed. Kant further claims this accounts for the “fact that the Negro is well suited to his climate, namely strong, fleshy, and agile” and is only made “lazy, indolent and dawdling” because he is so amply supplied by his motherland.⁶⁶ As an indication of this difference in strength, Kant quotes the following example:

To cite just one example, red slaves (native-Americans) are used only for domestic work in Surinam, because they are too weak to work in the fields. Negroes are thus needed for fieldwork. The difficulties in this case are not the result of a lack of coercive measures, but the natives in the part of the world lack ability and durability.⁶⁷

.....
63 Ibid., p. 20.

64 Ibid., p. 20.

65 Lentin 2008 provides this summary definition of race but later on she distinguished between the racial naturalism and racial historicism, thereby making it clear that even after abandoning the biological connotation of the very first elaborations, the concept of race survived (Lentin 2008: 23). By elaborating on her definition, and the incorporation of racial historicism into it, we would suggest to define race in terms of fixed hereditary differences between groups, thereby suggesting that such hereditary transmission can be considered to happen either through biology or through history, and or a mix of both.

66 Kant 2000, p. 17.

67 Ibid., p. 17.

Kant provides no source for this example, but it is not hard to imagine it must have come from somebody who has been particularly attentive to labour needs.⁶⁸ Whereas the capacity for physical work is a criterion for classifying those races that are apt for slavery, Kant refers to the capacity for abstract thought as a pendant criterion for racial classification, while lecturing to his students about the future of races. As Van Norden pointed out, Kant simultaneously used the ability for abstract thought as a criterion to arrange races in a hierarchical order, and thus distinguished between those fit and those unfit for philosophical thinking. According to Kant:

1. “The race of the whites contains all talents and motives in itself.”
2. “The Hindus... have a strong degree of calm, and all look like philosophers. That notwithstanding, they are much inclined to anger and love. They thus are educable in the highest degree, but only to the arts and not to the sciences. They will never achieve abstract concepts.”
3. “The race of Negroes ... [is] full of affect and passion, very lively, chatty and vain. It can be educated, but only to the education of servants, i.e., they can be trained.”
4. “The [Indigenous] American people are uneducable; for they lack affect and passion. They are not amorous, and so are not fertile. They speak hardly at all, ... care for nothing and are lazy.”⁶⁹

If we add to this that according to Kant, “Philosophy is not to be found in the whole Orient”, we come to the striking conclusion that Chinese, Indians, Africans and the Indigenous peoples of the Americas are congenitally incapable of philosophy,⁷⁰ whereas white people are naturally prone to it. In sum, it does not appear as an exaggeration to say that races were largely set up as job descriptions, with imaginal white people containing all talents and were thus the best fit for abstract thinking and intellectual labour, while the others displayed features that made them fit for certain jobs (mainly manual) but not for others.

We have insisted on the biological language that Kant uses in his elaboration of the concept of race because, at least in the European political public discourse, we tend to perceive such biologism as outdated. But it is not. Since the early 1950s (and the UNESCO Declaration on Race and Racial Prejudice), the term race has been abandoned in most European public discourses and considered scientifically flawed, precisely because of its problematic biological connotations. And yet, as has been observed, the concept of race survived through other names, such as ethnic

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68 Williams (1944, Ch. 1-2) traces in the making of modern capitalism the origins of such discourses about “suitability” or “natural abilities” of Black enslaved persons to work in hard and hot conditions. When there was not enough indentured labour and native American slaves, a new justification was needed for the massive exploitation of Black bodies, that of the “natural qualities” that Kant refers to.

69 Quoted in Van Norden 2017. pp. 21-22

70 Ibid., pp. 22-23.

origin, civilisation, or even culture.⁷¹ The term race may have been buried, but, where it did, it was certainly alive, because constantly reproduced by the institution at the core of the political organization of European modernity: the sovereign state. As Alana Lentin, among others noted, the history of racism is intimately linked with that of the modern state.⁷²

For example, we tend to forget how the biological understanding of belonging is transmitted and constantly repeated in the legal institution of citizenship, which is at the basis of the very foundation of modern European nation-states. Since the French 1789 Declaration of the Rights of Man and the Citizen, a tension has been established between the universal aspiration of the language of human rights and the particularism of the institution of citizenship, whereby the protection of rights is only accorded to those who belong to a specific state, so that to follow Arendt's succinct formulation, the crucial question of our time is indeed that of the right to have rights.⁷³ Race is reproduced daily by the modern European state system, because in most European nation-states, citizenship is still defined by a mixture of *jus soli* (the *jus* of the territory) and *jus sanguinis* (the *jus* of blood). That is, the criteria for belonging to a European nation-states is in most cases a mixture of the rights one acquires through presence on a territory (*jus soli*) and that of blood descent (*jus sanguinis*), with some EU countries still basing citizenship on *jus sanguinis* alone.⁷⁴ This means that, in some cases, you can automatically acquire European citizenship just because your parents are European citizens, and thus because you have European blood, even if you have never lived in that territory. On the contrary, there are countries where, if you do not have that supposed European "blood", you cannot automatically acquire that citizenship even if you have lived there for most of your life. Notice also that the simple opposition between the two Latin terms may be misleading: even the *jus soli* contains in itself a biological element, in as far as, very often, the criteria for accessing citizenship through *jus soli* is the very fact of being born in a certain country rather than another. Once again, it is not the fact of inhabiting a certain territory, but the biological event of birth inside of that territory that matters, as if a land could ever literally be a mother-land or a father-land.

We tend to think that citizenship is a universal institution and that defining political belonging in terms of the place where one is born (or of the blood of their biological parents) is a normal fact. But this is far from being the case. For centuries, even in Europe, the institution of citizenship

71 For a discussion of the 1950 UNESCO declaration and the idea of "racism without race", see Lentin 2008, p. 92.

72 Lentin 2008, p. 15-23.

73 No rights without being citizens of any sovereign state, according to Arendt (1973, p. 267-304).

74 For comparative material on European citizenship and citizenship in Europe, see: <http://eudo-citizenship.eu/> and <http://globalcit.eu>.

did not even exist.⁷⁵ This is not to argue that those times were better, but rather to emphasize the contingency of the institution of citizenship, and in particular, a contingency that is intimately linked with the history of the modern state, and its exclusionary logic that divides territory according to the inside/outside. In the entry "Citizen", that Diderot wrote for the *Encyclopédie* that he co-edited with D'Alembert, and which remains in European intellectual history a symbol of the spirit of the enlightenment, Diderot captured this double-sided nature of citizenship very well. "The citizens", he wrote, "in their capacity as citizens, that is to say in their societies, are all equally noble".⁷⁶ Although Diderot means here to emphasize how nobility has now been generalized to all citizens belonging to a certain community, this is a double-sided move that enlarges the nobility from one cast to an entire class, but thereby only transposes the exclusionary mechanism of nobility from family lineage to political belonging. There is a marriage between the racial understanding of the world and the modern institution of the sovereign state, and that marriage has been sealed and exported to the entire world through the institution of modern citizenship. What may appear as a universalizing institution when looked at from the inside of a nation-state such as Diderot's France, suddenly becomes a particularizing one when seen from the outside, and in particular from the colonies. The free French citizens were the "nobility" of Diderot's modern times because they enjoyed privileges that were denied to people of other descent (and, we should not forget, from other genders).

If we now consider that, since the end of the second world war, the entire globe is divided into sovereign states, meaning that there is not even a single space on earth that is not subject to state sovereignty, it does not appear as an exaggeration to state, with Fanon, that what divides our world is first and foremost our species, that is what "race" one belongs to.⁷⁷ By elaborating on classical Marxism with his mix of psychology and phenomenology, Fanon, well before Quijano, emphasized that the link between the international division of labour and the racial classification of people across the earth is a twin product of European colonialism.⁷⁸ As he goes on to explain, in "the colonies you are rich because you are white, you are white because you are rich, so whereas in the centre of capitalist production it makes sense to distinguish between structure and superstructure, in the colonies we have to emphasize that the superstructure is also

75 Mendieta 2020, [p.8].

76 Mendieta 2020 [p.10]. Although Mendieta mentions this as an example of the emancipatory potential of modern citizenship, with its "democratization of the spirit of nobility to all citizens", we should also contextualize that effect and looks at it from the point of view of those who are excluded from it.

77 Fanon 1961/2004, p. 14.

78 In his oft forgotten seminal work, Trinidadian historian Eric E. Williams also notes how racism emerged as a justification for the increasing use of slaves in Atlantic commerce. For him, it is capitalism that breeds racism (Williams 1944).

the economic infrastructure, and thus the cause is the effect”.⁷⁹ In contrast to Quijano, we find in Fanon not only an analysis of the intertwining of racial schemes and world capitalism, but also an emphasis, as we have already mentioned, on the reflections of those mechanisms in the social unconscious. Since the capitalist division of labour is global, the unconscious patterns that sustain it must be equally global.

Already in 1961 Franz Fanon could observe “the colonized, underdeveloped man is a political creature in the most global sense of the term”.⁸⁰ We must understand global in the dual sense of the depth of oppression but also its range. When we take the perspective of the colonized, and thus of the entire international division of labour that the concept of race came to signify, one cannot but take the entire globe as the framework of analysis. This does not mean that there exists a global racist unconscious that works in the same way and in the same manner all around the globe. Despite the fact that Fanon used the notion of collective unconscious when analysing the complex of the colonized, he also emphasized how the latter changed considerably from one context to the next. Beginning with Fanon, we can therefore see how, in order to analyse the structures that perpetrate racism, we need both a potentially global framework, but also the careful work on the specificity of each context.

3. From colonial politics of the past to the necropolitics of the present

The notion of a coloniality of modern power that Quijano develops by referring mainly to Latin America also clearly applies to other former colonies and certainly to those located at the Southern Mediterranean border of Europe. All European nations involved in colonial enterprises denied to the indigenous populations of (North) Africa and the Middle East intellectual and civic maturity. In particular, the interwar period generated different types of mandates for the League of Nations expressly based on the ability to reach independence or not. Mandates A, B or C were established based on a supposed degree of “preparedness” for self-government, thereby providing excuses for European powers, and in particular for France, England, Germany and Italy, to retain a colonial foothold in those territories after the collapse of the Ottoman Empire. Albert Memmi, in his *Portrait du colonisé* (published in 1956, English version 1965) describes how the colonizers created the myth of the immaturity of the colonized through symbolic mechanisms such as comparing the colonized to a teenage society⁸¹ and how, in parallel, the colonized progressively lost hope of reaching a full sense of citizenship. The discourses of the colonizers were internalized to the point of naturalization and thus

79 Fanon 1961/2004, p. 14.

80 Ibid., p. 40.

81 e.g. Memmi 1965, p. 98.

normalization: a lot of colonized people really ended up thinking of their societies as still “immature” and thus incapable of self-government.⁸² The infantilization of native societies is a colonial trope which has nurtured a sense of biological and cultural difference, reproducing forms of structural racism at different levels.

Quijano's point about the mixture of religion and phenotypes in the expression of racism is indeed also at play in European encounters with Northern African populations. The common Christian origins of the various European settlers, be they Catholic or Protestant, was perceived as opposed to the Muslim identity of most local populations. Not by chance, the French empire organized a tiered system of citizenship based on religion in its Algerian colony, opposing Christians (first rate citizens) to “Indigenous” (second-, or at times even third-class citizens).⁸³ The presence of Jews in these colonies, at a time when European Jews strived to be assimilated in the metropolises, added a second putative divide, that of “whiteness”. Jews, even if more autochthonous than Muslim Arabs,⁸⁴ were imagined as white and became, with the infamous Edict Crémieux of 1870, full citizens. From there a gradient slope of superiority expressed in a sliding scale of white to black ran from the European metropole towards Africa, thereby reproducing that traumatizing complex of the colonized that Frantz Fanon captured so well in his *Black Skin, White Mask*. This complex is based on a dichotomy between black and white where the latter work as two extreme of a spectrum including different variations. Fanon himself gives different examples of this and of the racism existing within the colonial realm itself, for example when he narrates how *Antillais*, himself included, were taught to look down on “savage Senegalese” or how he was shocked “to learn that the North Africans despised men of colour”, thereby meaning people of a darker skin colour.⁸⁵ Still nowadays gradation in skin colour is a powerful signifier in the region, so much so that we could say, paraphrasing Fanon, that the whiter you are, the richer you are, and vice versa.

The meaning of citizenship and its administrative praxis were also profoundly racialized in the colonial context. We will now dwell on the Algerian case because a critical colonial analysis of the history of French citizenship at the time of decolonization (and European construction) can shed light on both the generally exclusionary mechanism at play in citizenship for those who are non-citizens, but also for those who are lesser citizens. Todd Shepard has captured better than anybody else both the

82 Memmi 1965, p. 96. This echoes H. Sharabi's famous theory of *Neopatriarchy* (1988).

83 Shepard 2008.

84 Note here that North Africa was conquered by Arab Muslims at the time of the Prophet, and thus Berber and Jewish populations antedated the Arab presence there.

85 Fanon 1952/2008, p. 126 and p. 82

violence of this legal codification and the legacies of decolonization in the French context.⁸⁶ In his *The Invention of Decolonization* Shepard documents how France, which originally refused to leave the Algerian colony and pushed for a politics of assimilation for a century, created new measures to specifically target Muslim Algerians and prevent their migration towards metropolitan France in a dramatic U-turn at the end of the Algerian war in 1962. Why this abrupt change of policies? In the 19th century, France favoured measures that would grant a form of citizenship to Algerians who would abandon their local, religious customs. Thus, if a Muslim Algerian accepted the French civic code during the period 1865-1919, this person would have access to better jobs and benefit from limited political rights (though not yet as a first-class citizen like “European” French or Jewish Algerians, who were promoted to full citizenship with the Edict Crémieux). Muslims in French Algeria could only get French *nationality*, but were never entitled to full *citizenship*.⁸⁷ After WW2, when France realized that the assimilation proposed was only “faint”,⁸⁸ it proposed integration of all its citizens under its *Union Française*, a last-ditch attempt in 1946 to retain its Empire under another name. Yet, in North Africa, all of the Muslim population was denied any say in the legal aspects of self-rule and suffered severe discrimination in French politics. For ex., representation from Algeria in the French Assembly was based until 1958 on the principle of a “double collège”, with French settlers and Jewish populations (the first electoral college) electing the same number of deputies as the rest of the population of Algeria (the second college). Although the number of electors was much smaller for the first college (probably about 200,000 total in the settler population) than for the second one (about seven million “Algerians” in total)⁸⁹, both colleges sent the same number of deputies to the *Palais Bourbon*, presenting a serious discrimination against the Muslim population of Algeria. This is one of the many instances of the racialization of Muslim subjects, which would peak at the end of the Algerian war.⁹⁰ In the neighbouring Tunisian protectorate, we see similar discriminatory patterns: French and European workers received a 30% higher salary than their Tunisian (read Muslim) counterparts – the so-called “*tiers colonial*” in French (or colonial third”.⁹¹ Symptomatically, the so-called “French Muslims of Algeria” (FMA), an official category of

86 Shepard 2008.

87 For a detailed analysis and description, see Shepard 2018, p. 19-54.

88 Ibid., p. 31.

89 See e.g. https://www.persee.fr/doc/pop_0032-4663_1971_hos_26_1_4969 for figures about European and local population in “French Algeria”.

90 Shepard 2008, p. 37, 42, fn 67.

91 Anderson 1986, p. 148.

French administrative law in the Algerian departments after 1944⁹² were not even consulted in the referendum of April 1962, leading to the end of the Algerian war.⁹³

In sum, throughout the 1950s and 1960s, Muslims were the clear target of legal and administrative measures meant to prevent their inclusion in the fold of full French citizenship, while other non-French residents of colonial Algeria were given support for repatriation in their capacity as “Europeans”. These measures reinforced what Fanon called the complex of the colonized by sealing the sense of lesser citizenship in the letter of the law itself, and by grounding a *legal* opposition between Europeans on the one hand, and Muslims on the other.⁹⁴

Even if the end of colonial empire is a relatively distant historical event, many analysts argue that the specific targeting of Muslims and North African migrants by police forces, law, or public discourse in contemporary Europe is a direct follow-up to a long history of colonial rule by difference. Colonial times and practices still live with us. When, after the November 2015 attacks in Paris, President Hollande declared “the state of exception”, he did so through a legal category whose origin harks back to the time of the Algerian war (March 1955 to be precise).⁹⁵ Similarly, after the Cologne New Year’s Eve sexual harassment attacks in 2016, we saw the resurgence of racialized discourses portraying “North Africans” as hyper-sexualized, essentially sick individuals who are a threat to European public order.⁹⁶ To be sure, the “global war on terror” that ensued since 9/11 contributed to the spread of the myth of a clash between Islam and the West.⁹⁷ Some specifically national episodes have become mingled

92 Shepard 2008, p. 41, 51.

93 Ibid., p. 41, 94. The apex of this confessional discrimination against Muslims came with measures taken to decide who would be entitled to “return” to the metropolis, i.e. continental France. There were two types of residents in French Algeria: “French citizens” on the one hand, and European residents, who did not enjoy political rights in the French system. The group of French citizenship itself was split, as we have seen into three groups, Christians, Jews, and Muslims. Jews were mostly dealt with and considered as 100% French citizens since the Crémieux Edict, but a tiny minority of Jews in the Algerian Sahara, (the so-called Muzabite Jews, probably less than 1,000 persons), who had refused to renounce their customary, religious laws in the 19th c, were granted automatic access to France in 1961 when they were granted full French citizenship. They were thus “*rapatriés*”, like “French Algerians”. Muslims who, we have seen were second-class citizens, were not permitted access to the European continent and were at best considered “*réfugiés*” (Shepard 2008: Ch. 9 “Rejecting the Muslims”). But it was instead non-French European residents in Algeria who were allowed access to France, on confessional grounds, even if they had no legal reasons to be given privileged access to “return” migration towards France (Shepard 2008, p. 224-247).

94 For Shepard, this means that “Islam” is legally connected to French citizenship from 1962 onwards. Other authors insist that this targeting of Muslims and Islam might date back to 19th century. It is clear that previous colonial rule of difference built the basis for this now formal identification of Muslims as legally different.

95 Sereni 2015.

96 Dakhliya 2017.

97 Bottici & Challand 2011.

over time with the process of building a supposed “common European identity” that is perceived as threatened by migrants in general, and by those of Muslim descent in particular.

Indeed, when Frantz Fanon stated that Europe has been “literally the creation of the Third World”,⁹⁸ he meant more than the mass plundering of material goods and labour from the colonies. The colonial and decolonization contexts contributed as well to building a certain idea of citizenship, one that has a long history of entrenched Islamophobic and anti-black racism. In his more recent work, *Arab Sex and France* (2017), Todd Shepard illustrates another legacy of decolonization, that is the image of a sexually aggressive man, perceived as a danger to French women, and the parallel new paragon of the Arab homosexual, perceived as threatening the heteronormative European cultural order and self-understanding. This stereotyped image of a sexually aggressive Arab man first emerged from social groups who resisted Algerian decolonization, in particular the *Organisation de l'Armée Secrète* (OAS, a military club of officers refusing de Gaulle's acquiescence to decolonize Algeria). One publication that distilled racist and homophobic remarks against French Muslims of Algeria was *Europe Action*, a journal frequently associated with “sexual orientalism” and fears of aggressive sexualized others (generally male).⁹⁹ The continuity from this right-wing imaginary all the way to the present, with the FLN of Jean-Marie and Marine Le Pen, and other intellectuals from the *Nouvelle Droite*, such as Alain de Benoist, plays with the fear of France and Europe under threat and is strikingly described by Shepard as part of this long colonial history. The original formulation of the theory of “great replacement”, used nowadays by white supremacists and terrorist attacks against Muslims throughout the globe,¹⁰⁰ was first written by Renaud Camus, a journalist and essayist whose ideas crystallized in the context of the 1970s post-Algerian war.¹⁰¹ According to this conspiracy theory, the very existence of Europe would be threatened by such large and sustained waves of immigration that white people will soon be fully replaced by Muslims and/or people of colour.

To sum up this point, we can see how the specific colonial context is enmeshed with a larger self-understanding of Europe, and vice versa.¹⁰² Similar arguments would be made about anti-Black feelings in other parts of Europe, for example, Enoch Powell's “River of Blood” speech and ha-

98 Fanon 1961, p. 58.

99 Shepard 2017, p. 19-41, 282.

100 For ex, the recent attacks in Christchurch in New Zealand in March 2019, or in El Paso, August 2019. For reference to great replacement in the El Paso shootings, see “Minutes Before El Paso Killing, Hate-Filled Manifesto Appears Online”. *The New York Times* (3 Aug 2019).

101 Shepard 2017, p. 125-129; 282-284.

102 Haleh Davis & Serres 2018.

tred-filled discourses against Jamaican immigration in the UK.¹⁰³ The myth of a shared European cultural identity is based on a fantasy of whiteness that runs throughout the European colonial history. Arabs, Turks or “North Africans” (even when the latter are regular citizens of France, Spain or Germany) are constantly singled out in xenophobic discourses as outcasts, threats or lives with less value because they are seen as “non-white” and therefore a threat to the fantasized European purity. Those speaking of a “post-racial Europe”, on the basis that, since WWII, race has largely been banned from European public discourse,¹⁰⁴ should consider the way in which other categories, such as civilisation, ethnicity or even citizenship, are now doing the same work that biological discourses did in the past. The term “race” may have been buried in the European public sphere, but it constantly being re-enacted at its borders.

The current so-called “migration-crisis”, which may indeed only be a crisis from the point of view of this fantasy of pure whiteness (for there have always been large-scale migrations around the globe), must also be read as another episode in this long history of racial discourses. From the early alleged “migration crisis” of 1991, with the stunning images of the boat *Vlora* full of Albanians that were denied entry to the Italian city of Bari, to the flow of refugees following the war in Yugoslavia, to the endless debates about whether to accept mere dozens or thousands of migrants in the mid 2010s, all the way to the illegal measures by the Italian Minister Matteo Salvini to criminalize solidarity around the Mediterranean,¹⁰⁵ both European states, and Europe, have been administering the chances of survival in front of death.

Faced with hundreds of thousands of migrants, the EU has more often than not preferred to let people die on the perilous journey to Europe, or turned a blind eye to the paramilitary units making money smuggling refugees towards or in Libya.¹⁰⁶ It is therefore apt to apply the term of “necropolitics” to these instances. Mbembe originally coined the term to depict how modern sovereign power, in general, is much more than Foucault's biopower. For Mbembe, the term necropolitics is a complement to biopower, as it allows us to understand how weapons create “death-worlds”, i.e. spaces for the living dead.¹⁰⁷ Later in that article, he explores the specificity of colonial contexts for necropolitics, where the consequences for racialized subjects have been the worst.¹⁰⁸ For him the “most accomplished form of necropolitics is the con-

103 Gilroy 1987.

104 For a critique of post-racial Europe, see Lentin 2020.

105 By denying access to Italian ports for boats rescuing migrants and refugees, or by pressing charges against the NGOs staffing these rescue operations. For another example of criminalization on the French-Italian border, see Celikates 2018.

106 For an example of complacency towards Sudanese paramilitary forces and the “migration” question to Europe, see <https://www.middleeasteye.net/news/eu-accused-hiding-links-sudan-armed-groups-migration-funding>.

107 Mbembe 2003, p. 12 and 40.

108 Ibid., p. 17, 24.

temporary colonial occupation of Palestine".¹⁰⁹ Extending his argument, we want to argue that even in the "post-colonial" context (the false belief that we are allegedly *after* colonialism), there continues to be an uneven distribution of violence and inequality in terms of one's chances in front of death. If during the formal European colonial empires, the European settlers consistently benefitted from high protections and suffered lower rate of mortality than the colonized, similar inequalities are still at play with Fortress Europe in the present. We use here "necropolitics" to denote an uneven "politics of death",¹¹⁰ and, in particular, a biopolitical apparatus that distributes different life trajectories according to how close they are to the prospect of premature death.

The phrase "Fortress Europe", originally referring to a defence strategy developed by Nazis during WW2, re-emerged massively in the 1990s to decry and criticize common European policies meant to prevent the entry of migrants from its eastern and southern borders.¹¹¹ 1999 was a turning point, with concerted measures adopted by the EU to stop migration from the Balkans and North Africa.¹¹² Later instruments, such as Frontex are just the continuation of this effort to prevent migration across the Mediterranean. The more the EU builds its fortress, the less legitimate is its claim to offer a new model of citizenship. The fact that, from November 2019, the next EU Migration Commissar will be entrusted with a new portfolio called "Defence of the European Way of Life" is further proof that the current management of migration in the European context is still imbued with colonial and essentialist discourses, aimed at perpetrating a biopolitical apparatus that discriminates between lives that are worth living and lives that not.

While the administration of death through the control of borders is a clear case of necropolitics, a less evident yet very powerful example is the administration of ecological resources. In that instance, it is less the political component of Europe than the consequence of its economic policies that comes to the front. Through three decades of neoliberal policies and a commitment to capitalist exploitation, Europe has been and remains a central actor in what we could call the current "environmental necropolitics": while Europe has been and continues to be one of the regions that has most benefitted from the unlimited plundering of natural resources, it is now mainly the global south that faces the deadly consequences of such plundering, with heat waves of unprecedented levels in the "global south" turning locals into the "living dead", to take again the expression

109 Ibid., p. 27.

110 Ibid., p. 21.

111 On the history of Fortress Europe, see Silonen 2016. A search on JSTOR (done 25 Aug. 2019) with the phrase "Fortress Europe" produced 2,337 results, with a maximum 89 hits per decade until the 1990s. It then peaked to 683 in the 1990s, 741 results with that phrase in the 2000-2009 decade and 698 for the 2010s. See <https://bit.ly/2NBZDMp>.

112 See e.g. www.economist.com/leaders/1999/10/14/fortress-europe (accessed 20 Aug. 2019).

of Mbembe.¹¹³ This is particularly clear in terms of the consequences of human-made climate change, with Europe, along with the US and China, still being one of the main emitters of carbon dioxide, while Africa and East Asia pay the highest prices for the extreme weather patterns generated by such emissions.¹¹⁴

Since the 1990s, experts on global warming have repeated calls to stop uncontrolled economic and industrial growth. In August 2019, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) presented its latest report on "Climate Change and Land". Priyadarshi Shukla, an expert on climate and food security and co-chair of one of the IPCC working groups, underlined the unequal consequences of global warming: "We will see different effects in different countries, but there will be more drastic impacts on low-income countries in Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean".¹¹⁵ *Le Monde*, in its coverage of the report's release,¹¹⁶ estimates that 500 million persons will be exposed to the growing trend of desertification, but almost none of these live in Europe or advanced capitalist polities. The risk of desertification, and with it deaths and new rounds of conflict, are once again exported to the Middle East, South and East Asia.¹¹⁷

There is however a positive light in this report, albeit a dim one. The group of experts that put out that report was comprised of about 100 international researchers. For the first time, a majority of these (53%)¹¹⁸ were from "developing countries" (the expression chosen in *Le Monde*), bringing awareness to topics that are usually overlooked by European and North American analysts. Leaders of "autochthonous people and communities" from 42 countries greeted this report positively because the alarm bell that it raised gave them a chance to defend an alternative model of land development. These leaders called for more community-based control over natural resources and the preservation of respectful know-how and management, often gendered, of natural resources.¹¹⁹ This

113 Mbembe 2003, p. 40.

114 See the data of CO2 emissions per capita with Europe still above all other world regions (except North America with a double rate of emission per capita), at: shorturl.at/giH18 (accessed Oct. 12 2019, via [Google Public Data Explorer](https://www.google.com/publicdata/)).

115 For more on the IPCC report on climate change, desertification, land degradation, sustainable land management, food security, and greenhouse gas fluxes in terrestrial ecosystems, see www.ipcc.ch/2019/08/08/land-is-a-critical-resource_srccl/ (accessed 2 Sept. 2019).

116 *Le Monde*, 9 Aug, 2019, p. 2-3.

117 See https://www.lemonde.fr/planete/article/2019/08/08/l-humanite-epuise-les-terres-selon-le-dernier-rapport-du-giec_5497654_3244.html.

118 See factsheet report at <https://www.ipcc.ch/site/assets/uploads/2019/08/190729-SRCCL-leaflet.pdf> (accessed 29 Aug 2019).

119 The quote, in French is "garantir les droits communautaires sur les terres et les ressources est essentiel à la gestion durable et la conservation des forêts (...) en particulier à travers le leadership

simply means that awareness of the global scope of the issue should also go hand in hand with rethinking global natural resources as common resources, outside of the boundary thinking and methodological nationalism inherited from the past. Recognition of the positive role played by indigenous communities in fighting natural catastrophes should not lead us to indulge in the fantasy of a possible return to the origins, even less so when the latter are understood in terms of ethical origins. Human beings have always been migrating so, properly speaking, nobody is purely “ab-original”, that is there from the very origins, if not in the universalizing sense that all humans are aboriginal to planet earth.

4. In lieu of a conclusion

When seen through the lens of a colonial critical approach, the language of “crisis” that currently surrounds the European project cannot but appear as misleading. More than a “European crisis” or a “migration crisis”, we should speak of a “re-politicization of the battles over borders”. Migrants crossing borders and carrying signs such as “we did not cross the border, the border crossed us” remind us that the movement of people and goods between Europe and its colonies has been happening for a long time. Equally, battles over who is in and out of Europe are a stark reminder that human beings have not always lived in political formations characterized by sovereign boundaries demarcating the inside from the outside.

Will there ever be a Europe after Eurocentrism? Only if Europe becomes a space of exchange that encompasses its cultural and political neighbours as well, with liminal zones of crossing, debate and at times disagreement and struggle, but in which joint emancipatory and solidarity projects can emerge. Europe’s history cannot only be the history of its member states: it is also a Europe of its conflicted relations. This means that it is not made up of European voices only, but of intellectuals, thinkers, artists and migrants, whose very act of crossing the border can have a democratic effect, in the etymological sense of an expression of the power of the people. In the current necropolitical configuration, crossing borders illegally ceases to be a mere act of civil disobedience and can indeed become a process of constituent power.¹²⁰ Triggered by Europe’s colonial past, border crossing can project Europe towards a different future, prefiguring a different form of citizenship outside the exclusionary logic of nation-states, which many Europeans believe is the reason Europe was created in the first place. Maybe the reconfiguration of European citizenship is not the entire story, but it is at least one step closer.

Instead of contemplating our supposed European identity, in need of preservation, and threatened by an alleged “crisis”, we should rather

des femmes autochtones et rurales.” *Le Monde* p. 3.

120 Celikates 2018.

follow the call of Fanon to defend a shared sense of solidarity, transcending narrow conceptions of identities. In the concluding pages of *Black Skin, White Masks*, Fanon charts a path forward that resonates with the idea of a common political project for generating new selves:

[...] I acknowledge one right for myself: the right to demand human behavior from the other.
And one duty: the duty never to let my decisions renounce my freedom. [...]
There is no white world; there is no white ethic--any more than there is white intelligence. [...]
I am not a prisoner of History. I must not look for the meaning of my destiny in that direction. I must constantly remind myself that the real leap consists of introducing invention into life.
In the world I am heading for, I am endlessly creating myself.
I show solidarity with humanity provided I can go one step further.¹²¹

121 Fanon 1952/2008, p. 204.

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Empire of Graveyards

Joshua Clover

Abstract: the European Union is understood, in the first instance, to be a bid toward providing a new center for accumulation on a world scale in the waning of the US-centered cycle. This effort has failed, in ways that have helped drive a lurch toward renewed and deadly European ethnonationalism that focuses on borders within and at the frontiers of the Eurozone, and is on the rise both on the right and, in a disturbing development, on the left, identified here as “Fortress Leftism.” The EU has been an effective zero-sum economy at least since 2008, funneling value from peripheral states to core. This limits its capacity to absorb immigration in ways conducive to capital. Consequently the pressures on its borders have intensified, a fact complicated by the historically unique situation wherein the internally differentiated superstate with its own core & periphery serves as core for a larger capitalist system. Immigration from the far peripheries arrives not at Europe’s core but the lumpenized nations of the europa-periphery, with Greece as the example: unable to absorb, compelled to function as Europe’s absorption zone. The essay finally argues, reviewing unimplementable Brexit and the ignored Greek *oxi* vote, that such developments intimate the collapse of the historic left-right spectrum, and of the parliamentary procedures that have accompanied it. From the rubble, the essay argues for a renewed international communism as the only adequate direction.

Keywords: Europe, Greece, world systems, ethnonationalism, borders, growth, political economy.

1. Europe and Empire

While Afghanistan has truly earned the title “graveyard of empires” where imperial pretensions go to die, is this formula not the most comprehensive description of Europe itself? Dead empires as far as the eye can see, hulking skeletons resting where their once-living bodies fell, bones at varying stages of liquefaction in the continental rain. At some late moment in this cemeterial history, Europe played host to a transformation in the mode that empire would take. In the terms offered by Giovanni Arrighi, this is the shift from “TMT” to “MTM” empires: the former extracting money from its territories in order to expand territory further, the latter expending money to expand territorially only in so far as it would increase the store of money.

The specifically capitalist form of empire, whose colonial imposition of direct domination (while not ignored) is somewhat downplayed within Arrighi’s framework of Gramscian hegemony extended to the scale of the nation-state, will eventually depart the Old World so that the United States can fulfill its historical mission to realize in full this peculiarly European invention. The imperial form in question features a set of internal compulsions, among them the flow of jobs toward low-wage nations and the flow of raw production goods toward high-productivity

nations, the great tidal washes of value and immiseration that found the relation between core and periphery.

While these compulsions produce an uneven landscape of exploitation and extractivism — industrial- and settler-centered dispossessions — they function as well at a planetary scale, as logistics build-outs allow for transnational wage arbitrage, productivity increases that are uneven but generalized, and extractivist regimes that intensify locally as climate and resource pressures develop globally. The TMT empire may have aspired to arrive at the edges of the map, but the MTM empire, even if it begins from a base a few hundred kilometers across, is born global, since in its compulsion to expand it must reconfigure every minute of daily life in every quarter of the globe as it funnels surplus value inward toward the great catchment of the core. For Arrighi, this expansion has two phases: material expansion, effectively meaning growth in systemic profits, employment, and productive capacities; and financial expansion, wherein control over global capital flows yields profits without material growth, with the shift from one phase to the other being both peak and sign of autumn.

It is useful to insist on reformulating this according to value production along the *arc of accumulation*, wherein early increases in productivity generate profits extensive enough to draw in greater capital reinvestment and to expand major sectors at a rate that more than countervails the tendency of productivity increases to expel workers from production. Eventually, these expulsions of labor from productive sectors exclude the basis of surplus value and *discumulation* sets in — Arrighi's financial expansion — wherein accumulation of value wanes and the hegemon is left to arrogate as much profit as possible from the motion of money in the markets.

This arc is the course of empire, contested at every moment, recomposing class and capital along the way. And it is in turn because of this intrinsic drive toward the transformation of life, rather than the simple seizure of territory which in the past could leave local “ways of life” largely unchanged, that such a situation can be passed off as a social phenomenon somehow independent of empire itself and called “modernity.”

This particular sleight, wherein a concrete mode of political-economic domination can appear as a span along an abstract timeline, gives sense to the concept of “Eurocentrism” which, often understood as an relative valuation of certain cultures (it is hard not to place all of these terms within the disbelief of quotation marks) or episteme — a sort of Mercator projection for consciousness — is more properly the triumph of this substitution. Let those who worry as to whether we have ever been modern turn to dust; we have passed off the characteristic intensifications of settler-capital as “progress,” have lived through the remaking of daily life according to the law of value or died in its wake, and that is enough to make historical claims.

2. Europe as Empire

There is no thought of Europe, all of this is to say, which is not a thought of empire and of accumulation. In seeking to understand the current fate of the European Union, rather than falling into the incommensurations of Schengen and Maastricht, the longstanding differentiations and conflicts according to ethnicity, sovereignty, and far more, it may prove functional to begin from the EU's contemporary status as empire or imperial aspirant, conditioned as it is by the unraveling of United States hegemony, the waning US capacity to center a cycle of accumulation (if not its ability to serve as an increasingly lonely global policeman) and the potential opening thus for a new hegemon. Arrighi's own late calculation imagined three divergent courses, all of them hinged on China's capacity (or lack thereof) to seize the global reins. One of these paths featured an Atlantic compact wherein “The United States and its European allies might attempt to use their military superiority to extract a “protection payment” from the emerging capitalist centers of East Asia,” and thereby bring into being “the first truly global empire in world history.”¹

Against this, the actual existing wreckage of the European project. This essay understands the EU to be in the first instance an attempt to bring into being a superstate that, even if not centering a global empire on its own, could nonetheless be one center able to drive the restart of accumulation on a global scale and help coordinate a long 21st century — an empire forged treaty by treaty for the express purpose of taking the imperial baton pass from the United States at a late moment when no single western nation approaches the necessary scale and population for such a gambit. In train this essay understands the EU's current pathologies to be in many regards consequences of said ambition's grand hollowing.

Another way to limn this analytical framework is to suggest that the internal relations that bedevil the EU at present, notably around economic renationalization, intensified border regimes, and exits of various ilks, can only be understood against the EU's relation to the global politics in which it is situated. Here Immanuel Wallerstein's clear explication of the rationale for hyphenating “world-system” proves useful: “Putting in the hyphen was intended to underline that we are not talking about systems, economies, empires of the (whole) world, but about systems, economies, empires that are a world (but quite possibly, and indeed usually, not encompassing the entire globe).”²

Because of this bespoke concatenation of states planned to function as a single empire, we might speak for the first time of two world-

1 Giovanni Arrighi, *The Long Twentieth Century: Money, Power, and the Origins of Our Times*, London: Verso, 2010, 381.

2 Immanuel Wallerstein, *World-Systems Analysis: An Introduction*, Durham: Duke University Press, 2004, 16–17.

systems arranged such that one is nested within the other: the European Union, and capitalist world-system more broadly which the EU hoped to center. For the moment we will have to perservere amidst the analytical ambiguities which result from the failure of these hopes. We cannot speak of EU as hegemon, nor of an EU-centered cycle of accumulation; its hopes were not to be realized. We can nonetheless speak of the EU as having its own core and periphery and of being a core of a larger world-system to which other states are peripheral. So in the first case the core is played for the most part by Germany, though states such as Austria and the Netherlands are functionally part of the core, while the periphery is played almost everyone else, most famously by the PIIGS (Portugal, Italy, Ireland, Greece, and Spain), in addition to smaller economies such as Cyprus and Malta. And in the second case, the EU operates as a core for surrounding national economies, extending east toward Russia, south into the Maghreb, and to the Mashriq between them. Consequent to the double system, what looks peripheral from Frankfurt may appear as the core from Aleppo or Pristina.

This bears careful consideration for the simple reason that it organizes what is at present the most dramatic, most dramatized, and most dangerous situation confronting Europe as world-system and as part of a world-system: migrant flows set in motion by the imbricated triumvirate of economic failure, civil war, and climate collapse; the border regimes being revised against these flows; and the renewed ethnonationalisms mobilized to enable both legal and extralegal violence against migrants. These matters, which cannot be reduced to political-economic determinations, can nonetheless not be thought without them, and it is here that we return to the conjoined matter of empire and accumulation.

3. Europe and Settler-Capitalism

Aimé Césaire assessed the bifurcation within the European imperial innovation decisively in his *Discourse on Colonialism* (1955): “The fact is that so-called European civilization — “Western” civilization” — as it has been shaped by two centuries of bourgeois rule is incapable of solving the two major problems to which its existence has given rise: the problem of the proletariat and the colonial problem.” These two problems are often registered as fundamentally distinct political economies, “capitalism” and “settler-colonialism,” and treated as if some speciation, asynchrony of development, or originary basis has left them too distinct to be grasped within a single framework or global unity (hence the recent vogue for pluralizing “histories of capitalism”). Understanding Césaire’s two major problems as *different, but one* — dialectically, that is to say — strikes me as a primary demand for thought at the level of the world-system. Though it is the nature of empiricism and of the micropolitical that ever more finely grained analysis will inevitably reveal ever more variegated local particulars until finally every instance is unique and models are revealed

as nothing more than abstractions useful or otherwise, capitalism and settler-colonialism might be less differing modes than differing geographical and temporal inflections of a single mode of production. In any regard they are more properly identified as co-constituting the political economy in full of what Glen Sean Coulthard has usefully called “settler capitalism” — the European style of empire which has depended on both.

Their orienting forms of dispossession are, as noted, exploitation of labor and extraction of natural resources respectively. In the terms drawn from the critique of political economy, we might say they are centered on command over labor power on the one hand, or variable capital; and command over means of production (particularly raw materials) on the other, or constant capital. Needless to say, both are always present; we speak here only of balance or orientation, shaped by and setting the terms of how it will be placed within any larger world economy. Just as a single capital must bring labor power and means of production together toward the highest level of productivity, so must empire at the level of the world-system and eventually the planet.

We might further clarify these inflections of political economy, perhaps toward circling back to their initial nominations. A political economy oriented by exploitation is necessarily one of *absorption*, in the sense of seeking to absorb labor inputs indefinitely toward material expansion, managed according to the discipline of the wage. A political economy oriented by extraction is necessarily one of *coloniality*, wherein the dispossession of Indigenous populations means their removal from traditional lands with neither promise nor threat of employment, left to be managed by forms of direct domination from genocide to apartheid to incarceration and other policing.

We might say, among other things, that the absorptive mode is that most attended to by the Marx of *Capital*, while mode of coloniality finds a leading thinker in the Frantz Fanon of *Wretched of the Earth*. Marx discloses with sustained care the ways that industrial and manufacturing economies absorb the dispossessed into a class of actual and potential laborers who are differentiated internally to allow for growth at the lowest possible wage level (hence reserve army of labor et cetera). Compassing nations colonized by the competing capitals of Europe, Fanon writes of how those dispossessed in this manner, “forced off the family land by the growing population in the countryside and by colonial expropriation, circle the towns tirelessly, hoping that one day or another they will be let in” — a veritable image of non-absorption.³

These differences go a good distance toward explaining, for example, why Marx and Fanon were able to reach such different conclusions regarding the nature of the lumpenproletariat, the structure

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3 Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*. Translated by Richard Philcox. New York: Grove Press, (1963) 2004, 81.

of revolution, and the relation of the two; they offer not so much different interpretations of a shared situation as a shared interpretation of distinct situations where different relations are in play. Moreover, neither absorption nor coloniality is adequately explanatory of the history of unfree labor, the necessary third term of slavery — which features both immiserating labor exploitation and brutal direct domination, and whose role in accumulation remains fiercely contested, though no one disputes its role as pedestal for European empire:

Direct slavery is just as much the pivot of bourgeois industry as machinery, credits, etc. Without slavery you have not cotton; without cotton you have not modern industry. It is slavery that has given the colonies their value; it is the colonies that have created world trade, and it is world trade that is the pre-condition of large-scale industry. Thus slavery is an economic category of the greatest importance.⁴

One might note that the global success of United States rested on its arrangement of all three: its historically specific admixture of wage discipline and direct domination toward an empire “founded on the lash, the land grab, and the Lowell System.”

Because the imperial core comes to feature large-scale absorption (as in the image of workshop to the world and so on) that often effaces bloody histories of land struggles on which it is overlaid; because it appears to be *where accumulation happens* rather than where the lion’s share of value is captured for which the full ensemble of relations that constitute a world-system is requisite⁵; and thus finally because the core’s character appears to be an explanation for, more than a beneficiary of, accumulation at a global scale, the central and inescapable feature of wage-labor exploitation is often given an exaggerated role in understanding systemic accumulation (including, arguably, in Marx). As corollary to this, the framework of core and periphery, and dependency theory in particular, is regularly understood to efface class politics (see for example Brenner, “The Origins of Capitalist Development”), despite

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4 Karl Marx, *The Poverty of Philosophy*, Moscow: (1847) 1958, 125.

5 One notes the analogy, at a different scale, to the insight of Marxist-Feminist value theory: that while the male wage laborer appears to produce value and thus “deserves” to be paid for rendering this service to capital, this production is in reality a collaborative effort toward which unpaid, feminized reproductive labor in the domestic sphere is a necessary component. This analogy is useful in three ways: it distinguishes between the apparent localization of value production and the systemic character of accumulation that is veiled by this appearance; it shows the necessary unity of the dispossession that is wage labor and the dispossession that is exclusion toward accumulation; and, in analogizing the hidden value-work of feminized labor and that of the racialized colonial dispossession, it discloses the ways that a strong distinction between sites where value appears to be produced and sites where it appears not (work and home, metropole and colony) enables a specious opposition between class and identity that bedevils Marxism to this day, and about which there is much more to say outside the confines of this essay and/or Europe.

the fact that class operates in every moment and at every scale within the world system.⁶

This confusion is further enabled in part by the illusion that, because land and habitation are transhistorical, land struggles retain an autonomy from historically specific modes of production; it is enabled further by the substitution of *working class* (haunted always by the figure of 19th century factory workers in the coal smoke-shrouded metropole) for *proletariat* (designating all of those without reserves including those excluded from wage labor). All of these factors sum up to the evident absurdity that the dispossession of wage exploitation, and opposition thereto, might be treated self-evidently as class struggle, while dispossession of people from traditional lands in the peripheries and hinterlands, and opposition thereto, seem often difficult for Marxists to decipher as class politics — when such opposition is in truth a doubled struggle against local class power and against the international division of dispossession which in part constitutes settler-capitalism.

All of that said, exploitation-based accumulation is an axiomatic feature of the settler-capitalist empire and in its fortunes a telling sundial regarding empire’s passage. When systemic accumulation wanes, when the end of real growth arrives, which is to say, when a hegemon reaches the point when it can no longer expand materially through internalizing further labor power, the hour is late.

4. Europe as Zero-Sum Game

The neo-imperial dream of the EU arose from the end of growth for the United States and waning accumulation across the US-centered world-system, or at least the end of growth adequate to displace the volatility to which capital is heir (David Harvey and others suggest 2.5% as a minimum). This is the circumstance in which Arrighi’s original question about a next cycle, and the possibility of a concatenated Atlantic hegemon, are posed.

Since the US cycle’s decline first visible in the sixties and bursting into bloom around 1973 — comprising a series of internal crises, international failures, and ongoing imposition of austerity conditions — we have seen something like a shift, within the early-industrializing nations of the capitalist core, away from the absorptive capitalism that characterized the Long Boom and arguably the larger period beginning with the Industrial Revolution, and toward something like coloniality or neo-coloniality, as deindustrialization hurls laborers into a service sector that (even while suffering from internal limits to productivity increases, Baumol and Bowen’s “cost disease”) can absorb them only incompletely, leading to an absolute and relative increase in populations surplus to the needs of surplus value production. With shocking prescience, James

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6 Robert Brenner, “The Origins of Capitalist Development: A Critique of Neo-Smithian Marxism.” *New Left Review*, no. 104 (1977): 25–92, 91.

Boggs captures this trajectory in the United States as early as 1963, the year of *Wretched of the Earth's* translation into English: "Today in the United States there is no doubt that those at the bottom are growing in numbers much faster than the system will ever be able to absorb," he suggests, concluding that "America is headed toward full unemployment, not full employment." Absorption again, and its limits.

But of course even the formally wageless, or those driven into precarious underemployment, must still engage in some sort of activity toward food and shelter (outside of the historically rare times and places of full unemployment insurance). This informalization of labor proceeds unevenly at a global level. "That is due to three things," notes Aaron Benanav, "first, to the continued entry of large numbers of people into labour markets, particularly in L[ess] D[eveloped] C[ountries]; second, to a persistently low demand for labour, especially for unskilled, manual, and routine labour; and third, to governments' unwillingness or perhaps inability, in the face of economic challenges, to make full employment...a major policy priority."⁷ Benanav here narrates increasingly generalized conditions that both signal and derive from discumulation, the downward slope of the arc of accumulation.

It is in this context that we may think about the Eurozone awoken from its dreams of hegemony by the failure of European growth, at least "real" growth in the sense of material expansion. In the terms of the economists Will Bartlett and Ivana Prica, "The Core countries have suffered from secular stagnation as their economies have matured and the autonomous part of their growth has diminished. Their economic growth has been propelled by exports to the rest of the EU leading to structural imbalances within the Eurozone with a trade surplus in Germany and the Core countries, as the countries in the Periphery and super-Periphery are consumers of Core country exports."⁸ This formulation is useful for its clarity regarding relative and absolute economic conditions: Germany, Austria, and the Netherlands, e.g., can occupy an advantageous position in the Eurosystem while at the same time suffering from what bourgeois economics calls secular stagnation and what heterodox political economy might identify as secular crisis.

Different but one; this is the dreamworld and catastrophe of the Eurozone. Germany, it is worth noting, achieves and preserves its advantage in part through its success in driving down domestic wages alongside high productivity to increase its exporting power, but this operation itself depends on financial expansion. As detailed by Galina Hale and Maurice Obstfeld, Germany has been able to borrow from

⁷ Aaron Benanav, "The origins of informality: The ILO at the limit of the concept of unemployment," *Journal of Global History* (2019), 14: 1, 107–125, 109.

⁸ William Bartlett and Ivana Prica, "Interdependence between Core and Peripheries of the European Economy: Secular Stagnation and Growth in the Western Balkans" (February 8, 2016). *LEQS Paper No.* 104, 7.

global financial centers outside the Eurozone at 2% and loan this same money to the Europeriphery, notably Greece and Spain, at 5.2%, even as the integration of the Monetary Union has decreased transaction costs.⁹ This has the double effect of generating a profit from the carry trade, and provisioning on credit the periphery's capacity to continue as a set of importing nations: "In particular, as Germany is a strong exporter," note Bartlett and Prica, "she has run structural current account surpluses, while the peripheral countries such as Greece, Spain, and Italy have run structural current account deficits."¹⁰

Another way to formulate this: Germany now serves as a catchment for value throughout its near world-system; its surplus depends on the deficits at the periphery of the Eurozone. Much of this value capture is accomplished via financial vehicles indicative of the shift from, in Arrighi's terms, material to financial expansion: "financialisation was also a product of the tendency towards secular stagnation, as the provision of consumer credit was an important way in which the Core countries were able to stimulate demand and overcome under-consumption tendencies. The phenomenon of financialisation has also spread to the peripheries, making them vulnerable to the additional financial effects of crisis."¹¹

In some sense this is only to say that, notably in the last 12 years, the Eurozone has become a zero-sum system; Wolfgang Streeck, to whom we will return, describes it as an "asymmetric fiscal stabilisation regime."¹² In Matthias Kaelberer's virtuously simple formulation, "someone's surplus [was] someone else's deficit."¹³

But such deficits are not themselves stable. This contradiction has long been obvious, but its implications are still unfolding, ceaselessly expressed *within* and *among* national political economies. What is not yet broadly recognized, and thus the point to which I cannot help but return, is the extent to which this contradiction was to be managed via accumulation within the Eurosystem, and the extent to which its morbid symptoms arise from the ruination of this plan. Zero-sum, to repeat (for it proves to be the fatal point) means non-absorptive.

⁹ Galina Hale and Maurice Obstfeld, "The Euro and the Geography of International Debt Flows," *Journal of the European Economic Association*, vol 14(1), (2016), 115-144.

¹⁰ Bartlett and Prica, 5.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 22.

¹² Wolfgang Streeck, "Rise of the European Consolidation State," MPIfG Discussion Paper 1/15/2015, Cologne: Max Planck Institute for the Study of Societies, 1.

¹³ Matthias Kaelberer, "Sovereign debt or balance of payments crisis? Exploring the structural logic of adjustment in the Eurozone," *Journal of Balkan and Near Eastern Studies*, 16(4), 2014, p. 420.

5. Europe and Civil War

If Germany has a single other in the Eurozone it is Greece. We can see already, if we may again risk the drawing of analogies between nation and individual (knowing full well the limits to such parallels, as for example in the misbegotten idea that states benefit from balancing their books in the same way as do households), that in relation to capital at the core, Greece as a nation is forced into the position of the informalized worker, whose superexploitation is premised on paying them less than the cost of reproducing their labor. This is the basic goal of austerity economics, producing a gap between income and the cost of reproduction which must then be bridged with debt, to be financed by an enervated capital for whom debt has become the crucial vehicle for profit. This strategy is guaranteed to result in crisis after crisis as debts come due (hence my preference for the term “Long Crisis” over the term “Long Downturn”). So we can describe austerity dynamics, which is to say crisis dynamics, as again having a double character: Greece is compelled to apply austerity to its residents even as austerity is applied to Greece and other peripheral nations by the institutions of the European core.

Moreover, if we can push this suggestive analogy just a bit further, we might restate the double character of the crisis — which is to say, of the end of absorption — as follows: that it presses a larger fraction of each national population into proletarianization and indeed lumpenization, while also pressing fractions of the Eurozone itself, that is to say, states within the superstate, into the position of the lumpen. One is the measure of the other: the production of lumpen populations in Greece measures the hyperproletarianization of Greece itself, which is to say, measures the end of absorption in the EU more broadly. Again, while it may at first appear that these contradictory doublings arise from the dangerous analogy between individual and nation as political-economic units, in truth the doubling arises from the contradictory existence of the Eurozone as a supranational capitalist system comprising national economies disciplined by a shared currency.

The internally peripheral nations of the Eurozone, and particularly those mentioned earlier (Greece, Italy, Spain, Cyprus, Malta), thus find themselves between the proverbial rock and a hard place. They are caught up in a disaster conditioned by the unique historical relation arising from the nesting of an internally variegated superstate unified by a single currency within a larger world-system to which the superstate plays core. These nations’ frontiers are always two frontiers, both their own and Europe’s. Migrants arriving from Asia and Africa as well as from the European superperiphery hope to enter the EU but they are of course entering specific intake nations. Forced into permanent deficit according to the zero-sum character of the Eurozone, these nations are compelled to function as *if* they have a surplus, serving as the superstate’s border control and absorption zone both, without the

concomitant capacity. Should these refugees succeed in entering, they immediately enter into the hyperproletarianized masses of the Europeriphery’s lumpen nations. That is to say, while it may be in the end a desirable outcome for them, they can only enter into the cascading structure of superfluity resulting from the end of absorption.

So we can see three cuts made by the blade of crisis, which intensifies the antagonisms within each Eurozone nation, among nations of the Eurosystem, and between the Eurosystem and the nations of outmigration. To continue with the Greek case as an example, or as an instance within what we might call spectrumatic proletarianization (that is, happening at all levels and scales): when I speak of hyperproletarianization or the production of surplus population in Greece (whose rates of both overall and long-term unemployment remain second-highest in the OECD and easily the highest in the Eurozone) I speak of among other things what are sometimes referred to as the riots beginning in 2008. Such struggles should not be construed as a simple response to the stimulus of unemployment, but rather are conditioned by exclusion from production such that any social struggle will perforce take the form of direct conflict in the sphere of circulation, in the agora, the plaka, and so on. These are the subjects of Chapter 25 in the first volume of *Capital*, surplus to capital’s capacity for value production. Indeed, this narration of the end of absorption arises from an attempt to restate Chapter 25 in ways that can describe the conditions and trajectories of national and supranational economies in ways that inflect political decisions. The riots continued persistently as unemployment moved toward its 2013 peak, persistently enough that it is not clear to me that we should *not* use the term civil war in Greece, albeit quieted somewhat for now.

By the same token, the ongoing if deferred question of Grexit, alongside the tragicomedy of Brexit which has for the moment supplanted the Greek case in the global imagination, should be understood as moves within a developing civil war in the Eurosystem. The argument that the nation-state must again be strengthened daily gains adherents not just on the right but on the purported left. Denmark’s *Socialdemokraterne*, having come to power in 2019, forwarded during the election vitriolic anti-immigration policies formerly the preserve of the hard right *Dansk Folkeparti*. The argument, increasingly common, was that such policies were needed to protect the vestiges of the Scandinavian welfare state, pitting a national working class against migrant “invaders.” Left parties across Europe have increasingly come to borrow the rational and rhetoric of right wing nationalists, calculating how and how much to express xenophobic beliefs and policies to earn the support of a working class ideologically constructed according to race and ethnicity (and here we must admit that the US left has scarcely been immune to this lure, as select representatives of the renascent democratic socialist movement have affirmed the need for supporting

hard borders toward wooing the national working class).¹⁴

If the Danish case is exemplary, its cognate in Germany is more worrisome to the exact degree that Germany has been able to impose its interests on the EU. We cannot avoid the morass of *Aufstehen*, the movement founded by among others Sara Wagenknecht, parliamentary chair of *Die Linke*, as well as the nominally left theorist Wolfgang Streeck, who at present understands strong borders as the last line of defense against both against the “monster” of financialized global capital and against the violence of immigration, a conflation that demonstrates all too clearly the affinity between abstractly economic re-nationalization and authoritarian xenophobia. In Streeck’s own words, “One result of [the migration of foreign workers and refugees] is another migration — the migration of the violence that is destroying the stateless societies of the periphery into the metropolis, in the form of ‘terrorism’ wrought by a new class of ‘primitive rebels’ that lacks any vision of a practically possible progressive future.”¹⁵ This passage, as noted in Jerome Roos’ extraordinary and detailed study of Streeck’s political itinerary, engages in “directly reproducing the Islamophobic trope that ‘mass migration’ leads to terrorism.”¹⁶ Streeck is hardly the only formerly left intellectual to indulge such crudely prejudiced frameworks; Slavoj Žižek’s interventions regarding the need for migrant assimilation to European values spring to mind. Streeck’s passage, however, is (perhaps unknowingly) more illuminating for how it also reproduces the new logic of a zero-sum empire: absorption of new citizens into the national economy, once constitutive of economic progress and political progressiveness, is now a threat to “a practically possible progressive future.” Economically impossible, it may be dispensed with as a political goal. Progress and the taking in of strangers now find themselves irreconcilable.

Germany’s position, as noted early on, is peculiar. Because it profits from asymmetrical power within the EU for as long as it can exploit the proletarianized states of the periphery (which, it should go without saying, still have their own internal relations of exploitation) and dragoon them into serving as absorption zones, it has an interest in trying to stabilize the EU’s contradictions, alongside the competing interest in renationalizing. This tension is not unique to Germany but is condensed

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14 That most careful studies of the effects of immigration suggest a minimal impact on wages has made little difference to the left ideologues of border control purporting to protect a national working class; it is hard to dispute that this set of beliefs transcends the empirical. For one summary of the literature, see Alan de Brauw, “Does Immigration Reduce Wages?,” which features a useful bibliography despite its own political predilections. <https://www.cato.org/cato-journal/fall-2017/does-immigration-reduce-wages>

15 Wolfgang Streeck, “The Post-Capitalist Interregnum: The Old System Is Dying, But a New Social Order Cannot Yet Be Born,” *Juncture*, 23, 2, 2016: 68–77, 73.

16 Jerome Roos, “From the Demise of Social Democracy to the ‘End of Capitalism’: The Intellectual Trajectory of Wolfgang Streeck,” *Historical Materialism* 27(2), 2019, 248–288.

there, the underlying contradiction of the politically incoherent “fortress leftism” for which that nation is laboratory. The contradiction, however, is unlikely to be stabilized, hence the civil war in Europe: the superstate is premised on a model of growth now unavailable, and the perceived need to husband national resources cannot help but set individual states against one another, though this antagonism will be prosecuted for now not by national armies but through the renegotiation and eventual hollowing of membership agreements.

We should not mistake this for a pacific resolution, however; current, ongoing, and ascending border violence against migrants is, among other things, the violeent expresson of this civil war. While we should resist reducing racial and ethic animus to simple economic determinations, we might also recognize the profound entanglement wherein the end of absorption means xenophobic border regimes and renascent ethnonationalism across the political spectrum.

6. Europe and the End of Politics

I am not here arguing for the preservation or support of the EU as a world-historical political project (the seeming impossibility of exit even when it is a popular desire is surely the best argument against its continued existence). I am simply noting the constraints that shape the particular form taken by the inevitable collapse of the EU, still in progress. It is manifestly true that the will toward hard borders, against free movement within the Schengen Zone, is a structurally violent social tendency enabled by the global division of labor and oriented by racial and ethnic subordination. It remains difficult for this to yield the conclusion that therefore one must be in favor of the EU, given that it is the political economy of the EU itself — the superstate at the end of accumulation — that assures such social tendencies will arise and find both popular and political adhesion, and thus that support for the EU is support for more of the same.

In sum, racial, ethnic, and religious exclusion and border violence will continue as a necessary feature of the EU, not despite it.

Meanwhile, this particular contradiction among many brings into relief once again the absolute imbrication of class and race politics, disclosed as a unity wherever borders are asked to function as protections of the right to be exploited. Efforts to think class and race in opposition, or as competing claims, should be resolutely opposed, no matter the direction from which they arrive.

All of this is politics. Consequently, any idea of the end of politics will sound curious. But a certain kind of politics may be reaching its limits. While much has been said about the rise of openly ethnonationalist state and street politics in various places including the EU, and about the concomitant degree to which left or social democratic parties have come to tarry with policies traditionally associated with the right, all of this inextricable from waning accumulation, such attentions risks

concealing the extent to which the left/right spectrum itself, with us since the Assemblée Nationale of 1789, seems to be losing its efficacy. The designations “right” and “left” seem no longer able to predict political directions at all.

This is true most dramatically at the frontiers of the EU, in the slow-motion turbulence of its dissolution. While there are evident limits to the comparison of Greece and the United Kingdom, foremost among them the relative autonomy of the pound and the far better if still dire economic circumstances in the UK, the two nations’ dramas usefully bracket the range of this disturbance. The final and draconian imposition of the core’s austerity program by SYRIZA, rather than seizing the opportunity to depart the EU, is scarcely the lone example. In the UK, after all, the Labour and Tory parties both were unable to marshall their members in a single direction for the Brexit referendum, both parties splitting unevenly. This has turned out to be a sort of original sin which cannot be erased, leading to the protracted irresolution, the fragmenting of the parties, the birth of new ones, and so on. As long as the Leave/Remain axis does not align with the left/right axis that orients the major parties, parliamentary solutions are out of reach and will be imposed from without (this is what “No Deal” means, no less than a deal written in Brussels).

In train of this, voting seems to be losing its efficacy as well. SYRIZA’s great yes to the troika followed immediately on the electorate’s great *no*; never has there has been a more glorious moment for democracy from above, wherein the will of the people, supposedly sovereign, counts only if it affirms its masters. The UK, meanwhile, lurches ever closer to a second referendum, whether in the original terms or reformulated according to ensuing events. Rip it up and start again! This is in no way cavalier; what else to do when the previous vote has proved literally impracticable? And yet it is a short leap to other votes proving to be similarly nonbinding. This would be the end of politics as we know it, of the liberal-parliamentarist compact between people and state, nominal as it often appears. Perhaps that is fitting, as that politics is an artifact of accumulation anyway, of the need to manage ongoing absorption at the core; it has to go sooner or later.

Two examples do not a historically decisive pattern prove. The current arrangement may stagger on a few more decades, and may be unmade far more directly by the same climate collapse that sets more and more migrants in motion. However, as this essay has hoped to suggest, these instances of crisis in Europe cannot be written down to contingency or coincidence. For all their real differences, these examples express the pathologies of Europe’s late bid for restored imperial status, of its last chance to be a center of accumulation, and that chance’s wrack and ruin — pathologies compelling an imagined opposition between national working classes and the international proletariat, between Europe and its dialectical others. This is the very inversion of communism: fortifications at the edges of empire, refortification of individual nations, internal

fortifications against the growing lumpen classes of each nation. All those fortifications! And all of them in the end against those who cannot be absorbed, cannot be internalized, who are met with violence at every border, every frontier a potter’s field, Europe an empire of graveyards.

Arriving on the Continent that Needs to be Named Again

Oliver Feltham

Abstract: In which the author meditates on the ways in which he has been lucky enough to arrive, again and again, in experiences of Europe that did not belong to anyone in particular, did not cement any determinate history, emerged from improbable encounters, expressed ancient conflicts in a comic mode, and yet now refuse to be turned into complete allegories that might illuminate the destiny of any continent, and which nevertheless suggest a few things to be done, by the author, in his attempt to continue to live in Europe.

Keywords: Event, allegory, encounter, migrants, new internationalism

A Portuguese friend, Vanessa, who studied at Paris VIII and now teaches in a School of Fine Arts in Marseille once gave me the best present that anyone outside the family has ever given me, the Pleiade edition of Descartes, which I happened to be reading on the train last Tuesday, on the way home, an exercise that was causing me a good deal of pain working out the function of the circle in Descartes' diagrams of a tennis serve in the 'Second Discourse' of his *Optics*, and I tell you it is damn odd for an Australian to have to allow that the French not invented liberty and equality and fraternity all joined together but also invented tennis when at least in Sydney we have tennis courts, some in real clay, some in real grass, that you can climb into for free in every single suburb and we have Rod Laver, and in my earlier life as an English boy I learnt to play on the grass practice courts of Wimbledon, so how dare the French claim to – when thankfully my fellow passenger rescued me by asking me what I was reading and he was surprised to hear that it was Descartes since he had thought, upon viewing the red leather and gold lines of the Pleiade cover, that I was reading the bible, and I supposed that he had anticipated sharing his views of certain biblical passages in the interpretation of which, no doubt, he would have had much to offer, but as fortune had it, I was not reading the bible, but struggling with my own secular faith in the comprehensibility of mathematics, and so we told each other what we did for a living – he an entrepreneur in transport and mining, myself a professor – and where we came from – he from France and the Ivory Coast, myself from Australia and England – and neither of us blinked twice at the improbability of the encounter, he because, as he said (after not very long) he liked to share his experience of Jesus with people he met, and myself because Descartes' diagrams were unravelling my mind and if I could not talk to a fellow passenger in a train about Jesus in his life because I was anxious about lesson preparation then what kind of goddamn life was I leading, certainly not one dignified of philosophy itself, and so when he asked me to pull up youtube on my phone so that he could show me his sermons on his youtube channel and my browser would have a record of that web address, well I was, to be honest, happy that the battery in my phone had died – it had died, I didn't fake it – but I still wished to find an

honest way to have a conversation with a believer without faking interest nor dismissing his faith as an insult to my, say, liberal views on the mere probability of any metaphysics and the importance of debate in the public sphere rather than appeals to the emotions, or my Marxist views on Christ as a bedtime story that stopped the revolution in its tracks, and so, not being insulted, I looked at the list of his sermons that he pulled up on his phone and was surprised to see, as he scrolled down, a sermon devoted solely to the laying on of hands, which I had thought had little to do with Jesus as a moral force, and he told me of some group he had in Versailles and invited me to stay in contact but I demurred telling him that I held Jesus to be a philosopher and activist without peer nor parallel from whom I had still a great deal to learn and understand yet I did not believe him to be the Christ – for as Hobbes says in the part that no-one reads in the back of the *Leviathan*, that is all Christianity comes down to in the moment of conversion ‘Jesus is the Christ’, which is also how Mel Gibson titled his film which had disturbed me greatly, especially the flagellation scene, before I went on that school trip to Ireland, a Catholic country, where one of my cruellest ancestors had lived, a judge by the surname of Lynch who had been so rigorous that he had condemned his own son to death when the son was on trial for the right reasons, all of which was a little much to find out after having seen that film and having just left Italy, another Catholic country – indeed I held that Jesus was not the Christ but from Nazareth and one mortal man amongst many and that was enough for me and being honest, since honesty is important in these matters, I could not say that I was interested in becoming a Christian and being converted, not today, and not tomorrow, and ‘try it, you might like it’ was not going to work this time. He smiled and told me little matter what I thought I believed right now, I should know that it was quite simply the case, and this was something he knew in his heart of hearts, something that he had never doubted since he found the way, Jesus loved me – Jesus loved me at 6:15pm on Tuesday on my way to pick up the kids – a conclusion that I thought it would be churlish and dogmatic to deny, a conclusion that had certain echoes from my youth – as in when my schoolteacher told me the story of Jesus walking on the water and I thought I can do that and pulled my inflatable armbands around my ankles and took a few steps across the surface of the municipal swimming pool before flipping upside down with my legs held above the water by the armbands and drowning in a panic until a tall blond woman dived in doing her job as lifesaver and playing her role in the city and pulled me out of the water and as I always say, my wife is tall, blond and a lifesaver, though, I should point out, she is not the same person – and so I did not deny this conclusion about Jesus and his oddly-directed love and wished him the best of luck with his investment in his brother’s mining business in the Ivory Coast, a business I could barely imagine, and I got off the train at my station, where I bumped into Eugenie, the mother of a child who had been at the childcare centre with our second child and told her the whole story, which was unusual since I am not so

talkative with acquaintances and I was unsure of whether she herself was a believer or not, which was always likely, since we had ended up, after ten years in a north-eastern arrondissement, in the Catholic south-western hinterland of Paris, and thankfully she was most amused, and in a most secular fashion.

I regret not remembering his name, my fellow passenger. Perhaps that would have saved him from figuring as a character in some silly allegory. But hey all fates are only half-fates because shit happens, as the Australians say.

Back when I was so easily burnt by the sun and surprised by our family's foam surfboard snapping in two on the roofrack in the airstream on the highway from St Malo in the summer of '79, not having yet understood the aggregate force of an apparently flimsy body like air against an apparently solid body like the surfboard, my parents took us on a camping holiday to Soulac-sur-Mer where the trickling golden spills and heaves of the sand-dunes were only matched by the endless wavy engraved ripples of sand sliding down into long wide tranquil beach pools where one could swim and paddle and row an inflatable dinghy without fear of waves, one pool interrupted by a rift of sand falling down into another long pool, pools whose wonder and ease were only matched by the fizzy cool taste of orangina and the brown skin of the girls and boys at play on the beach and the taut mauve nipples and aureola and curving flesh of the golden women sunbathing just up the beach which was only matched by the long walk in trepidation on my own across the camping ground repeating under my breath *je voudrais, je voudrais, je voudrais une glace s'il vous plaît* so as to bring a block of ice back to our tent to keep our esky cold, which was only matched by my father eating a pig's foot and then the following dinner a pig's tail, and the following year a cow's foot dripping in some green sauce which he had over his moustache when he yelled ‘hold your mother down whilst I kiss her’ and she giggled as we grabbed her arms and his face came in close which was only matched by running in between the tents and our neighbour's tents chasing children between the pine trees over the pine needles who then chased me yelling instructions I never understood to which I gave back my own orders in English as I chased them, which was only matched by the kiss of salt in my mouth when I licked my arm warmed by the sun in the late afternoon at Soulac-sur-mer.

My grandparents, Dawn and Jerry, before they had children, before the war, used to go on holiday from Maidstone not to France but to Germany for they loved the Black Forest and the mountains and the Rhine and I wonder just how tone deaf to politics they must have been when my grandfather recalled having seen Hitler youth marching down a high-street. I thought he must have changed his mind quick about holiday destinations when the Blitz began and he took up his wartime duties in which, after all, he could still manifest some kind of care for those parts of Germany that he had loved, being tasked with staring through

a magnifying glass at reconnaissance photographs developed from film taken a few nights before over Hamburg, since he was one of those tasked with deciphering and distinguishing between warehouse and arms depot, goods trains and military trains, barracks from hospital, arms factories from food factories, so as to recommend where to bomb the following night with as much precision as was possible back in those days – not that precision-bombing mattered when it came to Dresden, as Kurt Vonnegut remembered for us. And how is that for being on the outside of Europe and looking in so as to make sense of it – an approach some philosophers recommend – deciphering reconnaissance photos of towns from across the channel so as to recommend tomorrow night's targeting? How many outsides to Europe can we find so as to look in and try to pinpoint it? The first time I entered Germany, on a cheap coach trip from Paris to Denmark, I shivered and savoured the misty air and the watery coffee at the autobahn truckstop, and thought about the might of that country, and now I am learning German and my daughter, entering junior high, has also just begun, and to jumpstart the acquisition of as-yet foreign sounds and to kickstart our attributions of meanings to those sounds – the bridging of vocabularies – we went on a trip to Berlin to visit museums and old friends and monuments, and in a rooftop bar that was also a garden and a stage, an art gallery, a community, somewhere south of Kreuzberg I looked at my daughter chatting with Bruno across from his partner Eileen who had been so very ill but had astonishingly recovered, it not being fair for her to be struck down since she is a gifted doctor who prefers the public over the private sector, and doctors in my book should never get ill, and I looked at my daughter sipping on her first alcohol-free cocktail and reflected that if it hadn't been for Bruno peering over my shoulder in 2002 in Salle G of the French National Library asking me what I was doing studying Alain Badiou's *L'être et l'événement* given that it was the only copy in the library and he also needed to work on it, and I responded that I was turning it into a future book to be called *Being and Event*, by the same author, and he laughed and said come to the café at 5, that's when the Italians here take a break, and so I did. When I sat down across from him with my espresso straight away I noticed an angular blond with green eyes – and that, as you've guessed, was the *Event* – with whom I got into a conversation – that was the *and* – a conversation about praxis and it turned out Barbara was not only doing a PhD in philosophy but went out dancing and knew all about contemporary art, well, if it hadn't been for Bruno, the *Being* of Alma would not have been, and now sipping her Mojito *senza* rum Alma was old enough to appreciate the wry circuits of fortune – *je voudrais un ÊTRE et un ÉVÉNEMENT s'il vous plaît* – not least amongst which was a circuitous bike ride through the North of Berlin, past fragments of *die Mauer* where ancient escape tunnels were marked by paving stones amidst the grass, in which I followed Alma following Benjy son of Gernot, Benjy following Gernot whom I had met and become friends in commiseration then comradery, he having also turned *L'être et l'événement* into another book

by the same author, this one called *Das sein und das ereignis*, and after table tennis and football in the *Tiergarten* Gernot made sure outside the University of Berlin that we got our summer selfie in front of the statue of Hegel, whose works – in the original – I am learning German so as to read, despite Frank, another Berlin friend, who is said to have taken Hegel's *Philosophy of Right* around in his backpack wherever he went for ten years, I am learning German despite Frank having insisted that Hegel was easier in English, Frank who found a good job in Dundee, beyond Hadrian's wall.

The first time that anyone could be bothered to wind their way through my attempts at a conversation in French was late Autumn in 1995 in Paris before the mass protests and transport strike and somehow we were up in her apartment, and it was late, although I knew it was not an official date, and an unfortunate accident which was not my fault but the fault of French plumbers had ruined any possible pretention to nuancing this non-date into a date, somehow this Czech student Magda, with a downcut black bob and a sardonic smile, still had the patience to decipher and guess words for me as I tried to speak about what was special about literature from a philosophical standpoint and it was tough for her because English was not her first nor second language; to my chagrin English was her sixth language, languishing far behind Slovakian, Polish, Russian, German and French, French in fourth or fifth place, yet her French was far superior to my own for I had not yet completed that first crucial Sorbonne course in French language and civilization which, at two hours every day for fifteen weeks, launched me into the crucial intermediate phase of being able to exchange not so random sentences with anyone if they didn't speak as fast as a jackhammer or make too many allusions or use too much slang, caveats which were overly restrictive. I remember when this sophisticated activist, Lulu, Melinda's girlfriend, asked me 'qu'est-ce que tu racontes?' and I thought she wanted me to tell her, to 'recount', a story, which seemed odd, but perhaps appropriate, given that we had bumped into each other outside a bookshop near Bastille and perhaps she hadn't been content with the stories on sale in the shop when all she was asking, as Melinda explained, and Melinda had perfect French through working at a French bakery for years in Five Ways in Sydney before coming to do her doctoral thesis in Paris with Antonio Negri on time and anxiety in Lacan and Deleuze – and all doctoral theses at base are about time and anxiety – as Melinda explained, what her girlfriend was simply asking was 'wassup?', by which time her girlfriend was no longer interested in what was up but had lit a cigarette and sidled down the street to chat to another friend, which is also what she did a month later when she said 'à un de ces quatre' and I asked 'quatre quoi?' wondering what had been enumerated in this phrase 'one of these four' and Melinda, always the benevolent linguist, explained that it meant 'see you round' by which time it was too late to say 'oh, bye', or even 'à bientôt', since the moment was lost, like that moment in the Autumn thanks to the French plumbing, though at least I did manage to explain to Magda what I liked in 'Literature and

the Right to Death”, that essay by Blanchot, to Magda, for whom English was not important, Magda who was Czech, and spoke six languages, with a sardonic smile and a tipped up bob, who thus resided in a higher realm than myself, and who had probably deliberately forgotten about me, and Blanchot, as soon as the plumber left.

I thank that chance encounter of atoms and blood that happened a while ago for the fact that I was born on land and with certificates that gave me some legally stipulated right to apply for and secure a British passport which up until now, at least, did secure entrance into Europe, the right to work and live in a European country. I chose France and emigrated to it, not from Britain though, for anyone, even a hamster, would understand such a choice, but from Sydney, a completely bewildering and almost offensive choice for just about every French person I have introduced myself to over the last twenty years – *mais pourquoi?* – and I tell bad stories about Sydney and good stories about Paris, neither of which any French person believes since they go all Gauguin about Australia, and it is only when I admit that I came on a pilgrimage to study philosophy that they get it. What I now know is that coming on a pilgrimage is not a solid foundation for emigrating: such an enterprise does not in any way guarantee that one will ever actually arrive in the land of choice – and this is still my present question, not having become French, no longer really English, nor Australian, the question of whether I actually did arrive in Europe: am I not still circling between the broken pieces of a fantasy composed of distance and solitude and sex and formal gardens and labyrinths and stone busts of Greek gods and goddesses and dark scarlet velvet curtains framing tall windows looking over a boulevard with a narrow round table and a chair drawn up and a book and a pen, and yet, you know, I have joined some of those items together over the years in Paris, making scarlet curtains once, and I wrote a book and it was like going though a labyrinth, and yet the places that I walk by on weekdays, the streets I ride down or park on by chance, even the scabbiest alleyway with closed shutters and some phone repair shop and a deserted laundromat and that metal bollard which has been bent here, you see, struck perhaps by a heavy vehicle a year ago, and the dark smears of chewing gum that dot the pavement; each of these places too, concrete opposites to my fantasy, concrete that already broke the fantasy into pieces, you know each of these places has its own song to be sung that will capture its precise angles and details and mood as generative of spirit, a unique mood that will otherwise, if the song is lost, never be found, never be recovered but fall away into the depths of the earth’s crust to dissolve in the magma at the planet’s core, and the neglected place will join up into yet another chain of indifference weighing down the sodden city-dwellers in their travels between a sixth-floor walk-up, a hospital, a social security office and the metro entrance or a piece of cardboard under the overhead metro line. The day-by-day here has made me think, not just after twenty years but even after the first few weeks when I asked, in a panic, that French student to return my deposit

for a flatshare in the 16th arrondissement cause I had lost my nerve and made the wrong choice and wasn’t going to be able to make it on my own with no structure to my days and only a friend of a friend of a friend’s address, even back then I used to think it is way too facile to invoke the muse and sing a song of the slate-grey rooves, of the sun-dappled sky, of the Seine’s turbulence, of the lit boulevard in the ninth at aperitif hour, of the demi-monde opening up beyond midnight, yet who will be brave and open and patient enough to find the words, the tone, the rhythm to not redeem but simply capture the earliest promise of an ordinary street and its nondescript buildings, the street behind the street, a promise it has been making since the day its first stone was laid until yesterday evening when the garbage-truck trundled down it, and if I could join in this vast project of singing all places outside or despite judgement and prejudice, I thought, along with all my neighbouring immigrants who chose this city and fought their way to come here, and light it up each day with noise and fried food and smells in the stairwell, and insults in foreign languages, and the sound and the fury – thanks Jacques Chirac! – then maybe we would actually arrive here, and here we would find a chosen land, unlike the surface-dwellers, always sufficient to themselves.

When I heard the result of the Brexit vote I was sick in my guts and had one thought ringing through my mind and it was not ‘I need to become French’ since I am and have been living and working here thanks to my British not my Australian passport – no, my first thought, stupidly messianic and so typical for a professor who didn’t just read continental philosophy but actually lived on the continent in a continental manner whilst continuing to do philosophy, that one thought ringing through my mind was we need a new internationalism, a new way of joining up peoples and their organizations, beyond the idiocy of national sovereignty, avoiding the zombie of empire, no longer focused on the sole ideal of facilitating trade via regulatory and financial and monetary unity. Back then I didn’t know what form that ‘we’ could take, and still don’t, and there is research to be done on regionalism and federalism and alliances. But then, quite apart from unfinished projects, I thought, let’s say a new form of internationalism was happily found, then surely it would not apply to this continent alone but could start to take effect between any country whatsoever and a neighbour: but then, again, is not this non-specificity true of any diagnosis and remedy proposed by a political philosopher? What is wrong with this continent? Nothing that a little more democracy, transparency, accountability, participation cannot cure, nothing that a stronger federal state cannot cure, nothing that a unified financial direction cannot cure, nothing that an enforced rule of law cannot cure, nothing that a cannier strategy in world affairs cannot cure, nothing that a true leader, an all-powerful ephorate of experts, a reinvented party cannot cure...can you believe that some philosophers have sold books making such arguments, running very fast through doors that have been open for centuries if not decades, and to think they are interviewed on the radio to explain these

ideas, it makes me even sicker to the stomach this passion for running round a corner and down an old dead-end! None of these solutions, in the universality and predictability of their concepts, are tailored to any country or continent – to state the bleedingly obvious – however, if, in reaction to the slipperiness of the universal the philosopher were to try to capture particular properties or factors or conjunctures that were unique to this continent and happen to characterize all lands and peoples fallen under its legal name, would that not be to fall into the culturalist trap of trying to fill in the void behind a master-word, the name 'Europe', by chaining it to a whole lot of subordinate words – heck, what's in a name, after all, as someone once said, someone who came from this continent, yet politics, also, let me point out, is all about names and the charge of passions attached to those names – as Lazarus said, what a name, 'Lazarus'! – anyway, so a new internationalism has to treat, no that is a Frenchism, it has to *make up* names, names from lands and peoples, in a particular way, and it is question of choosing the right names, and perhaps some will be very old forgotten names that someone else apart from you and me has just remembered and perhaps some will be new names on the lips of those that struggle to even reach the southern beaches with a breath of life inside their lungs because that blood-steeped idea of sovereignty is parasiting the minds of politicians in power who intentionally smash into fragments the fundamental fantasy of untold numbers would-be migrants – what fantasy? –well the all-too human fantasy of a better life, a job, social security, schools, hospitals, even metro entrances for a public transport system that works.

A new internationalism will not hold out the mirage of peace nor consensus nor agreed upon conditions of argument towards consensus nor a finite list of fundamental laws but will rather open up an as yet incomplete inventory of ways of treating conflict that do not seek to dissolve it immediately but rather dis-intensify and de-escalate it by complicating and triangulating and quadrangling it via overlapping disputes and differences, some of which have already been sailed through, proving themselves to be not quite the much announced and catastrophized Scylla and Charybidis, a safe trip proof indeed of peoples' capacity to move beyond one conflict, and yes, perhaps only to hit another one but that is like breathing for these neighbouring peoples, for neighbours everywhere given the smell and the sound and the fury – stop kicking the ball in front of the neighbour's flat, you'll break a window I tell my son for the 6th time this weekend but as he points the window is actually open, a window through which a, I think she is Moldavian, woman, who does not speak a word of French, and whom I have never seen outside the building, offered him an intricately carved wooden horse that he still keeps in his bedside drawer – and this is an idea I found in an essay by Balibar, who I call the Father Christmas of philosophers, not because I found his book in a stocking but because of his benevolence in supervising Justine's master's thesis on Nietzsche that year in Paris when she fell in love with

a doomed youth in Paris, doomed because she had to go back to Sydney, ironically in the end to discover that philosophy and its institutionalized antagonisms to the disappointment of her mentor were not for her, but nevertheless Balibar had helped her beyond any of his own institutional designs and in this essay he says that in this continent, which is nothing special by the way, and cannot be totalized, but anyway nevertheless one can at the very least say of this continent that there are overlapping conflicts that can be triangulated and treated or recomposed. Well, there you go, that is the base idea, but I differ from Balibar because I do not think a double-layered idea of both incompleteness of a whole and potential yet also historical triangulations of conflict, I do not think such an idea can be properly presented in a philosophical argument or a conceptual analysis but only approached, a little like one makes a boat approach a jetty by cutting the motors early and drifting a little, like we tried that time on holiday on Myall lake with the family, laughing and hoping we'd get deposit on the rental boat back however misshapen it was upon return and actually I stopped laughing for a second and tried a new trick of giving a small burst of the throttle in the other direction so as to slow down and not smash or bash or meld the boat into the jetty and it worked! That one time a slow approach worked, the non-date became a date, and the boat arrived gently, a slow approach like those tangents to a circle found in Descartes' diagrams of light rays hitting and refracting through a curved glass body like these lenses between my ill-shaped eyes and the computer screen that, thank God, thanks to the good social security reimbursement of glasses in this country, focus converging rays from the screen back to the back of my spherical eyes where the delicate flesh of the optical nerve branches out into a thousand little pathways as Descartes explains what you see if you cut open an oxen's eye, a dissection a little too direct for my liking since I prefer, as I said before, the slow lingering approach by way of neighbouring thoughts, neighbouring memories, not quite allegories since not pretending to be whole and also a little too foreign to the actual subject at hand and so apparently way-off topic but nevertheless neighbouring thoughts that are already not so anecdotal and not so personal since they are caught up in neighbours' and friends' and friends of friends' lives and thus caught up in the life and death conflicts that after all make up the very matter of what we all end up calling this life down here below, and what we call death – remember those visits to the hospital, translating the hallway signs in trepidation back into one's mother-tongue – stories making up the matter of death – but whose death? Can I just ask, at the end, here, now, who shall speak, who dares to speak not of but for the dead? If no-one then how shall the dead speak through us? Through us, on this continent whose present and future names are yet to be found and renewed.

But then, hey, let's not get so messianic! Shit happens, as the Australians say, and nothing is the Christ, no longer – look, that person over there, your accidental neighbour, she might have found some names for this continent already: go on, ask her.

Is a European People Possible?

Frédéric Lordon

Abstract: The present work is an attempt to think the potentials of the European people. It takes a detour into the philosophical, political and economic theories and practices of the past and contemporary Europe. It also discusses the political proposals for Europe and their limits.

Keywords: EU, Spinoza, political bodies, common affect, imperium, people

"We think that it is possible to advance towards the possibility of constructing a European popular sovereignty" does not finish to affirm the leftist Europeanism. It will be granted without difficulty that it is a very beautiful thought. But we ask what makes it something else than a petition of principle. Once reunited, right-wing euro-federalism and left-wing Europeanism have in common that they want something in the exclusive mode of wishful thinking, and without ever questioning the conditions of possibility, nor to wish to submit the desire for analysis.

Submitted, however, it will be necessary, except to renew the adventure of the euro, an allegedly economic construction but tarnished from the beginning by an irremediable lack of political thought - the idea that the sincerity of wanting to, could palliate the absence of a reflection most often devoted to the full-scale experimentation of political *wishful thinking* to catastrophic destinies... But the idea of a European popular sovereignty is at least a proposal with serious consequences, and especially of requisitions, which will hardly be satisfied for any justification of a "we think that ..."

What will be granted without difficulty to the leftist Europeanism is that its horizon of desire is worth it and that, if the national solutions do not deserve the discredit for what overwhelms them, there is always material to think about the transformation of our present political forms, there is no reason to consider that nation-states in their present circumscriptions are the last word in history, and that there's a lot to be gained from considerations on overtaking it - but provided that one sees there first of all an intellectual site of first magnitude rather than a hazardous political enterprise in which to throw oneself headlong without the least preliminary.

In any case, without falling into Kantian teleology from the cosmopolitan¹ point of view, it is true that there is an intrinsic interest in envisaging the constitution of political groups as vast as possible, interest that, the argument of peace put to on the other hand, one could formulate in terms not Kantian but Spinozist: interests of power. Very generally speaking, one could say that there are profits of power for individuals in contact with more numerous and more diverse powers: all things

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¹ Kant 2016.

being equal (and this is an important clause!), it enriches its affective complexion of being in contact with more varied complexions, that is to say in contact with other ways of thinking and feeling, and the variety of complexions encountered (or encounterable) is favored by the size of the population, and even more by the fusion of formerly constituted² people. Power profits equally from the point of view of totality, not at all here in the classical sense of economic or geopolitical power, but in the Spinozist sense of the power of a collective body, is the extent of the spectrum of its affectabilities such as that it results from the variety of the affectabilities of its constituent parts. The complexion of the whole is more powerful in proportion to the diversity of its parts, that is to say, of the fact of composing among them a more varied individual affectability. A collective body composed by a greater variety is richer in ways of being affected, and hence in the power to affect - and that is the same power for Spinoza.

For all that, the political groups or, in this case, the perspective of extension, by composition, of the political bodies, meet the constitutive problem that one could formulate as such: to find the optimum defined by the maximization of the benefits of variety under constraint of overall coherence. In other words: to arbitrate between the gains of positive externality of variety and the costs of dyscompositions or centrifugal tendencies - which follow from the setting in coexistence of parties whose reports of mutual compatibility are not guaranteed *ex ante*. It is this type of question, linked to the powerful viability of a composition of initial heterogeneities, that must imperatively be posed in order to decide the possibility of overtaking abroad. For a long time, the European vulgate has for a long time held the perspective of the United States of Europe, the present treaties being only a transitional stage on the path of "an ever closer union", an adequately vague formulation, but whose filigree was, however, quite clear - at least until the shocks of the constitutional referendums of 2005, and of course of the current crisis.

The dead ends of the cosmopolitan-federal idea

The idea of the United States of Europe, however, is by no means self-evident. And one will take the measure to this fact rather curious, and even frankly paradoxical, that there is on this question of the European political construction, a whole Kantian trend, generally of the most optimistics when it is necessary to consider the post-national overtaking, which claims a "realistic" (unusual!) position to... reject the idea of a European state³. The objection of Jean-Marc Ferry is very representative of this

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2 I admit without difficulty that all this must seem a little hermetic and do not speak much to the reader who is not used to Spinozistic problems of the body and the union of bodies. On this subject, and in the absence of power to be able to say more here, the best is to read Sévérac 2011.

3 It is true that Kant, in the Idea of a universal history from a cosmopolitan point of view, expressly declares himself against the project of the world state, and gives a completely different meaning (say, to make it simple that of a free cooperative association of states) to the cosmopolitan perspective.

trend, against the European constructivism of state starts from a finding - whose relevance is obvious - the disappearance of the "instruments" that historically had permitted the construction of the peoples and nations in the case of European nation-states⁴: neither the school medium, irreversibly misguided in professional formation, nor the military obligation, fainting at the same time as the army of conscription, nor the fiscal obligation, circumscribed by multiple channels of escape, are no longer available to support, if not by an extended national construction process, at least in-depth integration. In any case, continues Jean-Marc Ferry, it is the State that has "produced" the nations, but... there is no European State - and one thinks at that moment that one would have imagined the European Kantian optimism for once to be more sensitive to the charms of the dialectic...

Instead of a State in the full sense of the term, the best that Europe could hope for would be of the order of a cosmopolitan construction, but in the strict Kantian sense of the idea, that is to say, articulating internal political rights (*jus civitatis*), a law of the people (*jus gentium*), a name which designates (*counter-intuitively*) all the procedures regulating inter-state relations (in the usual way of treaties), surmounted by a cosmopolitical right (*jus cosmopoliticum*), but extended far beyond the narrow Kantian definition as a right of universal hospitality and the circulation of people, to include fundamental rights (such as human rights, enforceable by individuals to their own states) and individual rights of political participation, transferable from one European nation to another.

But one thing is the definition of fundamental rights, another is the institutional arrangement for concretely pursue *common policies* - economic and social policies in specific. But from this point of view - and there is a manifest Kantian relapse - nothing is proposed but the cooperative goodwill of the States, probably led by the maxims of practical reason, and penetrated by the higher interests of harmony inter-States, to guarantee the coherence of a federative European construction (more than federal: a federation of nation States respectively maintained in their integrity, rather than a federal State strictly speaking). It will take nothing less than the mysterious forces of practical reason to hold the State powers to commitments in paper, and to make them conform to rules even if they are their own. Spinoza, more lucid, states in these terms in the *Theologico-Political Treatise* about the fatal instability of bilateral or multilateral contracts: "while men promise and commit to keep their word with assured marks of sincerity, no one, however, can with certainty trust others *if nothing else is added to the promise*, since everyone, by right of nature, can act deceitfully, and is bound to respect pacts only by hope of greater good or for fear of greater evil"⁵. And to add immediately: "we

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4 Ferry 2005a; Ferry 2005b.

5 Spinoza, XVI, 7, 1999, emphasizes mine.

conclude that a pact can have strength only in regard to its utility; this one removed, the pact is at the same time suppressed". For example, in 2003, Germany and France cease to find a clear usefulness in respect of the Stability Pact - and are free from it at once (*Nota Bene*: so we did not wait for Greece to sit on European economic treaties...)

As the advent of practical reason is unfortunately not yet on the agenda of the day, it is necessary to accept the Spinozian idea that agents only hold themselves commitments if they are determined by their interest or *well by an external force* that will constrain them. The great absentee of the cosmopolitan construction of the distant successors of Kant, attached to the idea of a European federation of nation-States, is the force that enforces the commitments - the Anglo-Saxons have a word to say it which we miss: *enforcement*. Where is the *enforcement* authority, the authority that gives strength to the oaths on paper, and what is its real power? As long as this question has not been answered, it is to be feared that any political architecture conceived in a chamber remains null and void - unless surreptitiously summon forces outside of the proper political community, in the manner of the present eurozone which has instituted the capital market as a third power of *enforcement*, it is true of an unparalleled power...

Enforcement, imperium, State

Except for this kind of particularly vicious recourse, the *lastingly* force that holds the parties involved in association, that is what, *very generally*, one could call a State - but, and this is the important point, without prejudice to extremely varied forms that it may take. Where does this force come from, and what is its origin in the *last instance*? Spinoza's answer is as clear as it is astonishing: this force, in the last analysis, is... ours, that which he calls the "power of the multitude" (*potentia multitudinis*), conceived as a composition of individual powers, but as it is empowered to dominate each of the individual powers. Composite power incommensurably superior to the power of its components, the *potentia multitudinis* is the principle of an effect of immanent transcendence by which the product of composition rises above its constituents, to dominate them all, even though, in the last analysis, it comes only from them⁶. It is this immanent power of the multitude that the institutions of State capture and from which they derive the power to reign, according to a mechanism of dispossession that had already been glimpsed by La Boetie: the eyes with which the state is watching you, he said, are your eyes! The arms with which it strikes you are your arms! - but in the *last analysis*, that is to say, at the end of an invisible capture that separates the multitude from itself ... and turns against itself its own power!

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6 See Lordon 2013.

This is the power that Spinoza makes the principle of the State: "this right that defines the power of the multitude, I call *imperium*" (*Political Treaty*, II, 17), and it is useful to preserve for a moment the Latin term of origin, *imperium*, to show the significant diversity, the non-antagonistic plurality of the translations that it can receive: "sovereignty" for Charles Ramond⁷, "State" for Pierre-François Moreau⁸. This oscillation is in itself conceptually interesting, then leads to a possible definition of the State in the straight line of (TP, II, 17). State: the institutionalized field of exercise of the imperium, or sovereignty, this right that defines the power of the multitude.

The advantage of this definition, which is very conceptual and abstract, consists precisely in the fact that, by its very generality, it does not prejudice in any way the many forms that the exercise of *imperium* can take: the circulations and captures of power of the multitude can, *a priori*, flow into the arrangements of the centralized unitary state, of the federal state... or of any other form that a fertile political imagination could conceive, that of History, for example, which is not lacking.

In any case, Jean-Marc Ferry is right to clearly mark the difference between the federal State and the cosmopolitan⁹ project of the federation of nation States, and we now know exactly what separates the second from the first: the composition of power capable of *supporting* a real power of enforcement, that is, of *actually* holding the constituent parts of a political whole to its common law. Where there is this power, there is a State; where it is absent, there is none. And correlatively: in one case viability, on the other, chronic instability and the permanent threat of decomposition in case of "stress" by exogenous or endogenous shocks.

If it can at the very least work towards a transnational consolidation of fundamental rights - and again... the question of *enforcement* is not less acute about them - the cosmopolitical constitution of a European federation of nation-States does not solve in itself the much more prosaic problem, but the much more significant problem of the conduct of common policies. If we therefore continue to explore an alternative term to national configurations, it is not at all certain that this unusual "modest"¹⁰ Kantianism offers us a viable solution in the "federative"¹¹ configuration. And if the European cosmopolitan federation turns out to be unviable, perhaps it is necessary to resume, strictly speaking, "the question of the European State" (title of the book by Jean-Marc Ferry) that its author even closes rather quickly by declaring it without any possible solution. In fact,

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7 Spinoza 2005.

8 Spinoza 1999.

9 Always in the Kantian sense of the term.

10 But, let us say it again, rigorously.

11 As opposed to federalist.

I have no intention of claiming here that it has one - nor that it does not have one! My only - conceptual - project is to propose the terms in which the problem of the European State could be formulated anew, and these terms are those of a general economy of power and sovereignty.

One of Jean-Marc Ferry's objections to a hypothetical European State paradoxically offers a good starting point. The objection emphasizes the impossibility of going beyond the current nation-States and their respective historical legacies to merge them into a "moral community"¹² which, alone attached to a legal community with which it coincides, can form an authentic political community. It is in this field that the problem must be unfolded, for example, by starting from a surprisingly reserved term for business law, whereas, appropriately adapted, it would suit political philosophy so well: the *affectio societatis*, this personal affinity that the fund raisers who come together to form a capital society... and with this important difference in the present case that a "society", rigorously understood, is only a *collection* of individuals when it comes to thinking here is of the order of a political *community*, that is to say, a collective *totality*, citizen in this case, but more than the sum of its parts, irreducible to a simple juxtaposition of "members", therefore not bound by an *affectio societatis* but say, analogically, by an *affectio civitatis*, which is an *affectio communalis*.

Peuple et affect commun

In order not to succumb to the wager of claiming to add anything relevant to the enormity of what has already been said about the nation, there is a possible way of circumventing (or doubling) the abundant historiography of the formation of the nations by more conceptual ways and in particular, starting from this firm reminder that Spinoza makes in the *theological-political treatise*: "Nature does not create a people". It will first be noted that one can not break more categorically with the essentialist or ethnicizing conceptions of the nation. We will then see a rather good news: nothing in this matter is fixed for eternity because, if it is not nature but, let's say for short, that history makes them, this means that just as they are, the people can get rid of themselves, and also be rebuild themselves. In particular, there is nothing to prevent us from considering the hypothesis of the formation of a people's people - it is even, as Hobsbawm¹³ has shown, a configuration commonly practiced by history. So, of course, it is not obvious that the idea of a European people is *anything but* absurd.

Nature does not create a people, so as says Spinoza, but no more the adhesions of contractualist rationality - according to the model of the voluntary, free and transparent association that has given their

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¹² Ferry 2005b

¹³ Hobsbawm 1992.

character to the various schemes of the "social contract". So what? TP¹⁴, VI, 1: "Since men are led by affect more than by reason, it follows that the multitude naturally agrees and wants to be led as by one soul under the guidance not of reason but of some common affect". The political communities, the national communities, are essentially passionate communities.

There are, however, several pitfalls in this statement. One must beware in the first place of the singular: the common affect that offers to the community (the assembled multitude) its cohesive principle is a *composite* affect - or an affective compound. It is *about* ways: ways of feeling, of thinking and judging - of judging good and bad, right and wrong, licit and illicit. The common affect is, for its part, the principle of a moral collective order. But to what extension? Judging good and bad, but of what? In what ways? Of which delimited set of actions? Spinoza certainly does not say that the ways of judging everything must be common! The *Theological-Political Treatise* even explicitly says the opposite, which is explicitly designed to defend the freedom of opinions - so as their differences. There is consequently no totalitarianism of the common affect, no aim of absolute homogenization of the multitude. Moreover, the strict stato-nationalist point of view tends to systematically underestimate the cultural variance and the internal moral, including in the case of nation-States deemed to be very unitary, cultural diversity correlated (among others) to geographical diversity. Let us think, for example, in the case of France to the differences of ways of the North and the South, mountain "countries" and "countries" of sea, oceanic sea or closed sea, to say nothing of all overdeterminations of geography by history, etc. To say that there is no totalitarianism of the common affect is to recognize from the outset, that the collective passional complexion is necessarily an articulation of the diverse and the common. But a *hierarchical* articulation: an articulation of the various *under* the common. It is the quasi-tautological definition of a collective entity, by the factual criterion of its mere existence, which poses the primacy of the common over the various. Without this primacy which holds together the various parts, no collective persists but, at best, the simple temporary coexistence of the diverse under the species of the unbound juxtaposition - and most often the re-scattering.

Common Global Affects, common local affects (or the data of the viability of a collective body)

The maintenance of the existence of the collective entity thus passes through a certain power relation between "global" common affects and "local" common affects, lower-scale common affects - and it is necessarily forms - constituent subsets of membership - where the "local"

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¹⁴ *Traité politique*, here in the translation of Charles Ramond.

is defined not only in geographical terms but also, for example, in terms of social (political and ideological) space. Thus, in addition to (regional) subproperties that are properly regionalist, there are common (under-) affects of social position, defined in particular in terms of material interests - what might be called common class affects. The overall entity therefore holds only if the global common affect outweighs the local common affects, the affect of belonging to the whole over the affects of belonging to the parts.

The primacy of the common over the various is then measured by the degree of problematization, or rather *deproblematization* of the local. The local can never be quite so *deproblematized*. But it can be to a considerable degree. For example, certain regions of France tolerate the dynamics of economic involution, cultural attrition and desertification without following the formation of violent local reactionary passions, in any case nothing that could call into question the global (national) affect of community amongst the populations concerned. Thus, the Creuse or the Ardèche accept in the heart of France declines, and even abandonments, that no nation would accept within an integrated Europe, and it is so only by the balance in each case between global common affects and local common (sub) affects. Conversely, the persistence of automatic interregional financial transfers, linked to the dominant weight of the central budget, objectively leads the richest regions to support the poorest, but without these contributions being experienced by the contributors as a *contingent* burden of which they would have been unjustly ballasted, by this way to feed an acrimonious protest.

For not posing the problem in these terms, the speeches that call with tremolos for the "solidarity" (financial) of the European peoples ("we should show solidarity with Greece") or, on the contrary, which stigmatize the "selfishness" of Germany, is condemned to the last degree of political inanity - by dissolution in an appalling moralistic broth. In truth, these discourses are the very symptom of the European Union's political inadequacy because, precisely, internal financial transfers to a genuinely integrated political community (and whatever the form of this integration) are no longer the effect of any moral impulse of the populations concerned but that of a political institutionalization granted by the very fact of their common global membership. We can say, if we really want, that the Ile-de-France region is "solidary" with the Limousin region, but provided we do not stay too long in this moral wonder, except to miss the important point: if they are solidarity, the inter-regional financial transfers are mainly of *instituted* solidarity... that is to say of politics. Of the policy allowed by a certain configuration of collective affects, notably by the primacy of the national affect on the regional affects, as it deproblematizes, and hence demoralizes, transfers that take place out of the consciousness or the attention of their agents - it can not be said, for example, that this is the case of the financial aid that Germany pays to Greece and other countries in the South in difficulty (and it can not be said either that

these deproblematizations can be regarded as irreversible achievements: reproblematicization is always likely to take place again, as in Italy, in the relations of the North and the South, a characteristic sign that the unity of the national totality is dangerously put to the test).

Correlatively, it makes no sense to stigmatize the "egoism" of the Germans. Because we do not see by what miracle the Germans should feel an immediate feeling of community with other populations with whom... they do not make notoriously community - except in the *wishful thinking* of the Europeanist spirits. It is the lack of community, that is to say, the common affect of global membership, which leads to problematization - to live as a problem, as something that is not self-evident - private contributions of political institutionalization and consequently, returned to the impetus of morality - "solidarity" - and ... to its hazards. That the Germans (or any other European people in their position as creditor) consider that there is room for debate, perhaps even to conceal, concerning a financial effort that does not enter into their contract social - all the more, if one is to remember that even the efforts that enter through the tax are subject to sharp and permanent rediscussions¹⁵ - it is still the most legitimate thing of the world, and we do not see in the name of what, these problematizations, including reticence, should be the subject of a moral stigmatization. But as always, occupying the magisterial ground of uplifting values, and moving the problems there, is the best way not to see the profound political shortcomings of the non-European community, "Union" of words but certainly not of fact, since it would be necessary for it to be a European common affect superior than the national common affects - and that it was obviously unable to produce it so far. There is no third term: either parties recognize a common membership strong enough that transfers can be politically instituted, and hence deproblematized (as much as they can be because taxation, which is the form institute of solidarity, is always subject to rediscussion); this membership does not exist, and these transfers are abandoned to the vagaries of morality known as "solidarity" - but while we are not surprised at their volatility, and sometimes their (predictable) bad will.

Thus, and almost tautologically, a collective entity exists, and does not remain in existence, unless the global common affects prevail over the "regional" common affects. There is, of course, no guarantee that these scales will always remain in their interval-instructions, and nothing excludes that the power ratio between the global affect and the lower-order affects does not come under its critical thresholds - whatever the nature of these affects of lower rank, and not only local in the geographical sense of the term. If for example, it is an under-affect class that prevails, we have a revolutionary civil war - the Russian revolution expelled a part of the population with which it was no longer possible to maintain the global

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¹⁵With the exception that these are generally conducted on the basis of social stratification data and not local divisions.

entity, the Versaillese exterminate or deport the Communards. If they are properly regionalist sub-affects, we have a split and the formation of two or more peoples from one: a hot version of Yugoslavia; a cold version of Czechoslovakia - and who does not see, at the very heart of present-day Europe, the powerful work of these centrifugal regionalist forces, in Spain (Catalonia), Italy (Lombardy), Belgium (Flanders), the United Kingdom (Scotland). In any case, it is the old assemblage that is undone by the erosion of its cohesive (affective) principle, dominated in power by the tendencies to locality and divergence, and the possibility of decomposition is permanently on the horizon of any political community.

The possibility of an "supplementary step"

What about the inverse process of extension by composition? This is typically the problem faced by a hypothetical European State, a problem of the formation of a common affect under which a European multitude could come to be assembled, and which would be powerful enough to dominate the national common affects - becomes local. Or, as always: compose the various under a new common higher rank. What is, or what are the objects on which could precipitate the common affect constitutive of a European people? The hypothesis sketched here holds that one of these objects could be the very idea of popular sovereignty, that is to say, that which is deeply in crisis in the present European Union and which, conversely, could be the lever of its regeneration. The apparent paradox perhaps comes from the common vision, which starts from a constituted people, previously given, to go to their sovereignty as a subsequent predicate. Whereas it would be here, conversely, to conceive the active claim of sovereignty by a community as the *operator of its constitution in people*.

Indeed, we can hold popular sovereignty, that is to say the assertion of communities as masters of their own destiny, for the fundamental fact of political modernity (in fact for its very definition), as it has historically developed on the European continent. And paraphrasing Spinoza, one could say that it is the primary political affect of these societies, their primary political passion. One can then wonder if this idea of claiming for popular sovereignty is not shared to the point of being constitutive of a European political imaginary and, consequently, the possible matter of a sufficient common affect. The question of its sufficiency is obviously central. But for the moment we can already note this. Firstly, this is not an abstract model in which, *ex nihilo*, the position of a claim to collective sovereignty alone would have to support the formation of the political community. It is a *historical* situation, that is to say a current configuration *but carried by a past*, endowed as such with its power of determination. But we find contradictory things in this power of determination. For if the different European peoples were constituted by him in the objective difference of their complexions, by other traits they have also been made quite near -

perhaps *enough* so that the common sovereign claim can constitute the *additional step* that constitutes them as a people of peoples.

Secondly, it was necessary to go through sufficiently abstract and general conceptualizations of the State and the nation to avoid that their definitions remain in the orbit of their present historical achievements, both contingent... and always capable of reinvention. It was particularly necessary not to fall into the conceptual misconception of Ulrich Beck for whom "what is called into question in the field of political theory, it is the national paradigm as well as any approach to the European question pertaining to a methodological nationalism"¹⁶. Obviously, but it should not be too much to ask a supposed "political theoretician", one comes out of this misinterpretation only on the condition of having for "State" and "nation" concepts sufficiently general to admit a plurality (moreover indeterminate *ex ante*) forms susceptible of being deployed by history, beyond what we have before our eyes say for two centuries. Thus, as one can call "State" any institutional realization of the *imperium*, "that right which defines the power of the multitude", in the same way we can call "nation", or say "nation in the modern sense of the term" all collective claim of the principle of sovereignty (to the extent of a domain largely covering the necessities of common life¹⁷). It is necessary to repeat the specific operation accomplished by this definition of the "modern nation", in fact in the direct line of the French Revolution, by reversing the relation which subsequently predicts of sovereignty a previously constituted community into a relation which *produces* the (*political*) community from a first claim of sovereignty.

Under these definitions of the nation and the State, there is a *priori* no need to abandon the national-State paradigm to think about a possible future of the European Union. For, except for the cosmopolitan-federative hypothesis, but of which we have seen what condemns it without appeal (the lack of *enforcement*), modern politics does not come out, and can not leave the nation-state - provided of course that one understands it sufficiently abstractly - with which it is essentially connected. There is no political ensemble without a force to hold its parts to its common law, this force is the *imperium*, in its Spinozist definition, and *imperium* is the general name of "State". As for the nation, in any case in the modern sense of the term, it is defined by the common desire to master a collective destiny - and from this point of view, even the most horizontal, the most a-centric, the most reticular, the least representative, should still be called "nation"!

.....
¹⁶ Beck 2003, p. 80 ; see also this in Habermas 2000.

¹⁷ A bowling club can declare itself "sovereign" but, covering only the activity of playing bowl, it would have a hard time claiming to be a nation...

The conditions of passionate possibility of a European "law of the majority"

There remains the question of the power sufficiency of a European common affect crystallized around the idea of popular sovereignty, around the idea of a "decision in common". The criterion of this sufficiency resides in the ability to remake the groupings, and to trace the lines of division, to replace the present dominant divisions, which are the compartmental divisions of the present nations, with transversal divisions: of social positions, of classes, of ideological affiliations, etc. But restructuring the groups and to redo the lines is by no means self-evident - and in any case is within the reach of any decree. In a hypothetical European state, as in any current nation-State for that matter, would remain a conflictual intersection between the common affects of global membership and the common affects of lower-level groupings - but which ones? Common social-political affections or common regional (i.e., *vetro-national*) affects? In other words, given the differences and reconciliations already produced by history, can a claim for popular sovereignty on a European scale constitute the *additional step* sufficient to produce a common affect, itself capable of to induce the formation of common transversal political sub-affects, which would outweigh the common-national sub-affects, and would be dominated by the European neo-national common affect? Which is nothing other than the question of the passionate conditions of the acceptance of the majority law.

To this - decisive - question, the answer is ... indeterminate! It is never given only by history, but *ex post*. The whole question is whether certain current national idiosyncrasies, objects of powerful local common affects, would tolerate being challenged under a law of the European majority - which could be the case if it concerned areas of common policy. Haphazardly: economic policy, including monetary policy. Or the thought experiment of imagining the reopening of the principles of monetary policy, i.e. the status of the ECB, thus, the possibility that it is no longer independent, the existence and level of inflation targets, the impossibility or the possibility of monetary financing of fiscal deficits, the constraints of balancing budgets, etc. Question: Germany, which imposed its obsessions and its own monetary dogma on the whole euro area, would it accept, in these matters which have for it a character of quasi-sanctity, to comply with a law of the European majority who would contradict it? It is the question of idiosyncrasies, that is to say, common local affects that is posed here. All is well as long as these idiosyncrasies can be accommodated in subsidiarity dispositives. The problem arises when they touch on areas of common interest - notoriously the case with regard to economic policy and monetary policy.

For those who consider that the intermediate political configurations, including the cosmopolitical form of the federation of nation-States are not viable, but which do not give up the prospect of the

European state, this is typically the kind of very concrete question that must imperatively be posed, except to remain in the register of cheap generalities - "peace" - which do political experimentations subsequent to catastrophic destinies. Needless to say, any negative response immediately condemns the very idea of European political integration. With economic policy, however, we consider one of the most important subjects of European common life... and one of the most likely to give rise to a case of unsurpassed local resistance, at least in the medium term.

It was therefore a bit of a lie to announce the only project to conceptually rephrase the problem of the European state without the intention of deciding it in one way or another. Because the reformulation produces of itself its cases of solution. Between which we will have to choose.

Or keep the current perimeter of Europe - the 28 of the Union or the 17 of the eurozone - but renounce a real politics of integration, which, by definition, should include all the questions of economic policy, and this while the most important of these questions are exposed to a clear veto by one of the countries and thus prohibited from reintegrating the perimeter of ordinary political deliberation governed by a law of the transversal majority. In this configuration, no European State, no European political integration - which does not mean more "Europe" at all, but a Europe reduced to more modest ambitions, and conceived as a network of various co-operations, without aim of building a European sovereignty, therefore without encroaching on the national sovereignties.

Or perhaps a less pessimistic lesson to be drawn from this decisive test of the monetary question would lead one to think that one can perhaps make a European State ... but not with anyone. And obviously, for now, not with Germany. One could very well judge that, given the centrality of Germany, both geographically and historically, the very idea of a European State that does not understand it, would inflict a sort of politically inconceivable vexation. In these circumstances, the alternative brought to its simplest expression, opposes, on the one hand, a viable European state... but without Germany, and for this very reason unimaginable, and on the other hand, a European state at full strength with Germany... but not viable - and from such a dilemma we can only come out with abstention.

The opportunity, in any case, is given to call political philosophy to cure itself of its scholastic illusions: the formal and abstract mechanisms of fundamental rights, of participation, and even of the common demand for sovereignty, have their limits, or their concrete conditions of possibility, namely sufficient proximities - an antechamber, if you will, of a European *affectio civitatis* - which make transversal redistribution feasible - that is to say the exercise of the law of the majority on areas of common interest. If it is to help how to think the end of the confiscation of the capital-institutional apparatus and restore - in fact establish - a popular sovereignty on a European scale, a critical political

philosophy would win to abandon its spontaneous attractors of the great universalisms for the more modest exploration of concrete affinities, and of the common affects that they could possibly support.

Translated by: Rodrigo Gonsalves

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The Achronic Function of Philosophy and Europe

Vittorio Morfino

Abstract: The article takes inspiration from the Husserlian definition of the archontic function that European philosophy must exercise for the entire civilization, to show how much such an assumption, in terms of the philosophy of history, conditions the very idea of Europe. Only by radically deconstructing such a philosophy of history can be imagined a just Europe, with an operation that is not possible without Marxism, and yet which must push the critical instance that is its own beyond the limits in which it has exercised in the past. Only at these conditions European philosophy can have an archontic function for the civilisation as a whole.

Keywords: Philosophy of history, no contemporaneity, pluritemporality, stratification, dependency theory

Edmund Husserl, in *The Crisis of the European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology*, an unfinished work where he attempts to overcome the crisis of modern science by positing philosophy as universal science and the full manifestation of reason, offers a definition of Europe, not as a geographical expression, but as a spiritual essence (in this sense 'the English Dominions, the United States, etc., clearly belong to Europe'):

Here the title 'Europe' clearly refers to the unity of a spiritual life, activity, creation, with all its ends, interests, cares, and endeavors, with its products of purposeful activity, institutions, organizations. [...] [We must] exhibit the philosophical idea which is immanent in the history of Europe (spiritual Europe) or, what is the same, the teleology which is immanent in it, which makes itself known, from the standpoint of universal mankind as such, as the breakthrough and the developmental beginning of a new human epoch—the epoch of mankind which now seeks to live, and only can live, in the free shaping of its existence, its historical life, through ideas of reason, through infinite tasks. [...] [It's] a supranationality of a completely new sort, [...] [a] spiritual shape [...] a new spirit, [...] aimed at infinite tasks, dominates humanity through and through, creating new, infinite ideals¹.

According to Husserl, what constitutes 'the primal phenomenon of spiritual Europe' is precisely the 'breakthrough of philosophy in this sense, in which all sciences are thus contained'². This origin founds and constitutes European spiritual unity, whose specificity is not to be a type of humanity among others, but to coincide with the very essence of humanity. Philosophy should constantly remind us of this:

Within this ideally directed total society philosophy retains its guiding function and its particular infinite task: the function of free and universal theoretical reflection, which encompasses all ideals and the

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¹ Husserl 1970, pp. 273-74-89.

² Ibid., p. 276.

total ideal, i.e., the universe of all norms. Within European civilization, philosophy has constantly to exercise its function as one which is archontic for the civilization as a whole³.

The Husserlian conceptual syntax establishes a close link between Europe, philosophy, humanity, epoch and spirit, presupposing a *Weltgeschichte*, a philosophy of world-history that establishes precise hierarchies. The following lines serve as sufficient proof :

There is something unique here that is recognized in us by all other human groups, too, something that, quite apart from all considerations of utility, becomes a motive for them to Europeanize themselves even in their unbroken will to spiritual self-preservation; whereas we, if we understand ourselves properly, would never Indianize ourselves, for example⁴.

We find the paradigmatic form of this *Weltgeschichte in Hegel's philosophy of history*: a unidirectional and progressive time, whose partition into epochs describes the 'journey' of spirit following the path of the sun, from East to West. The path is one-way, as Husserl says: «if we understand ourselves properly, would never Indianize ourselves».

The Orient for Hegel is the otherness from which the European spirit arises, where spirit is still immersed in nature, the beginning of a journey that must cross the Greek, then Roman, *Reich* to attain full freedom in the Christian-Germanic one. In this way, Hegel sets the boundaries of Europe, the inside and the outside, repeating (the word *Reich* clearly indicates it) the partition of history proposed by Joachim of Fiore in the *Concordia*, according to which the Trinity shows itself in the course of three different historical ages, the last of which, the age of the Spirit, denoting when the completion of time will be accomplished.

This philosophy of history, with its unidirectional, progressive and Eurocentric properties, builds a space of interiority and its relative 'other', the East, which is nothing but the specular inverse of the West: the inverse of freedom and spirituality, which nevertheless contains it in potentia like the seed of a flower. However, in Hegel there is also a second absolute otherness, represented by Africa, the other of the spirit: nature, immediacy, animality. For Hegel, Africa is the 'state of absolute barbarism', that is, a place that does not belong to the *Weltgeschichte*, but to animality:

Africa proper, as far as History goes back, has remained — for all purposes of connection with the rest of the World — shut up; it is the Gold-land compressed within itself —the land of childhood, which lying beyond the day of self-conscious history, is enveloped in the dark mantle of Night⁵.

In other words, as Bloch comments on nature for Hegel, Africa is an absolute preterite.

.....
3 Ibid., p. 289.

4 Ibid., p. 275.

5 Hegel 2001, p. 109.

In this view, Europe is the apogee of a philosophy of history that puts together the Greek, Roman and Christian legacies, starting from an "eastern" origin that is actually the closest exteriority, even geographically: Judaism.

The same syntax lies behind the embryonic *Weltgeschichte* found in Marx and Engels' *Communist Manifesto*, although limited to modernity. The passages on the revolutionary role of the bourgeoisie famously depict its incessant movement in the form of a continuous revolution of all living conditions, but also by a continuous expansion throughout the globe and penetration of ever new realities by dragging in the 'the most barbarian, nations into civilisation'⁶:

The bourgeoisie has subjected the country to the rule of the towns. It has created enormous cities, has greatly increased the urban population as compared with the rural, and has thus rescued a considerable part of the population from the idiocy of rural life. Just as it has made the country dependent on the towns, so it has made barbarian and semi-barbarian countries dependent on the civilised ones, nations of peasants on nations of bourgeois, the East on the West⁷.

According to Marx and Engels, this path will lead, following the Industrial Revolution, to produce within bourgeois society not only 'the weapons that bring death to itself'⁸ but also 'the men who are to wield those weapons – the modern working class – the proletarians'⁹. The specter that roams around Europe will soon become a reality produced by the necessity of historical development itself: communism as Europe's destiny.

If in Hegel the *Weltgeschichte* is commanded by the rhythm of the spirit, in Marx the motor of history is class struggle, the contradiction between productive forces and relations of production that, in the famous 'Preface of '59', will give rise to a mimesis *en matérialiste* of Hegelian *Stufenfolge*, of the kingdoms of the spirit as a succession of modes of production:

In broad outline, the Asiatic, ancient, feudal and modern bourgeois modes of production may be designated as epochs marking progress in the economic development of society. The bourgeois mode of production is the last antagonistic form of the social process of production – antagonistic not in the sense of individual antagonism but of an antagonism that emanates from the individuals' social conditions of existence – but the productive forces developing within bourgeois society

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6 Marx Engels 1970, p. 36.

7 Ibid.

8 Ibid, p. 38

9 Ibid., p. 39

create also the material conditions for a solution of this antagonism. The prehistory of human society accordingly closes with this social formation¹⁰.

This succession marks progressive epochs in the history of humanity: asiatic, ancient, feudal, capitalistic and ... communist. And yet, it is not a question of spiritual kingdoms, nor of spiritual principles that succeed one another by tracing a path to freedom (or, better, of the becoming freedom of necessity), but modes of production, that is, specific configurations of productive forces and relations of production. In other words, the difference in the analogy should not be forgotten: the fundamental Marxian move consists in showing the Hegelian kingdom of freedom as the surface-effect of capitalist society, of the circulation of commodities, behind which lies the hell of production and exploitation.

Marx and Engels seem to locate the true kingdom of freedom in a further step: communism closes the prehistory of human society and opens up history. Engels explicitly describes communism as the manifestation of this kingdom:

[in communism], for the first time man, in a certain sense, is finally marked off from the rest of the animal kingdom, and emerges from mere animal conditions of existence into really human ones. The whole sphere of the conditions of life which environ man, and which have hitherto ruled man, now comes under the dominion and control of man, who for the first time becomes the real, conscious lord of nature, because he has now become master of his own social organisation. The laws of his own social action, hitherto standing face to face with man as laws of nature foreign to, and dominating him, will then be used with full understanding, and so mastered by him. Man's own social organisation, hitherto confronting him as a necessity imposed by nature and history, now becomes the result of his own free action. The extraneous objective forces that have hitherto governed history pass under the control of man himself. Only from that time will man himself, with full consciousness, make his own history-only from that time will the social causes set in movement by him have, in the main and in a constantly growing measure, the results intended by him. It is humanity's leap from the kingdom of necessity to the kingdom of freedom¹¹.

In the 'Additional Considerations' to the third book of *Capital*, written in 1895, the old Engels proposes, *bel et bien*, an all-European philosophy of history that takes place between an Origin, primitive communism, and an End, true communism. As Maria Turchetto writes:

Engels revisits [...] a history of humanity marked precisely by the development of productive forces and the expansion of exchange: a path [...] from a hypothetical 'primitive communism' to the unfolded

.....
10 Marx 1999, p. 2.

11 Marx Engels 1987, p. 270

communism apogee and 'end' of history, through a sequence of modes of production [...] interpreted as 'development stages': the mythical primitive communism, in fact; the ancient mode of production based on slavery; the feudal mode of production; the unlikely 'simple commodity society' and capitalism in the (certain) expectation of socialism and communism¹².

The Asian mode of production is not even mentioned, which suggests that Engels himself found it difficult to place into this scheme.

It is interesting to note how the most awaited 'son' of Europe, at the apogee of his historical development, fullness and transparency of times, was born elsewhere, mainly in Asia and in Latin America, resulting from peasant 'barbarism' rather than industrial civilization.

More recently, a number of scholars from a variety of intellectual and geographical backgrounds, grouped together in the generic category of 'postcolonial studies', have proposed a critique of singular time and of universal history as the ideology of colonialism and imperialism. Edward Said's *Orientalism* criticised the classic division of the Orient and the Occident, a division constructed from the point of view of the West and which casts the Orient as the latter's prehistory. Ranajit Guha, founder of *Subaltern Studies*, showed how Hegelian *Weltgeschichte* constitutes an absolute limit, both in spatial and temporal terms, between the space of civilisation, Europe, and the space of barbarism, the colonised continents. Chakrabarty and Chatterjee provide a critique of the temporality of modernity founded on the repression, in the service first of colonialism and then of nationalism, of all heterogeneous temporalities. In *Provincializing Europe*, Chakrabarty proposes a critique of historicism (term that indicates in Chakrabarty generically a philosophy of historical progress) as an ideology of progress centred on the idea of a capitalism and modernity that would constitute the *telos* towards which non-European temporalities would tend. The colonized are therefore thought in the form of a 'not yet', that is, always as a 'figure of lack', of a still - incomplete transition to modernity.

Chakrabarty sees a sort of paradigm of this prejudice in the essays by Stuart Mill, *On Liberty* and *On Representative Government*:

According to Mill, Indians or Africans were not yet civilized enough to rule themselves. Some historical time of development and civilization (colonial rule and education, to be precise) had to elapse before they could be considered prepared for such a task. Mill's historicist argument thus consigned Indians, Africans, and other «rude» nations to an imaginary waiting room of history. In doing so, it converted history itself into a version of this waiting room. We were all headed for the same destination, Mill averred, but some people were to arrive earlier than others. That was what historicist consciousness was: a

.....
12Turchetto.

recommendation to the colonised to wait¹³.

A model of history of this kind is implicit in the stages of Rostow's economic development (*The stages of economic growth*), a sort of 'general theory of modernization' according to which there would be necessary phases of development through which each society would pass, phases that establish the gradation of delays of the rest of the world compared to Europe and the United States. A fundamental criticism of this position was conducted by so-called 'dependency theory'. Maria Turchetto summarizes the fundamental traits of the critique as follow: if 'for Rostow [...] underdevelopment is fundamentally delayed development, [...] for the dependency school the underdevelopment is peripheral collocation in the world-system. The capitalist world, in fact, is not a sum of states but a system of interdependent states and hierarchically placed in central and peripheral positions'¹⁴.

However, the most radical criticism of this model of history, which dominates the ideological landscape even today (for example, in defining the peripheral countries as 'developing'), was offered to us by a conference by Ernst Bloch held at the Academy of Sciences of the GDR in 1955. The polemical objective is the Eurocentric philosophy of history explicitly denounced as the ideology of colonialism, but it also undercuts orthodox Marxism, the *Histomat*, with its idea of linear and stadial progress, as expressed by Stalin in *Dialectical Materialism and Historical Materialism*. The attack that Bloch brings to this conception is complex and articulated. I will try to summarize it in some points:

- 1) criticism of the identification of temporal succession and progress;
- 2) criticism of temporal homogeneity of structure and superstructure;
- 3) criticism of the conception of a progressive order of the phases of the superstructure;
- 4) insufficiency of the partition of the history in epochs and stages;
- 5) criticism of the nature-history vector.

It is not our aim to go into the Blochian analysis¹⁵, but rather to take up its key concept: to think progress, a concept which Bloch does not renounce, a conception of historical time as *multiversum* is necessary. Progress must be thought of as a chariot pulled by multiple horses. Bloch writes:

The firmer the refusal of a purely Western emphasis, and of one laid solely upon development to date (to say nothing of discredited imperialism), all the stronger is the help afforded by a utopian, open and

.....
¹³ Chakrabarty 2000, p. 8.

¹⁴ Turchetto. See also Turchetto 2017, pp. 201-2013.

¹⁵ Per un'analisi di questo testo rinvio a Morfino and Thomas 2017.

in itself still experimental orientation. Only thus can hundreds of cultures flow into the unity of the human race; a unity that only then takes shape, in nonlinear historical time, and with an historical direction that is not fixed and monadic. For the very sake of the human race, Africa and Asia join in the polyphonic chorus of a polyrhythmic advance of progress towards this unity – admittedly beneath a sun which first arose, actively and in theory, in Europe, yet one which would shine upon a community that is really without slavery. In all its revolutions, the Western concept of progress has never implied a European (and of course not an Asiatic or African) vanguard, but a better Earth for all men¹⁶.

This plural conception of historical time allows Bloch not only to replace the notion of the Orient as prehistory with the actuality of China, India, and Africa, but also avoids thinking these cultures through the *telos* of the civilisation of man, and restores to them the 'concept of the pride of people in national cultures not mediated by Europe'.

The concept of *multiversum* is a fundamental methodological warning against a philosophy of history that poses Europe as a *telos* and measure of historical development, and it allows us to appreciate the complex intertwining of times, relationships, interactions and power balances, which have produced this imaginary representation of Europe.

However, *multiversum* does not simply mean a multilinearity, i.e. to think the time of Europe between other times; it means, more radically, to affirm the non-contemporaneity of the space of European interiority, to use another Blochian concept, its *Ungleichzeitigkeit*. Bloch used this to think about the rise to power of Nazism, declaring Germany, following the Marx of 44, die *klassische Land der Ungleichzeitigkeit*. To think of German society, Bloch said, it is necessary to 'make the turbulent Now broader', it is necessary to adopt a 'multi-layered dialectic', a multispatial and multitemporal one. And this is no less true for Italy, if we take into consideration the 'southern question'. In other words, we are allowed to think different temporalities within Europe, and to think the various European states in their non-contemporaneity, applying the dependency model in the same European space, i.e. not thinking of the times of these regions by comparing their rhythm of development with some imaginary, fundamental rhythm, but thinking of them as 'a system of interdependent and hierarchically placed states'.

However, to deconstruct the imaginary spiritual unity of Europe, I will use another concept of the Marxist tradition, that of Gramscian stratification.

Formulated in the theory of 'spontaneous philosophy' and contained, according to the Sardinian communist, in everyday language, common sense, and popular religion: philosophy, to the extent that it contains a conception of the world, is 'unaware'. In Gramsci, there is certainly

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¹⁶ Bloch 1970, pp. 140–1.

a temporal arrow, a 'philosophy of history', which traces a path from spontaneous philosophy to 'critical awareness'. However, what is most interesting is the form of this spontaneous philosophy: its being 'broken and occasional'. Thinking 'without critical awareness, in a broken and occasional way', writes Gramsci, means 'to "participate" in a conception of the world that is "imposed" mechanically by the external environment, that is, from one of the many social groups with which everyone is automatically involved from the moment of his own entrance into the conscious world'¹⁷. Here the concept of stratification comes into play:

We are always conformists of some conformism, just as we are always mass-men or collective-men. The question is this: which historical type of conformism, which kind of mass-men are we a part of? When the conception of the world is not critical and coherent but random and disrupted, it belongs simultaneously to a multiplicity of mass-men. Our personality is composite in a bizarre way: there are elements of the caveman as well as principles of the most modern and advanced science, prejudices of all previous historical phases (which are strictly localistic) and intuitions of the future philosophy which will be typical of humankind unified worldwide. To criticize one's conception of the world therefore means to make it unitary and coherent and to raise it to the point of the most advanced view of world thought. It therefore also signifies criticizing all the philosophy that has existed until now, inasmuch as it has left consolidated stratifications in popular philosophy. The beginning of critical thinking is the consciousness of what really is, that is, to 'know thyself' as a product of historical process held so far that has left in one's self an infinite number of traces without the benefit of taking stock. Such an inventory must be done¹⁸.

Multiversum and stratification are only two sides of the same coin, because stratification is nothing but the deposit of the continuous intertwining of times in boundaries that are inevitably porous. There are no pure identities, Freud in *Moses and monotheism* says it clearly, there are only continuous intertwining that deposit traces, stratifications. As Gramsci puts it, it is necessary to make an inventory of these layers of time, above all those whose effects are to be fought at the political level, if we want to build a Europe ready to live up to its claims of class, race, and gender privileges. No project of a just Europe is imaginable unless we are aware of the extent of colonialism and its violence, the treatment of slaves, racism and its massacres inside and outside Europe, fascisms, not only Italian and German, but Spanish, French and East Europe, and, last but not least, sexism.

And yet, to formulate such a project, it is necessary to understand the structural nexus that links racism and sexism to the very

.....
17 Gramsci 1975, p.1375-1376.

18 Ibid., p. 1376.

development of capitalism. As Silvia Federici writes:

[...] Marx's belief in the development of capitalism as a unifying factor for the global population and the levelling out of social inequalities is wrong: he has not been able to understand that capitalism is structurally racist and sexist. Because it is not an anomaly or a temporary period during a phase of its development. Capitalism, or rather capitalist accumulation, is an accumulation of hierarchies and inequalities intrinsically necessary for the organization and division of labor in production. And these are necessary to the capitalist for his accumulation of unpaid work, which does not exist only during the paid workday. Because, by means of a wage that allow to live a family, capitalism succeed in exploiting workers without wage (of whom women are a big part) in the entire productive economy¹⁹.

Of course, ecologism is part of the project for a just Europe. But no true ecologism is possible without understanding the structural link between capitalism and the destruction of nature. García Linera rightly attacks the so-called 'white ecologism', for which:

the nature that is worth saving or protecting is not all nature, but only that 'wild' part that is sterilized of the poor, sterilized of blacks, sterilized of peasants, sterilized of workers, sterilized of Latinos, sterilized of Indians with their annoying social and labor problems²⁰.

A few years ago, in *Specters of Marx*, Derrida admonished us: no future without Marx, no promise of justice without Marx²¹. I would add: no just Europe without Marx! But this Marx must be read 'against the grain', pointing to a theory capable of a radical critique to every form of Eurocentrism, racism, sexism and 'white ecologism' (to use the expression of García Linera), and of coming to terms with the legacy of its own theoretical and ideological history, including the history of real socialism (to which we must apply the blochian categories of *Ungleichzeitigkeit* and *multiversum* precisely to avoid reconstruction in terms of philosophy of history). If, as Husserl argued, 'the function that philosophy must constantly exercise within European humanity is an archontic function for the civilisation as a whole', this function can only be performed by a Marxist philosophy capable of going beyond itself, without, however, losing the force of its class analysis.

Of course, the forces that today are inspired by such a promise are squashed between a market and finance Europeanism, dominated (especially after the 2008 crisis) by austerity policies, and a reactive anti-Europeanism traversed by nationalist, fascist, racist, sexist and homophobic traces. What is to be done? It is a matter of continuing to interpret the world, denouncing injustices, waiting to be able to change

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19 Federici 2019.

20 García Linera 2017.

21 Derrida 1994.

it. And yet this expectation cannot and must not be messianic, an expectation of an event that interrupts the homogeneous and empty timeline, of a God who 'comes like a thief in the night'. The interpretation, the theory, must not be configured as an announcement of an Event, it is not a prophecy of a *novum* to-come, but must be conceived of as an analysis of a conjuncture. In this sense, it is necessary to rely on Althusser rather than on Derrida.

Althusser made two assumptions that seem to anticipate Derrida on this point: the impossible contemporaneity of the present and the omni-pervasiveness of the ideological. Like Derrida, Althusser rejects a metaphysics of time built on the dual axis of linear succession and contemporaneity: the present, the actual moment, is never a full present, but is always constituted by the intertwining of temporalities. And, like Derrida, Althusser rejects a conception of spectrality destined to dissolve itself into a transparent present: ideology is eternal like the unconscious, permeating reality as a trace of the various practices of bodies. However, at the intersection of these two theses, we find in Derrida a messianism without the horizon of the wait, a communism to-come, a democracy to-come, a new international that arises from the deconstruction of all historical institutions in which Marxism was embodied (the party, the cell, the trade union, the State); in Althusser, we find a theory of conjuncture as the conjunction of different real and imaginary times, in which the categories of historical materialism are not simply dismissed as ontology, but are criticized insofar as they imply a philosophy of history that indicates a linear time concluded by an *eschaton* and marked by a teleology. In Althusser, the concept of conjuncture is not meant to open the space of an unthinkable event, but rather to think how to transform circumstances into forces, as Gramsci says about Machiavelli, to gather forces by implementing a strategy capable of defeating the forces of the opponent field. In this sense, the forms of organization are not obstacles for inheriting the spirit of Marxism. Instead, these forms are that for which, alone, this inheritance can have a meaning. Machiavelli's *occasion* has a different nature from Derrida's event: occasion is opaque to the extent that it is the effect of a complex interweaving of real and imaginary times and not the link of a linear, predictable chain, and yet it can be anticipated.

This concept of occasion comes from Althusser's reading of Machiavelli, an author forced to think the impossible and necessary task of the Italian national unity. This concept can be useful to think about the future of Europe, of a just Europe, that means, of a socialist Europe, as impossible and necessary a task for us today as was for Machiavelli the national unity of Italy. This interpretation could be inspiring to the extent that it underscores the necessity to analyse circumstances, not as a set of objective facts to which the theory is external, but as a field of forces that defines a space of possible interventions in the ideological conjuncture, in spatial and power relations within the imaginary, and at the same time in the political conjuncture as a project capable of articulating these

forces, i.e. the struggles actually taking place. Of course, there is no a priori guarantee that this articulation is possible, nor that, once built, it can defeat the opposing forces. Yet, its construction is all the more urgent in the face of a global situation that increasingly confirms the truth of the alternative posed by Rosa Luxemburg in the early twentieth century: socialism or barbarism.

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Brexit, Britain and Europe

Michael Roberts

Abstract: Britain in Europe has always been an exception. Underlying the decision is the historically unsettled split in the British ruling class about what direction to take British capital in the post-war period. Support for staying in the EU faded away both prior to the Great Recession and particularly in the euro crisis period. In Britain the euro-sceptics gained support and clamoured for leaving the EU. The scene was thus set for the Brexit debacle. Whether Britain is in or out of the European Union will make little difference over the long term. The elephant in the room is a new economic slump which would be way more damaging to the UK economy than Brexit. Brexit will just be an extra burden for British capital to face. On balance, leaving the EU is a negative for British capital, even if the hit is relatively small compared to the hit that working-class households have suffered from regular and recurring slumps in capitalist production, especially when followed by depressionary stagnation, as in the last ten years.

As I write, the current British prime minister Boris Johnson is attempting to force through Britain's exit from the European Union, despite parliament passing a law forbidding any exit without an agreed deal with the EU. In the May EU Assembly elections that Britain was reluctantly forced to participate in, the single issue so-called 'Brexit' party took the most seats. The results revealed a total split among British voters between those who want to leave even without an agreement with the EU and those who want to stay in the EU.

Indeed, nothing has changed in three tortuous years since the narrow decision in the UK referendum in 2016 to leave the European Union after 50 years. That referendum vote threw the British political elite into total disarray. The issue has cut across class-based politics and classes; whether it is the top 1% (as measured by wealth and income) of Britons; or the 'middle-class' professionals; or the working-class; the old and young; city or small town; or north and south. All are split about whether to stay or leave.

The issue has caused paralysis in government policy, in corporate investment decisions; in parliamentary votes and even in individual spending on big ticket items like housing and cars. The British pound has plummeted by 20% against other major currencies; and each week another corporation announces that it will move its headquarters or production facilities out of the country; while British companies like British Steel go bust.

British exceptionalism

Britain in Europe has always been an exception. Support for the European Union among the citizens of the member states remains very high, indeed it is at its highest point in 35 years, at around 60-65% on average. As you would expect, EU-scepticism in Britain was the highest of all member

states at the time of the UK referendum of 2016. And in 2019, anti-EU sentiment in the UK was 50% higher than the next most skeptical member state, Czech.¹

Scepticism about the European 'project' has grown since the Great Recession of 2008-9 and the ensuing policies of austerity in the EU. But even so, not one of the EU's member states has delivered a public opinion poll with a majority wanting the country to leave – except the UK. The referendum of the 2016 confirmed that, albeit narrowly.

Underlying the decision is the historically unsettled split in the British ruling class about what direction to take British capital in the post-war period. After the debacle of the so-called Suez crisis of 1956 when France and the UK learnt that they could no longer dictate colonial control over Egypt and the Middle East on their own, and must hand over that role to American imperialism, the British ruling class was in a dilemma. Should they become just a junior partner of American hegemony and stay out of the European integration process being promoted by France and Germany from the late 1950s; or should they opt for becoming a senior partner in Franco-German capital's drive to build an imperialist bloc to rival the US and the Soviet Union?

The answer was at first to reject offers to join the European integration process and stay aloof. But economics eventually dominates politics and when it became clear that France and Germany were leaping forward economically with the Common Market, the European Economic Community and eventually the Treaty of Rome, the majority of the strategists of British capital opted for Europe.

But a significant minority remained sceptical and even hostile to the European project. Also, there was strong sentiment in the British labour movement that the EU was a 'capitalist club' with pro-market, anti-labour principles and must be avoided. After the Conservative government under Ted Heath had taken the UK into the European Economic Community in 1973, when the Labour party got into office in 1974, the Labour left-wing pushed for a referendum, but overwhelmingly lost the vote. The die was now cast for the next 50 years.

Throughout those years, Britain had an uneasy relationship with the Franco-German EU bloc. Indeed, it insisted, under Thatcher, on obtaining a special deal on contributions to the budget and on other matters to do with EU regulations. At the same time, Britain was a driving force for more de-regulation of industry and services and other neoliberal measures (i.e. reductions in agricultural subsidies) within the EU, taking it away from its supposed 'social market' principles.

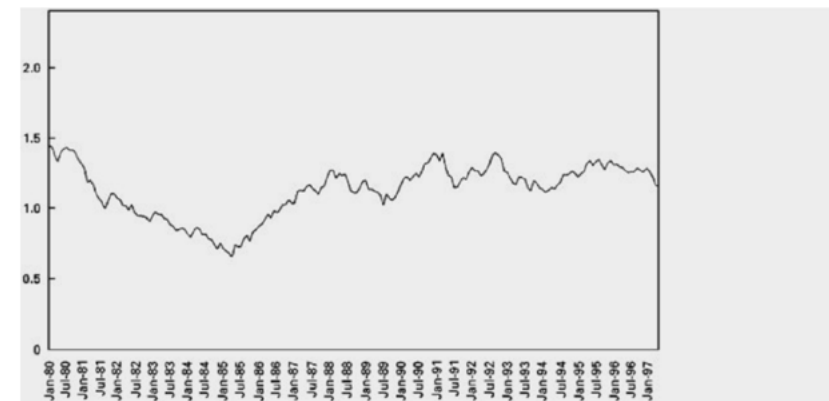
During the 1980s and especially in the 1990s, UK economic growth more than matched the major EU economies. So the UK refused to join

¹ <https://www.eui.eu/Research/Library/ResearchGuides/Economics/Statistics/DataPortal/Eurobarometer>

up fully for the Maastricht treaty and its move towards the establishment of the euro, as it meant losing control of monetary policy and the national currency – in effect placing British capital in a permanent marriage to the Franco-German bloc.

But the City of London and the UK's all-powerful financial services industry was strongly in favour of the UK joining the single currency to enable the smooth movement of capital flows and to enshrine the City's dominance in FX trading and other financial business. So in the early 1990s, the UK joined the EU's Exchange Rate Mechanism (ERM) that kept national currencies in a strict band with the European Currency Unit (ECU), the precursor of the euro. The City put the pressure on the then prime minister Thatcher to do this. But the irony was that the UK economy was too weak to sustain a strong pound as Franco-German economies drove up the ECU's value against the dollar. Eventually, 'Black Wednesday' occurred in September 1992, when John Major's Conservative government was forced to withdraw from the ERM.

The US\$/ECU rate – the ECU reached a high against the dollar in 1992, provoking the crisis for sterling.



This set the stage for a return of the hidden split in the Conservative party and British capital over whether to move towards further integration with the EU or to distance itself. The ERM debacle led to an attempt to remove the then Tory PM John Major by euro-sceptic MPs and later to Major's defeat in the 1997 election that put the pro-EU Blair-Brown Labour Party in office for 13 years.

That only increased the schism within the Conservatives. There was now a clear division between those leaders who represented the interests of big business and the City of London wanting 'free trade' and a big role in the EU and rank and file Conservatives who represented small businesses and the narrow nationalist and racist elements in small provincial towns. They wanted no truck with 'Europe' and harkened back to 'good old days' of a white imperial Britain ploughing its own furrow – something, of course, that had disappeared even before the UK joined

the EU. This division was heightened by the bulk of the 'popular' press, whose moguls were either Australian-Americans like Rupert Murdoch, or aristocratic 'empire believers' like the Rothermeres or the Barclay brothers.

The return of the Conservatives to power in 2010 after the Great Recession did not end this schism. The euro debt crisis of 2012 exposed the fault-lines in the great EU and euro project. Capitalism is a combined but uneven process of development. It is combined in the sense of extending the division of labour and economies of scale, and involving the law of value in all sectors, as in "globalization." But that expansion is uneven and unequal by its very mode, as the stronger seek to gain market share over the weaker. The euro project aimed at integrating all European capitalist economies into one unit in order to compete with the United States and Asia in world capitalism with a single market and a rival currency. But one policy on inflation, one short-term interest rate, and one currency for all members was not enough to overcome the centrifugal forces of uneven capitalist development, especially when growth for all ceases and there is a slump, as in 2008-9 and the subsequent euro debt crisis of 2012-14.

The professed aim from the beginning of the euro in 1999 was that the weaker economies would converge with the stronger in GDP per capita, and in terms of fiscal and external imbalances. But instead, the opposite happened. The global slump of 2008-9 dramatically increased the divergent forces within the Eurozone, threatening to break it apart. The fragmentation of capital flows between the strong and weak Eurozone states exploded. The capitalist sectors of the richer economies like Germany stopped lending directly to the weaker capitalist sectors in Greece, Slovenia, and elsewhere.²

The euro area twin crises – associated with the Great Recession and the euro area sovereign debt crisis – left a legacy of unprecedented high levels of public debts both at the national level and in the aggregate. Projected public debt for the euro area as a whole for 2019 is 85.8% of GDP, decreasing from the all-time peak of 94.4% in 2014 but still around 20 percentage points above the 2007 pre-crisis level. This high and persistent public debt has been associated with an unprecedented effort of fiscal consolidation which involved a rapid decrease in public deficits starting in mid-2009.³

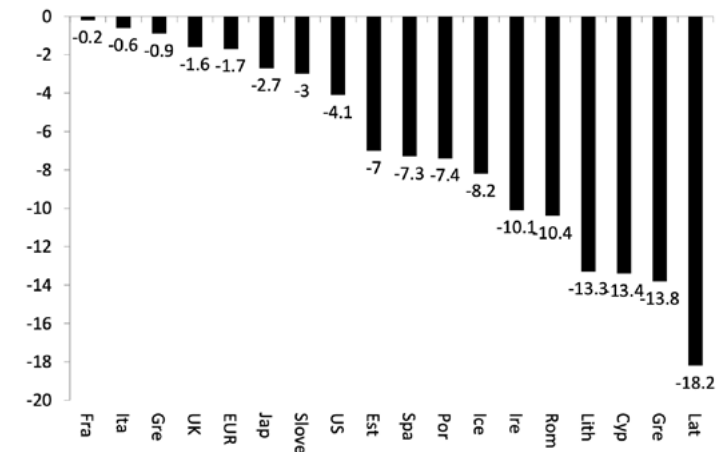
The ECB, the EU Commission, and the governments of the Eurozone proclaimed that austerity was the only way that Europe could escape from the Great Recession. Austerity in public spending would force convergence too. But the real aim of austerity was to achieve a sharp fall

2 Roberts M, (2018)

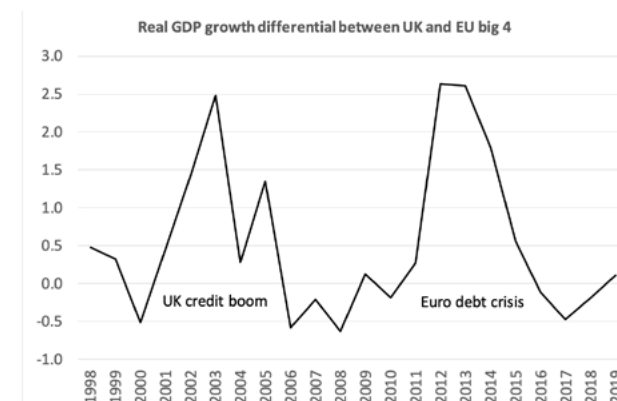
3 Alberto Caruso, Lucrezia Reichlin, Giovanni Ricco, The financial origin of the euro area fiscal wound <https://voxeu.org/article/financial-origin-euro-area-fiscal-wound>

in real wages and cuts in corporate taxes, thus raising the profitability of capital. And every advanced capitalist economy has managed to reduce labor's share of the new value created since 2009. Labour has been paying for this crisis everywhere.

Reduction in labour's share of new value added (%), 2009–15. Source: AMECO, author's calculations.



Since the introduction of the euro in 1999, the UK economy generally performed better than the EU average, at least in real GDP growth. Between 1999 up to the global financial crash and Great Recession in 2008, the EU big four excluding Britain (Germany, France, Spain and Italy) grew at an annual average of 2.4%, while the UK averaged 2.9% a year. Since the Great Recession, the EU-4 has grown only 0.6% a year, while the UK achieved 1.1%. Generally, the growth differential has been in the UK's favour, particularly during the euro debt crisis of 2012-14. However, in the Great Recession, the UK suffered more than the EU-4 and it is an irony that when the UK referendum on the EU took place in 2016, the growth advantage for Britain had disappeared.



Source: IMF, author's calculations

But there is no doubt that support for staying in the EU and even considering joining the single currency zone faded away both prior to the Great Recession and particularly in the euro crisis period. In Britain the euro-sceptics gained support and clamoured for leaving the EU. The argument was that Europe was an economic 'basket case' with heavy debts and high unemployment. Indeed, EU immigrants were flooding into Britain looking for work, particularly those from Eastern Europe, countries which were now in the EU after the EU's expansion. Support for the anti-immigrant, anti-EU UKIP increased and UKIP won the lion's share of the vote in the 2014 EU elections.

The scene was thus set for the Brexit debacle. The Conservative PM David Cameron, supposedly the representative of big business and the City, was worried. The Conservatives knew that they could lose a general election to Labour (because some of their votes would go to UKIP) unless they agreed to call a referendum on EU membership. Their manifesto promise sufficiently weakened the vote for UKIP in the 2014 election that Cameron narrowly won. By agreeing to a referendum, Cameron managed to reduce UKIP's representation to just one seat in parliament.

But this political tactic backfired in the ensuing EU referendum itself in 2016. The referendum delivered a 52-48 victory for the leavers. Cameron immediately resigned and scuttled away to leave the new leader, the 'remainer' Theresa May, holding the poisoned chalice of having to conduct fraught and tortuous negotiations with the EU, with her party and country split down the middle.

In the referendum it seems that just a sufficient numbers of voters believed the arguments of the pro-Brexit Tories and UKIP that what was wrong with their lives was 'too much immigration' and 'too much regulation' by the EU (although Britain is already the most deregulated economy in the OECD). Many voters did not swallow the immigration and regulation arguments; but these were mainly the young; and those who lived in multi-ethnic areas like London and Manchester.

Those who voted to leave were older, did little travel abroad, lived in small towns and cities mainly in the north or in Wales, far away from City of London and from the sight of any 'immigrants', but who had suffered the most from low paid jobs, public sector cuts, run-down housing and high streets and general neglect as a result of the austerity imposed by both Labour and Conservative governments after the Great Recession.⁴

So the working class vote was split; the young, trade unionists, educated and city dwellers voted remain; while the older, less educated and those outside unions in smaller towns voted leave. The vast bulk of small business-people, the rich rural dwellers and farmers voted to leave

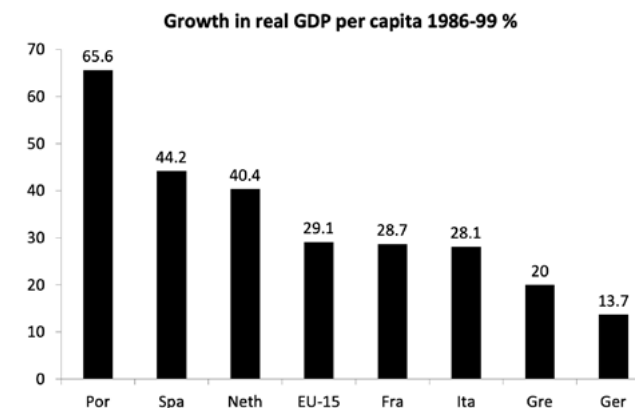
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⁴ Goodwin and Heath, Joseph Rowntree Foundation, July 2016, https://www.jrf.org.uk/report/brexit-vote-explained-poverty-low-skills-and-lack-opportunities?gclid=Cj0KCQjwiLLsBRCGARIsAHKQWLNGaol2sOqKbqMG5akOutvkDPE7qDNzaz5icvK9EK0CDyHpKnIkioaAv4kEALw_wcB

on anti-immigrant and 'pro-empire' grounds. Their vote was enough to tip the split working-class vote into a majority for leave.

May failed to deliver an agreement with the EU on future relations that was acceptable to the bulk of her own Conservative party or the opposition. In the end she was forced from office by hard-line Brexiters who appointed Boris Johnson, Britain's Donald Trump, to drive through a 'no-deal Brexit'. Most likely a new election will ensue to decide the issue by the end of this year.

Britain and Europe after Brexit

When it began, the European Union did show a degree of convergence between the rich northern core economies and the poor southern periphery. Common trade rules and the free movement of labour and capital between countries in the EU led to some 'convergence' on productivity levels. The move to a common market, customs union and eventually the political and economic structures of the EU has been a relative success. The EU-12/15 from the 1980s to 1999 managed to achieve a degree of harmonisation and convergence with the weaker capitalist economies growing faster than the stronger (graph below shows growth per capita 1986-99).



Source: OECD

But that was only up to the point of the start of EMU. The evidence for convergence since then has been much less convincing. On the contrary, the experience of EMU has been divergence. That divergence was cruelly exposed in the Eurozone debt depression in 2012, which forced bailouts on Ireland, Portugal and Spain and nearly led to the expulsion of Greece. The EU was no longer a positive role model for British capital, and certainly not for swathes of the British population. 'Populism' and euro-scepticism reared up in many EU countries, but no more so than in 'imperialist' Britain.

So would British capital do better outside the EU from here? The answer is that it depends, but on balance, probably not. It is true that much of the gains from free trade within the EU has been exhausted. But it is a myth pushed by the EU-leavers that Britain can negotiate just as good trade terms with the EU and other countries as they had within the EU without all the EU regulations and budget funding for EU institutions. The EU institutions are certainly not holding the UK back from selling globally. Germany has a world trade volume that is more than three times the UK figure, but it is suffering from the economic slowdown in China. It is unlikely that British capital would do better than Germany by opting for Asia or America over Europe for exports or investment. Indeed, given the trade and technology war that has broken out between the US and China, this is not a good time to expect increased trade with Asia.

And the experience of European countries like Norway or Switzerland that have negotiated such agreements with the EU and other blocs shows that with any trade deal comes obligations and conditions. In their deal with the EU, Norway and Switzerland must abide by all EU single market standards and regulations, without any say in their formulation. They must agree to translate all relevant EU laws into their domestic legislation without consulting domestic voters. They contribute substantially to the EU budget. And they must accept unlimited EU immigration, resulting in a higher share of EU immigrants in the Swiss and Norwegian populations than in the UK! So overall, for British capital, there would be little difference outside than being in the EU, if it negotiated a similar arrangement that Norway and Switzerland have.

Also, European Economic Association (EEA) members such as Norway do not belong to the EU's customs union. Consequently, Norwegian exports must satisfy 'rules of origin' requirements in order to enter the EU duty free and the EU can use anti-dumping measures to restrict imports from Norway, as occurred in 2006 when the EU imposed a 16% tariff on imports of Norwegian salmon. EEA members effectively pay a fee to be part of the Single Market. In 2011 Norway's contribution to the EU budget was £106 per capita, only 17% lower than the UK's net contribution of £128 per capita.⁵ So becoming part of the EEA would not generate substantial fiscal savings for the UK government and taxpayers. The UK's contribution to the EU budget, after rebates, is not particularly high per head of population and low as a percentage of GDP compared to other EU members.

The most important feature of British imperialism is that it is a *rentier* economy, meaning that it gets the bulk of its surplus value through extracting 'rents' in the form of interest, financial commissions and speculation in fictitious capital, increasingly from overseas, and less from the direct exploitation of labour in production at home. The UK is no longer

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⁵ House of Commons report, 2013. <https://researchbriefings.parliament.uk/ResearchBriefing/Summary/SN06522>

a manufacturing nation as it was in the 19th century. Now it is a service-based economy relying on imperialist flows of capital and income – the financial middleman for the global economy.

The key interest of British capital is to preserve its hegemonic global position in financial services – but with the UK outside the EU that hegemony could come under threat. Britain's specialisation in services – not only finance, but also law, accountancy, media, architecture, pharmaceutical research and so on – makes entry to the EU single market critical. Yet its service industries could be locked out. The French, German, and Irish governments would be particularly delighted to see UK-based banks and hedge funds isolated, and see UK-based businesses involved in asset management, insurance, accountancy, law, and media forced to transfer their jobs, head offices, and tax payments to Paris, Frankfurt, or Dublin.

EU states may also try and usurp the UK's position as the EU's most popular destination for foreign direct investment. Over the past 15 years, the UK has received more than 20% of inward EU FDI. But without full access to the EU's internal markets, future FDI flows into car factories or financial services hubs might be redirected and create jobs elsewhere in the EU.

What about turning the UK into a giant tax haven like Switzerland or Ireland, or deregulating industry and labour so that Britain becomes the port of call for multi-nationals looking for cheap educated labour and low taxation? That is the aim of the Brexiters. But as it is, Britain is already one of the least regulated countries in the world, as previous Labour and Conservative governments have boasted. So getting rid of any EU regulations by leaving would have little added value for British capital, even if it reduced conditions for labour.

After all, the euro debt crisis in Greece, Portugal, Spain, Italy etc. was mainly to do with the crisis in capitalism since 2007 and not really to do with the institutions of the EU, cumbersome, bureaucratic and undemocratic as they are; or to do with the policies of the EU leaders for Europe. The neo-liberal, pro-austerity measures applied by the EU Commission are the very same policies adopted by the national governments of Europe on their people. EU policy is no more neo-liberal and pro-big business than is the policy of successive British governments of the last two decades, Conservative or Labour.

Anyway, even outside the EU, the UK would still be subject to 700 international treaties, as a member of the UN, WTO, NATO, IMF and World Bank, and subscribe to a swathe of nuclear test ban, energy, water, maritime law and air traffic treaties. The idea that leaving the EU would lead to a golden era of UK capital control and self-determination, is, it is fair to say, far-fetched at least. National sovereignty is a relative concept in modern imperialism.

As for the interests of labour, Britain's Trade Union Congress (TUC) reckons that there are benefits for British workers from the EU. In a

report⁶, the TUC cites rights such as paid annual leave and fair treatment for part-time workers may be in danger that could be rolled back by a Conservative government: *“These are wide-ranging in scope, including access to paid annual holidays, improved health and safety protection, rights to unpaid parental leave, rights to time off work for urgent family reasons, equal treatment rights for part-time, fixed-term and agency workers, rights for outsourced workers, and rights for workers’ representatives to receive information and be consulted, particularly in the context of restructuring. And without the back-up of EU laws, unscrupulous employers will have free rein to cut many of their workers’ hard-won benefits and protections”*.

But the TUC exaggerates. EU laws and directives like the 48-hour working week are hardly worth the paper that they have been written on, with many exemptions for employment sectors for example, like junior hospital doctors on a 72-hour week or the practice of many employers to get employees to sign a ‘waiver’ on working hours and conditions. The point is that most of working conditions are determined by national laws and by the class struggle at the workplace, not by EU laws. Those battles have not been hindered or helped much either way by EU employment laws.

Even this isn’t the whole story, though, as it has become much more difficult in the UK for workers to enforce any employment law. The introduction of employment tribunal fees has seen a sharp drop in the number of cases being brought. As an employer in the UK, there isn’t much employment law to fall foul of but, even if you do, the chances of being prosecuted for it are pretty remote.

Then there is the question of immigration. Leaving the EU would supposedly allow Britain to block cheap labour from Eastern Europe flooding into the country and lowering wages and conditions. Or so the argument goes. But reducing immigration will not improve the situation for working people already in the UK. Migrants often fill the gaps in the labour market that Britons won’t or can’t fill. To take one example, strawberries are now available in the shops for much longer. They are picked by migrant workers who return to Eastern Europe at the end of the season. Care work is another industry heavily populated with migrant labour. Migrants often perform low paid, dirty work that British workers would be reluctant to perform. Indeed, the UK’s growth rate in the last 20 years has only matched that of the major EU economies because of a relatively fast-expanding workforce from young immigrant workers who pay tax and social insurance and do not use health services or pensions as much.

Around 3.7% of the total EU workforce – 3 million people – now work in a member state other than their own⁷. The number of students

⁶ <https://www.tuc.org.uk/campaigns/our-brexite-campaign>

⁷ https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=EU_citizens_living_in_another_Member_State_-_statistical_overview

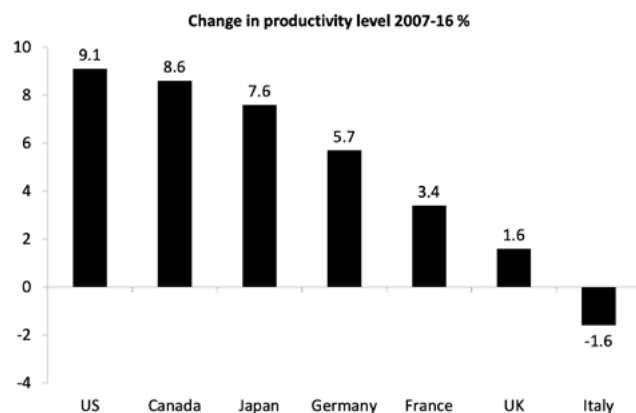
studying in another EU state other than their own has increased from 3,000 in 1988 to 272,000 in 2014. Since 1987, over 3.3 million students and 470,000 teaching staff have taken part in the EU’s Erasmus programme. There are 1.5 million Brits living in other EU countries and two-thirds of the long-term residents (800,000) are working (not retired) – although the UK has the lowest proportion of citizens living in the rest of the EU.

EU immigrants (indeed all immigrants) have contributed more to the UK economy in taxes (income and VAT), in filling low-paid jobs (hospitals, hotels, restaurants, farming, transport) than they have taken up (in extra cost of schools, public services etc). That’s because most are young (often single) and help pay pension contributions for those Brits who are retired. But the Brexit referendum has already brought about a sharp drop in net immigration into the UK from the EU, down 50-100,000 and still falling. That can only add to the loss of national income and tax revenues down the road.

The pressure on public services and social resources in the UK is not the result of ‘too much immigration’ – on the contrary. It is a result of huge cuts in public spending by the Conservative government and the overall slowdown in economic growth. The answer is to stop cutting taxes for the rich and instead boost public spending, in welfare and investment. State pension levels in the UK, relative to average wages, are the lowest in the OECD. This has nothing to do with immigration, but only to do with the weak state of British capital and government policies against labour.

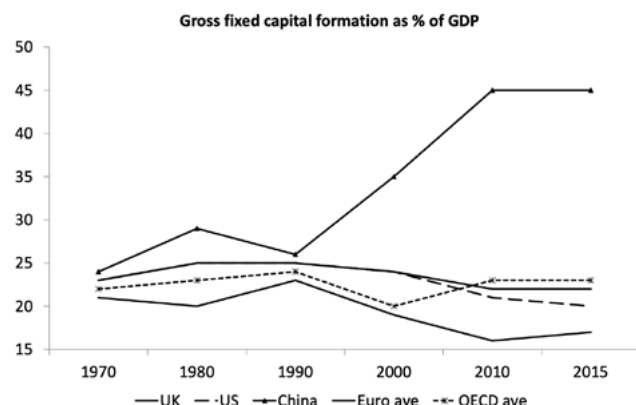
British capitalism on its own

So whether Britain is in or out of the European Union will make little difference to the majority of people in the UK. What does matter is the health of the economy, the level of wages and employment and the state of public services. That does not depend on Britain’s membership of the EU. Only if ‘freedom’ from EU institutions were to produce a sharp increase in productivity, investment and trade with the rest of the world, would these losses be overcome. On balance, that seems unlikely.



Source: OECD

Business investment in productive assets has been abysmally poor in the UK compared to other major economies.



Source: OECD

When we consider the impact of Brexit, it is clear that it has already had a detrimental effect on the UK capitalist economy. During the referendum campaign in 2016, the combined forces of the then Tory government of Cameron and Osborne, the Liberal Democrat junior coalition partners, the right-wing of the Labour party, the City of London and big business screamed that to 'vote leave' would lead to the collapse of the economy and a deep recession. This exaggeration, called Project Fear by the leavers, was only matched by the lies of the anti-immigrant UKIP party and the Tory right who claimed that leaving the EU would lead to extra money for the hard-pressed health service, trade would flourish and there would be prosperity all round.

Neither view was right. There may have been no economic recession, but the 'uncertainty' of the last two years and interminable

squabbling has been accompanied by a sharp slowdown in Britain's economic expansion. Sterling's value has dropped from US \$1.70 in 2014 to US \$1.25 now, more than 20%.

Britain's trade deficit with the rest of the world has widened to around 6% of GDP; and real GDP growth has slid back from over 2% a year to below 1.5%, with industrial production crawling along at 1%. Whereas the UK economy was doing better than most other G7 top economies in 2015, it is now doing even worse than Italy, while inflation has picked up due to the devaluation of the currency – so much for the argument often presented by Keynesians that having the ability to control the national currency (unlike those in the Eurozone such as Greece) can help restore economic growth and avoid austerity. Depreciation of a currency is not enough or even beneficial. Indeed, higher inflation and slower economic growth in the last two years have hit the average British household hard. Real wage growth disappeared and has only just returned at a feeble rate. Above all, from the point of view of British capital, business investment stagnated as companies paused on any investment plans while waiting for clarity on the Brexit deal.

And now with the possibility still of no transition deal with the EU, Project Fear has returned. The Bank of England's economists reckon that if there is a 'no deal' Brexit, then the UK economy could shrink 5% in 2020, while interest rates would rise to 5% to protect the pound and guard against rampant inflation, and home prices would fall by up to 30%!⁸ This would be a bigger decline than during the Great Recession of 2008-9. Capital Economics researchers are less pessimistic but still estimate that a 'disruptive no-deal Brexit', where the UK and the EU do not co-operate, could knock 3% off Britain's likely national income in 2020 and possibly cause "*an outright recession*".⁹

However, a "managed" no-deal scenario — where the two sides seek to minimise disruption in key areas, for example by agreeing arrangements to enable flights between the UK and mainland Europe — would *only* involve a 1% hit to gross domestic product by 2020. Oxford Economics estimates that in this 'managed scenario' the economy would still "*flirt with recession*" and GDP would be 2% lower than its current baseline forecast by the end of 2020.¹⁰

But let us look further ahead. Assuming the UK leaves the EU this year with a transition deal in place and eventually some long-term trade arrangement is reached with the EU, what are the prospects for 1) British capital and 2) British labour? For British industry and service sectors,

⁸ <https://www.bankofengland.co.uk/eu-withdrawal>

⁹ <https://www.capitaleconomics.com/publications/uk-economics/uk-economics-update/pick-your-own-brexit-forecast/>

¹⁰ <https://www.oxfordeconomics.com/brexit>

Europe is the main trading partner. About 57% of UK goods trade is with EU; and 40% of services trade.

Most long-term forecasts by mainstream economic institutes, including the Bank of England and the UK government, reckon that there would be an accumulated loss in real GDP from potential for the UK over the next ten to 15 years of between 4-10% of GDP from leaving the EU.¹¹ That's a 3% of GDP loss per person, equivalent to about £1000 per person per year. It all depends on whether any deal keeps the UK in a customs union (with similar tariffs and border regulations) with the EU and what parts of the existing Single Market (freedom of movement of labour and capital and citizens' rights) are preserved.

But whatever the final trade deal with the EU (or no deal), it does not mean an actual *fall* in UK GDP over the next ten to 15 years. This cannot be emphasised enough. The UK economy will not be smaller in ten years if it leaves the EU, it will just grow slower than it otherwise would have. The current average growth rate for the UK has been about 2% a year since 2010, which is down from an average 2.6% a year before the Great Recession in 2008. Most mainstream forecasts are predicting a slowing of the growth rate to between 1.3-1.6% a year depending on the nature of the final deal with the EU. This is hardly a disaster, if still a significant loss.

The UK economy already has weak investment and productivity growth compared with the 1990s and with other OECD countries. As it is a 'rentier' economy that depends too heavily on its financial and business services sector, services sector trade with the EU is likely to fall 50-65% after Brexit. Many banks, insurers and asset managers who want to retain access to customers in the EU have already redirected hundreds of millions of pounds of investment towards new or expanded hubs in the bloc. Nearly 40 banks from London have applied to the European Central Bank for licences. According to Frankfurt Main Finance, which promotes German financial capital, these are set to transfer 750-800 billion euros in assets in 2019. This is still a trickle, but it could turn into a flood.

British labour is already taking a pounding. Research by the British Trades Union Congress (TUC) found that the average worker has lost £11,800 in real earnings since 2008.¹² The UK has suffered the worst real wage slump among leading economies. Stephen Clarke, senior economic analyst at the Resolution Foundation think tank, put it: "*While wages are currently growing at their fastest rate in a decade and employment is at a record high, the sobering big picture is that inflation-adjusted pay is still almost £5,000 a year lower than when Lehman Brothers was still around.*"

Immigration into the UK from EU countries has been significant; but it also works the other way; with many Brits working and living in

11 Bank of England op cit

12 <https://www.tuc.org.uk/news/real-pay-cut-millions-lower-and-middle-paid-workers-tuc-analysis-reveals>

continental Europe. The number of EU citizens living in member states other than their own has risen from 4.6 million in 1995 to 16 million in 2015. And 22 of the 28 EU Member States participate in the Schengen Agreement, which allows passport-free travel for over 400 million citizens, who make over 4 million trips as tourists in another member state every year. With the UK out of the EU, British travellers will be subject to travel visas and other costs that will be greater than the total money per person saved from contributions to the EU.

The elephant in the room

And all these forecasts ignore the elephant in the room for the UK economy – another global slump or recession. The forecasts are based on *ceteris paribus* (other things being equal). But they won't be. Can it be realistic to assume that there will be no major slump in the major capitalist economies over the next ten to 15 years? Europe itself already has a recession in the manufacturing sector. Ironically, as the UK leaves the EU, the fate of Brexit Britain will be tied even closer to the fate of the EU and the euro. This is the paradox of unintended consequences.

There are two ways a capitalist economy can get out of slump. The first is by raising the rate of exploitation of the workforce enough to drive up profits and renew investment. The second is to liquidate weak and unprofitable capital (i.e., companies) or write off old machinery, equipment, and plant from company books (i.e., devalue the stock of capital). Capitalists attempt to do both in order to restore profits and profitability after a slump.

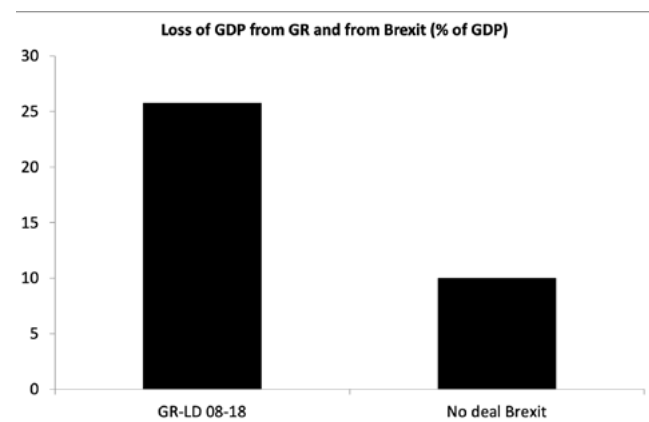
This is taking a long time in the current crisis, since the bottom of the Great Recession in mid-2009. Progress in devaluing and deleveraging the stock of capital and debt built up before is taking time and even being postponed by monetary policy. But progress in raising the rate of exploitation has been considerable.

Ultimately, whether the euro and the EU will survive is a political issue, depending on the majority view of the strategists of capital in the stronger economies and on the balance of class forces within the Eurozone. The EU leaders and strategists of capital need economic growth to return soon, or further political explosions are likely. But, given the current level of profitability, this may not occur before the world economy drops into another slump. Then, all bets are off on the survival of the euro.

A slump in the UK is unavoidable too. And such a slump as experienced in 2008-9 would deliver much more long-lasting damage to national income than even a 'bad Brexit' deal.

The UK economy, like all the other major economies in the Long Depression that has taken place in the last ten years, has experienced a permanent *relative* loss in GDP – in the UK's case of over 25%. In other words, the UK economy has had average growth some one-quarter slower since 2008 than it did before. Even if it continued to grow at around 2% over the next ten years with no impact from Brexit, that relative loss from

the Great Recession would reach 40% by 2030. That would be four times as much as the worst outcome from Brexit.



Source: Author's calculations

So a new economic slump would be way more damaging to the UK economy than Brexit. Brexit will just be an extra burden for British capital to face. On balance, leaving the EU is a negative for British capital but it is also not good news for British labour, even if the hit is relatively small compared to the hit that working-class households suffer from regular and recurring slumps in capitalist production, especially when followed by depressionary stagnation, as in the last ten years. The Brexit debacle will leave a permanent scar on the living standards of the British people.

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Europe Endless: Crisis, Spirit and the End of Europe

Benjamin Noys

Abstract: 'Europe endless' is the endlessly deferred promise of Europe as a site of rationality and freedom. In the face of the collapse of this promise it seems most current orientations are trying to 'end Europe', either in actuality or at the level of the idea or concept. Here I want to reconstruct the discourse of the crisis of Europe and the conjoined discourse of the spirit of Europe. This begins with Nietzsche as the philosopher of Europe as the crisis of nihilism in which Europe must be traversed to find a new 'spirit'. This crisis of spirit is projected as a global crisis to produce a meta-imperial traversal of crisis for the sake of Europe. Then the analysis moves to Husserl and the phenomenological reading of European 'spirit', which treats Europe as a 'life world' encompassing all others. Here Europe 'endless' is expansive and yet delimited. Finally, I consider the contemporary 'global' discourse of accelerationism, another Nietzschean current that embraces the solvent forces of technology and abstraction. The 'spirit' of Europe is formed within the forgetting of Europe and, as a result, the turning of the global into Europe. These discourses of 'spirit' at once try to end and maintain 'Europe Endless'. Instead, perhaps posing issues and problems of the actualisation of rationality and freedom might start to grasp the potentialities of 'Europe endless' beyond this constantly deferred end.

Keywords: Europe; Crisis; Nietzsche; Husserl; Accelerationism

It seems ironic that at the moment the unifying concern of Europe is how to put an end to Europe. In very different ways, with vastly different political and social forms, emerging out of heterogeneous formations, a range of discourses want to end Europe: discourses of radical right populism, perhaps best symbolised by Brexit, left critiques of Europe as neo-liberal form, decolonial critiques of the colonial form of Europe, 'no borders' struggles against the European border security system, all want to put an end to 'Europe endless' – the vision of Europe as a now permanent feature of the global system, in the form of the European Union. To reiterate, and as I will unpack below, these are very different forms of Europe and very different forms of 'ending' Europe to very different ends. It does seem difficult, however, outside of the realm of European Union functionaries, to find many who want to maintain Europe endless.¹ Even amongst those who want Europe to continue the desire is for it to end as it currently is.

That said, this problem of 'Europe endless' and 'ending Europe' perhaps speaks to something of that repeating discourse of the crisis of Europe, a discourse that predates significantly the global financial crisis of 2008 and the resulting regimes of austerity. That global crisis does,

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¹ Weber 2009, pp. 71-2

however significantly inflect the ‘crisis of Europe’. In a telling moment, the British historian of art and former member of the Situationist International, T. J. Clark, justified his decision to vote to leave the European Union in these terms: ‘I voted Leave, without enthusiasm, mainly because I had promised to do so in Greece last July.’² The financial waterboarding of Greece, which still continues, is not only a sign of the financial crisis but also a crisis of Europe that turns Greece into a sacrifice zone. This is particularly telling in this context due to the complex role of the ‘inclusion’ of Greece in Europe in the philosophical imaginary.³

If the crisis of Europe is a call to end Europe, it might also be a call to begin again. This, at least, is the claim of Franco ‘Bifo’ Berardi, who suggests that ‘Europe is dead, because of the austeritarian rule. But we must build another Europe. Immediately and without delay, we must build a social Europe, a Europe of equality and freedom from wage-labour.’⁴ Europe must be brought to an end, but this time to the benefit of a *new* Europe. The desire to end Europe endless is also closely bound up with the desire to begin a new Europe. The crisis of Europe would force a passage to this rebirth. What is striking, both in these discourses and in actuality, is the difficulty in producing this ending. The delay in Brexit, I write in August 2019, at least seems an empirical symptom of the difficulty of ending Europe.⁵

Europe might even appear here as what Hegel called a ‘bad infinity’, in which the infinite is separated from and dominates the finite as an ‘alien force’.⁶ The difficulty of realising Europe, of ending Europe endless, would speak to a conceptual failure in which infinite Europe is separated from actual Europe. The calls to re-invent Europe, of a ‘Europe to come’, to adapt Jacques Derrida,⁷ translate Europe into an infinite and endless task to achieve aims that constantly recede. In the words of Rodolphe Gasché, echoing Husserl, this is ‘Europe’ as ‘the infinite task’.⁸ For Gasché, such an ‘idea’ of Europe can be rewritten beyond the Kantian regulative idea, but even this remains a Europe that always promises to live up to its ‘openness’ and ‘self-criticism’.⁹ Despite the attempt to go beyond Kant this Europe seems to remain pre-Hegelian. Europe endless is valorised

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2 Clark 2016

3 Karatani 2017

4 Berardi 2017

5 On Brexit as a metaphysics of haste, see Finlayson 2018

6 Hegel 2010, p. 109

7 Derrida 1992

8 Gasché 2009.

9 Gasché 2017.

as the true state of Europe, which should never achieve the ‘equality and freedom’ that it always promises. The promise is even guarantee that we should not risk such a dangerous ‘realisation’, in a repeat of the trope of the various anti-totalitarianisms that were so crucial to post-war ‘Western’ Europe. In this case, endless Europe is the perpetually deferred but always possible promise of Europe. It might even be in response to such a Europe that we see the desire to end it, either to destroy any promise of equality and freedom or, finally, to bring it about.

What strikes me here also is a weariness with Europe, even a disgust, which again crosses the boundaries of various positions. Europe endless is a provoking prospect. Here I want to trace a philosophical discourse of Europe as a discourse of crisis and spirit. I begin with Nietzsche, as *the* European philosopher, with all the paradoxes, tensions, and violence, including colonial violence, which that entails. It is Nietzsche who exemplifies the notion of Europe as a site of crisis and tension that must be resolved in a ‘new Europe’. Then I move on to consider discourses of the spirit of Europe and crisis from the inter-war period (1919-1939) in the figure of Edmund Husserl in particular. Here the ‘spirit’ of Europe is one that must be maintained against irrationality but, being formed through a discourse of the ‘life-world’ or ‘community’, always risks a particularism. Nietzsche is, again, in the background here. Finally, I consider a more ‘minor’ moment of Europe in more recent philosophical discourses associated with ‘accelerationism’ – the desire to embrace the solvent forces of technology and abstraction. Here Europe becomes a site to be broken open and dissolved into a new global space. In this rupture with Europe, however, we also find a global projection of Europe as the origin of accelerationism and what is to be dissolved by accelerationism. My aim is to sketch the relations of Europe ‘endless’ to crisis and so to consider the delimitation of the future through and by Europe.

Good Europeans

It should be no surprise that *the* philosopher of Europe is Nietzsche, who self-describes as one of the ‘*good Europeans*’.¹⁰ In a remarkable moment, Nietzsche would even proclaim ‘the economic unification of Europe is coming of necessity’.¹¹ The ‘good European’ is, however, suspicious of a ‘good Europe’, or of how good Europe currently is. To be a good European is to aim for the target beyond what Europe *is* (a Europe of Jesuits, democrats, and Germans, in Nietzsche’s words). Existing Europe, certainly in the notes collected as *The Will to Power*, is the Europe of European nihilism. Europe suffers from a sickness, a narcosis, which is seemingly without end except for an end in catastrophe. Nietzsche writes that:

.....
10 Nietzsche 1973, p. 14

11 Nietzsche 1968, p. 396; #748

For some time now, our whole European culture has been moving as toward a catastrophe, with a tortured tension that is growing from decade to decade: restlessly, violently, headlong, like a river that wants to reach the end, that no longer reflects, that is afraid to reflect.¹²

Europe wants to reach the end, but while doing so it is inhabiting a soporific state that is, in fact, a state of tension. Beneath the appearance of tranquillity, if not tranquilisation, lies a rushing to catastrophe. In common with much of Nietzsche's clinical diagnostics of culture, in which the worst sickness presents itself as the best of health, or the healthy are seemingly sick, we find a site of reversibility and confusion in which Nietzsche's 'superior' diagnostic skills are put to work. Certainly, Nietzsche belongs to the nineteenth-century discourse of decadence,¹³ which is the shadow of the dominance of the notion of progress. Nietzsche is not original in this respect, but does stress the necessity of a transition through this 'illness', a surpassing or overcoming of the catastrophe.

Of course, this diagnosis gains empirical traction as Europe entered its own thirty-year civil war (1914-1945). Also, of course, Nietzsche's diagnosis is not only empirical or not at all empirical but metaphysical. Finally, of course, the metaphysical and the empirical stand melded in this diagnosis, as the fate of Europe is a philosophical one. In all this Nietzsche stands as the good European. But not so good. Nietzsche describes how he is 'the first perfect nihilist of Europe who, however, has even now lived through the whole of nihilism, to the end, leaving it behind, outside himself.'¹⁴ Nietzsche's 'advantage' over Europe is to have lived its fate in advance. Whereas Europe is entering into nihilism, which is a spreading infection or drug, Nietzsche has already left it behind. The 'good European' might then be the one who has transcended the crisis of Europe, in which crisis takes on the older meaning of a significant moment in the progress of a disease, the moment at which the patient will either die or recover. Nietzsche has survived that crisis, the fever of nihilism has broken, but Europe still has to confront that moment of crisis. Nietzsche has experienced inoculation or recovered from the addiction that is nihilism. At least that is Nietzsche's claim. The discourse of the 'bridge' or the transition or overcoming speaks, however, to the difficulty of forcing this passage or break.

To refer back to *Beyond Good and Evil*, the moment of European nihilism is not only a moment of exhaustion but of supreme tension, 'a magnificent tension of the spirit such as has never existed on earth

.....
12 Nietzsche 1968, p. 3 Preface #2

13 Nordau 1993

14 Nietzsche 1973, p. 3

before: with so tense a bow one can now shoot for the most distant targets'.¹⁵ This might seem to be belied by the fact that Europe does not appear European, but as 'European Buddhism'. The Platonic and Christian legacy of Europe ends in a self-dissolving nihilism as it undermines its own premises.¹⁶ This is why we can speak of a developing European Buddhism, which has yet to match the 'Nothing' of original Buddhism.¹⁷ Instead we have: 'The European form of Buddhism: the energy of knowledge and strength compels this belief. It is the most *scientific* of all possible hypotheses. We deny end goals: if existence had one it would have to have been reached.'¹⁸ In this absence we confront 'the European form of Buddhism – *doing* No after all existence has lost its "meaning."¹⁹ This state is the condition for the rebirth of an active and strong Europe, but only once this state has been transcended by new 'free spirits'.

This diagnosis of European nihilism, of course, underpins Nietzsche's reactionary attacks on socialism, feminism, anarchism, and any other gesture of egalitarian dissent as 'nihilist'. In Europe life is declining and so also the norms it sets, which are reduced to the 'herd instinct'. This is evident in *Beyond Good and Evil*, in which the 'herd animal' is found in many forms, including 'anarchist dogs' and 'brotherhood fanatics who call themselves socialists' that usher in the 'new Buddhism'.²⁰ Here diagnosis reveals the virulence of its 'acceptance' of nihilism in the contrast between a Europe 'to come', a Europe of higher spirits and hierarchy, which will overturn the misery of existing European nihilism.²¹ The Europe endless of nihilism will be ended by a new Europe of a 'new caste' imposing hierarchy,²² the 'imprinting' of new forms and a new gestalt, to use the Nietzschean terms of Ernst Jünger.²³ It is only after 'tremendous socialist crises' that new barbarians will arise to impose form on chaos.²⁴

Of course, it is possible to see Nietzsche's 'Orientalism', as an act that de-centres Europe and destabilises the notions of Occident and

.....
15 Nietzsche 1973, p. 14

16 Nietzsche 1968, p. 16 #19

17 Nietzsche 1968, p. 21 #31

18 Nietzsche 1968, p. 36 #55

19 Nietzsche 1968, p. 37, #55

20 Nietzsche 1973, p. 107

21 Martin 1995

22 On this 'caste' and Nietzsche's role in it, see Conway 2009, pp. 42-47

23 Jünger 2018

24 Nietzsche 1968, p. 465 #868

Orient.²⁵ Within Nietzsche's Orientalist use of concepts there lie moments of critique, such as the claim 'the Chinese is a more successful type, namely more durable, than the European'.²⁶ In this model, 'Orientalism' would serve the purpose of *disorienting* Europe. Yet, these valorisations of the 'Orient' are matched by Nietzsche's taste for scathing analogies, like 'the Buddhist type or the perfect cow'.²⁷ 'European Buddhism' might be the fate of Europe, but it is one that must be traversed and left behind. I do not think it is satisfactory to simply remark on Nietzsche's taste for paradox and provocation. Instead, Nietzsche's 'Orientalism' is similar to his anti- anti-Semitism.²⁸ Just as Nietzsche's opposition to anti-Semitism does not involve any real sympathy or engagement with Judaism, so Nietzsche's 'Orientalism' is not really the sign of any real sympathy with the 'Orient'.

In both cases, this seeming identification or valorisation is more at the service of disruption than any positive engagement. Nietzsche regards Europe's 'Others' as the means to disrupt or shock Europe into awakening to its own destiny, which involves transcending European Buddhism and the Judeo-Christian to attain its 'true' form. The Europe 'to come', for Nietzsche, is a martial and cultural power, triggered by 'Napoleon, by awakening again the man, the soldier, and the great fight for power – conceiving Europe as a political unit; Goethe, by imagining a European culture that would harvest the full inheritance of attained humanity'.²⁹ This is the 'new Europe' to come: hierarchical, violent, imposed from above, ordered, and 'Greek', in that inflection Nietzsche's gives. It is the rediscovery of Europe as 'Southern', as Dionysian, 'to rediscover the South in one and to spread out above one a bright, glittering, mysterious Southern sky'.³⁰ It is, ironically, the tourist Europe, although one, as with all reactionaries, that would have been lambasted by Nietzsche. So, Nietzsche's provocative remapping of Europe through its Others, the 'Orient', Judaism, the 'south', is one that absorbs and erases these 'sources' into a new European 'synthesis' of the 'free spirits'.

This new Europe is also a global form. While Nietzsche can be critical of the 'petty' imperialism of the late nineteenth-century, which

.....
25 Luisetti 2011

26 Nietzsche 1968, p. 55, #90

27 Nietzsche 1968, p. 188, #342

28 Martin 1995, p. 143

29 Nietzsche 1968, p. 66, #104. On Napoleon in Nietzsche's thought see Glenn, 2001 and Dombowsky, 2014

30 Nietzsche 1968, p. 542; #1051. On 'Mediterranean fascism', see Bull 2014

caused so much devastating suffering to colonised peoples,³¹ Nietzsche's vision is finally of a strong Europe imposing its goals on the world. 'Petty' imperialism would be replaced with 'Grand' imperialism, in the same way in which a 'great politics' would replace the trivial politics of democracy. This is evident in this quote, which forms a precursor to Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* (1899), if much less equivocal than Conrad:

What means one has to employ with rude peoples, and that "barbarous" means are not arbitrary and capricious, becomes palpable in practice as soon as one is placed, with all one's European pampering, in the necessity of keeping control over barbarians, in the Congo or elsewhere.³²

While Europeans are 'pampered', they must become powerful to impose control over 'barbarity', in a classical imperialist trope. Here, as in *Heart of Darkness*, the threat lies in the violent means required by colonialism, 'exterminate all the brutes!', which awakens Europeans to 'hardness' and threatens them with barbarity. For Nietzsche, this barbarity must be controlled and channelled so it can produce not only an imperial dominance but also dominance over the underprivileged internal to Europe as well. The workers, those other 'barbarians', must also be kept under control.

This discourse of European crisis and the traversal of Europe is another expansive vision of a Europe endless. As Timothy Brennan has detailed, and as we have traced, Nietzsche's apparent 'anti-European' image is in the service of a new 'European spirit' that is 'a mixed and stylistically novel fantasy of conquest and European triumphalism'.³³ While apparently lying in the 'self-critical' notion of European thought, Nietzsche in fact re-forges a European 'hammer' that will resolve the European crisis for Europe. The 'spirit' of Europe emerges from and through crisis and then resolves that crisis for Europe on a global scale. To repeat this argument, in a different form, while seeming to end Europe in a radical way Nietzsche re-births the most dubious forms of Europe endless. A hierarchical, violent, and 'barbaric' Europe is project onto the world, or the image of the reality of this imperial project is given metaphysical 'dignity' in Nietzsche's thought.³⁴ This violence is also endless because this vision can never be realised or achieved. Nietzsche remains a 'bridge' and the overcoming remains contaminated by what it overcomes. Finally, the world (or Europe) cannot be broken in two, but rather a repeated violence tries to constantly remake Europe to achieve its 'real' spirit. Spirit, in fact, is the word for this violent excess, this

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31 Davis 2000; Hochschild 1998

32 Nietzsche 1968, p. 487, #922

33 Brennan 2014, p.1 95

34 Lukács 2016

painful process of self-overcoming.³⁵ This difficulty of spirit is that this self-overcoming remains something to be overcome and spirit is the problem it purports to solve. In this way, Europe endlessly becomes endless violence and Nietzsche bequeaths this problem to the 'European spirit'.

‘Europe-problem’

Jacques Derrida identifies a particular discourse of crisis and spirit that traces the outlines of Europe in the inter-war years: ‘Here, too, one cannot overlook the common focus towards which, between 1919 and 1939, the discourses of worry gather or rush headlong: around the same words (Europe, Spirit), if not in the same language.’³⁶ In the middle of the European civil war, this discourse is particularly articulated, for Derrida, by Paul Valéry, in *The Crisis of Spirit* (1919), Edmund Husserl, in ‘Philosophy and the Crisis of European Humanity’ (1935), and by Heidegger, in the Rectoral Address (1933) and the *Introduction to Metaphysics* (1935). Derrida at once stresses the heterogeneity of these discourses and their disturbing congruences. While Derrida is locating ‘spirit’ within a particular form of Western metaphysics and as a particular metaphysical concession by Heidegger, in yet another attempt to deal with Heidegger’s intimate involvement with Nazism,³⁷ here I am more interested in this general move of identification of Europe and Spirit. In particular, I want to focus on Husserl’s essay, which is saturated with the discourse of spirit.

Husserl begins the essay and the discussion of European spirit, like Nietzsche, with the issue of sickness: ‘The European nations are sick; Europe itself, they say, is in critical condition’.³⁸ In a curious parallel to Freud, who in *Civilization and Its Discontents* had inquired into the possibility of collective neurosis,³⁹ Husserl’s argues for the possibility of an inquiry into collective spiritual illness. While Freud had doubted the possibility of a position from which to make the judgement of sickness, Husserl is much more cavalier. Husserl argues that ‘our Europe-problem’ has to be understood historically, out of the birth of the ‘European spirit’ and how that spirit has come into crisis.⁴⁰ The sickness of Europe is self-inflicted.

This is, unsurprisingly, a story of the origin of philosophy, and particularly the Greek origin of philosophy. It is the story of the birth of

35 Conway 2009, p. 50

36 Derrida 1989, p. 61

37 For a critique of Derrida’s inadequacies on this point, see Rose 1993

38 Husserl 1965, p. 150

39 Freud 2002, p. 80

40 Husserl 1965, p. 153

the attitude of *theoria* and how that creates a particular form of infinite rationality that is, according to Husserl, particular and peculiar to Europe as a ‘community’. Husserl makes an explicitly racial discrimination of Europe as an ‘enviroming world’ (*umwelt*). This ‘spiritual structure’ of Europe to which ‘belong the English dominions, the United States, etc.’, i.e. white settler-colonial states, ‘but not, however, the Eskimos or Indians of the country fairs, or the Gypsies, who are constantly wandering about Europe’.⁴¹ Derrida notes that this ‘sinister passage’ indicates how discourses of spirit and freedom can be close to the ‘worst’.⁴² Derrida also suggests that Husserl’s preservation of ‘English dominions’ implies the inclusion of Indians, which would not be strictly ‘logical’ in a racist logic. It does not seem difficult to suggest, however, that this is a typical colonial and racist settler-colonial logic of tutelage and administration. This is reinforced by Husserl’s remark that the people of India wish to ‘constantly Europeanize themselves’, while Europeans ‘will never, for example, Indianize ourselves’.⁴³ Again, while being forcibly brought to the ‘European ideal’ is acceptable, to depart from that is folly. It is not difficult to imagine what Husserl would have thought of hippies.

Husserl regards Europe as ‘the unity of a spiritual life and a creative activity’ that belongs to a *particular* community and life-world.⁴⁴ Despite recognising human history as a ‘sea in which human beings, peoples, are waves constantly forming, changing, and disappearing’,⁴⁵ Husserl stress the singularity of the ‘Greeks’ to a construction of Europe as ‘the free fashioning of its being and its historical life out of rational ideas and infinite tasks’.⁴⁶ Europe finds its ‘spiritual origin’ in Greece, which Husserl treats as a unity, as a ‘nation’.⁴⁷ What originates there is an attitude that forms science and philosophy as an attention to the world in its infinite forms. This is a disinterested attitude that also aims at the universal. It is ‘a spirit of free criticism providing norms for infinite tasks, ..., creating new, infinite ideals’.⁴⁸ Husserl argues that this attitude is sustained and exercised through ‘European man’ who therefore has the ‘role of leadership for the whole of mankind’.⁴⁹ While we might want to consider

41 Husserl 1965, p. 155

42 Derrida 1989, p. 120-21

43 Husserl 1965, p. 157

44 Husserl 1965, p. 155

45 Husserl 1965, p. 156

46 Husserl 1965, p. 156

47 Husserl 1965, p. 158

48 Husserl 1965, p. 177

49 Husserl 1965, p. 178

the 'singularity' of philosophy and consider the historical conditions of its emergence (for example, Alfred Sohn-Rethel's suggestion philosophy as abstract universal emerges from the abstractions of money and trade⁵⁰), Husserl simply asserts the unity of Europe with Greece, as origin, and the unity of its spirit with a singular community.

What, then, is the source of the European crisis? Husserl argues that this is a crisis due to rationality, but not a crisis of rationality *in toto*. Philosophy is the 'idea of an infinite task', but the risk is falling into the claim we have realised philosophy or limit it into a one-sided form.⁵¹ In particular, the problem has been the domination of mathematical and objective knowledge of the world, which occludes spiritual knowledge. The result is that this objective and psychophysical notion of the human causes reason and the forms of spirit to fracture. Husserl's solution is that sciences of spirit must not mimic objective science, but return to themselves against 'naïve exteriorization'.⁵² The resolution is Husserlian phenomenology, which through attention to intentionality recovers an 'absolutely autonomous science of spirit'.⁵³ Spirit is not subject to nature, but nature belongs to spirit. The ego is also not isolated but intimately related to other beings.

The crisis of Europe can therefore be resolved by the turn to phenomenology, which would recover the spirit of Europe as an infinite task. In a very Nietzschean vein, Husserl declares that 'Europe's greatest danger is weariness'.⁵⁴ Husserl even cites Nietzsche's 'good Europeans'. Europe must overcome its alienation from the reason and take up again the vital task of reason. Europe must embrace the 'mission to humanity', in which spirit will be reborn.⁵⁵ Husserl's is perhaps the most explicit version of Europe endless, with Europe as the origin and bearer of philosophy as 'infinite task'. It is also similarly problematic to Nietzsche's in a global projection of Europe, specified in a limited and racialised fashion. What Husserl projects out from and in doing so constructs is a limited life-world that polices its own borders. Husserl also adds a fear of the determination and realisation of spirit, in which spirit remains mere 'regulative Idea' in the Kantian sense. In this way, spirit polices without ever really emerging or actualising itself.

This limitation of the life world is also evident in Husserl's *Cartesian Meditations*. In the famous fifth meditation, which considers

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50 Sohn-Rethel 1978, p. 67

51 Husserl 1965, p. 180

52 Husserl 1965, p. 189

53 Husserl 1965, p. 190

54 Husserl 1965, p. 192

55 Husserl 1965, p. 192

the 'other' and transcendental intersubjectivity, Husserl deduces the life world as the open and transcendental relation to others. Yet, while this would seem the most open and global form of relation, at the same time this is also delimited. Husserl declares that products of spirit, 'all cultural Objects', 'carry with them ... the experiential sense of thereness-for-everyone' but only 'everyone belonging to the corresponding cultural community, such as the European'.⁵⁶ So, while it seems we should belong to a universal cultural world, in fact we live in 'concrete life-worlds in which the relatively or absolutely separate communities live their passive and active lives'.⁵⁷ We are historically rooted in a community, according to Husserl, and so this community is 'barred to anyone from another community'. While Husserl continues by suggesting the possibility of opening out understanding through sympathy, we can see again, as with the European idea, how a transcendental 'openness' or 'relationality' is radically delimited into a community. While resisting realisation of the universal, what is preserved is the particular.

To return to Husserl's essay, we find its closing discourse of heroism and risk, in its closing words embracing that Nietzschean style, does not really embrace the 'danger' of the realisation of reason. Instead, the 'infinite task' of Europe and philosophy and reason is infinitely deferred. So, we have something infinite that is, at the same time, always preserved and limited. In this way it is available as a critical resource that can always find any realisation wanting, but at the same time therefore unable to function effectively as a criticism. Sickness is diagnosed and heroism called for, but the disease should remain so to constantly spur efforts to cure. The realisation of philosophy in a life-world is left vague and at the same time delimited to Europe. While Husserl cannot help but recognise the spread and displacement of this new 'attitude' of philosophy, at the same time this also becomes another 'infinite task', rather than a series of transformations and instantiations. In Husserl's proclamation of 'European spirit' we find the full vision of Europe as 'infinite task' and the foundering of that vision.

No Future (for Europe)

It is Nietzsche who lies at the origin of 'accelerationism', which has emerged as a contemporary current of thought dedicated to increasing the tempo of forms of abstraction and technology to produce new post-capitalist or hyper-capitalist political and social forms.⁵⁸ As Nietzsche aimed at the traversing of European nihilism so accelerationism aims at traversing or purifying capitalism. In the classic statement by Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari in *Anti-Oedipus*:

.....
56 Husserl 1977, p. 92.

57 Husserl 1977, p. 133

58 Mackay and Avanessian (eds.) 2014

But which is the revolutionary path? Is there one? –To withdraw from the world market, as Samir Amin advises Third World countries to do, in a curious revival of the fascist “economic solution”? Or might it be to go in the opposite direction? To go still further, that is, in the movement of the market, of decoding and deterritorialization? For perhaps the flows are not yet deterritorialized enough, not decoded enough, from the viewpoint of a theory and a practice of a highly schizophrenic character. Not to withdraw from the process, but to go further, to “accelerate the process,” as Nietzsche put it: in this matter, the truth is that we haven’t seen anything yet.⁵⁹

The citation from Nietzsche, it turns out, is from *The Will to Power* and is a statement about Europe: ‘the levelling process of European man is the great process which should not be checked: one should even accelerate it...’⁶⁰ This is the translation found in Tracy Strong’s book, in the standard English translation it reads: ‘the homogenizing of European man is the great process that cannot be obstructed: one should even hasten it’.⁶¹

So, accelerationism owes a moment to the Nietzschean project of traversing Europe in which this ‘levelling’ is, as we have seen, the condition for a rebirth of rank. Thanks to the philological work of the collective *Obsolete Capitalism*, we have a full account of this ‘translation’ between Nietzsche and Deleuze and Guattari.⁶² The details are not necessary, however, to see how Europe is replaced here by a general global process of acceleration. Deleuze also cites this passage in his ‘Nomad Thought’, where again it is shifted from an application to Europe to ‘absolute’ decodification.⁶³ Europe is displaced by capitalism is displaced by decodification. There is a slippage here, which can be found in Nietzsche and his interpreters, for example in Heidegger on the *übermensch*: ‘this thinking that aims at the figure of a teacher who will teach the Superman concerns us, concerns Europe, concerns the whole earth’.⁶⁴ The movement is seamless, from ‘us’ to Europe to ‘the whole earth’ in a metaphysical version of the project of global dominance associated with hegemonic imperial powers. Repeating the Nietzschean vision, while claiming to displace it.

Accelerationism, to name those contemporary currents that adopt various forms of the desire to ‘accelerate the process’, whatever their

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59 Deleuze and Guattari 1983, pp. 239-40

60 Qtd. in Strong 1998, p. 211

61 Nietzsche 1968, p. 478

62 *Obsolete Capitalism*, 2015

63 Deleuze 1985, p. 143

64 Heidegger 1985, p. 67

intentions, stands in the lineage of this occlusion of Europe by the global that also incarnates Europe as the global.⁶⁵ Europe endless is ended in a becoming global. This is noticeable in the negative framing that the concept or ‘spirit’ of Europe receives in accelerationism. Accelerationism prides itself on a materialism, one of fluxes, flows, and forces, which is regarded as antithetical to spirit and the ideal. This fluid materiality is seen to escape spirit *and* Europe. While seemingly a highly ‘European’ discourse, accelerationism, in fact, works to displace Europe for the global and various zones that figure or embody the deterritorialized future that lies ‘beyond’ Europe. In this way it is often, especially in its reactionary forms, very close to Nietzsche. This is not surprising in that it emerges out of a mimicry of Nietzsche or a mimicry of those mimicking Nietzsche, especially Deleuze and Guattari. And yet, while Europe hovers in the background so to does the discourse of spirit, perhaps as a ghost. The spiritual, like Europe, is not so easily exorcised.

I have already detailed the anti-Europeanism that runs as a minor current through accelerationism.⁶⁶ In the 1990s work of Nick Land, Sadie Plant, and the Cybernetic Culture Research Unit (CCRU) at Warwick University, the explicit attempt was made to push deterritorialization further into a ‘meltdown’ of subjectivity and capitalism. Politically this was already equivocal, as the crisis of capitalism envisaged as much a purified capitalism as it did the rupture from capitalism. To quote the classic formulation by Nick Land:

Machinic revolution must therefore go in the opposite direction to socialistic regulation; pressing towards ever more uninhibited marketization of the processes that are tearing down the social field, ‘still further’ with ‘the movement of the market, of decoding and deterritorialization’ and ‘one can never go far enough in the direction of deterritorialization: you haven’t seen anything yet’.⁶⁷

The opposition of ‘socialistic regulation’ is explicit and prescient, considering how much the hostility to ‘socialism’ in Britain is figured as an opposition to ‘health and safety’ regulation and to European regulation. The pop Nietzschean embrace of danger and risk, perhaps best represented in the literally accelerating television programme *Top Gear*, is one that embraces the market as the site of self-realisation beyond ‘control’.

That a niche trend of metaphysical theory should prefigure the discourse of Brexit and contemporary anti-socialism is not so surprising when we consider how it reproduces a common current of anti-European sentiment. Europe is associated with regulation and inertia. While capitalism, and we could read America and China, are

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65 Noys, 2014a

66 Noys 2018

67 Land 2013, p. 340-41

associated with acceleration beyond regulation. In the case of America through the dissolving of regulation, while in the case of China through an authoritarian imposition of capitalism in certain zones. This latter development recalls the description of 'Night City' in William Gibson's *Neuromancer* (1984), the novel of cyberpunk and accelerationism, 'a deranged experiment in social Darwinism, designed by a bored researcher who kept one thumb permanently on the fast-forward button'.⁶⁸ Whether the 'bored researcher' is a cypher for the 'invisible hand' of the market or the authoritarian state matters less, for this discourse, than acceleration be pushed beyond regulation.

There are, of course, many forms of accelerationism and, of course, claims to have transcended or abandoned accelerationism. A movement formed through social media has, in some quarters, embraced a logic of obsolescence and transition.⁶⁹ What concerns me here is not to tease out the various strands of accelerationist thought but to mark how they inherit this discourse of Europe and crisis. Again, Europe is rendered as crisis and, in this case, as something that must be escaped or accelerated away from. We are accelerated towards the voyage beyond Europe, in the style of Rimbaud. This avant-garde escape, however, renders itself as a projection of Europe. It is an internal problem of Europe or, to be more specific, of the place of Britain within Europe, considering the fact that accelerationism is a very British phenomenon. The self-styled peripheral relation of Britain to Europe, the legacy of Britain's imperial identity, can be recast in the mode of a global acceleration.

This also takes on a peculiar punk inflection. Already present in Nick Land's provocations, we could also recall Franco 'Bifo' Berardi's reflections on the moment of 1977 as a moment of bifurcation between neoliberalism and new forms of global protest.⁷⁰ In the case of Berardi, we could wonder if this bifurcation is as clear as it would appear and rather a more messy state of affairs in which the politics of punk could find multiple alignments in the wake of the rupture of the post-war 'consensus', itself a highly-fragile construction. Punk hostility to social democracy, while cast as 'anarchist', could easily slide into capitalist libertarianism. This particular form of punk, the form that emerged in Britain in 1977, exemplified this political tension. While not dismissing all punk as proto-neoliberal, in fact punk liberated creative and social forms that took various political and social forms, we should not miss how punk rhetoric and practice chimes with certain forms of capitalist 'creative destruction'.

Accelerationism aims at a realisation of a certain transit through and out from forms of abstract and technology into a new global space.

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⁶⁸ Gibson 2016, p. 8

⁶⁹ On the logic of obsolescence and accelerationism, see Noys 2014b

⁷⁰ Berardi 2019, p. 14

In doing so it displays understandable impatience with the notion of the 'infinite task' and a phenomenological focus on meaning and intention that is limited to particular types of life-world. At the same time, however, this anti-humanist 'materialism' invokes a 'spirit' that offers little to grasping the problems of its emergence in a particular British inflection of post-imperial political identity, with its own claims on the 'global'. Europe is elided as a problem, while the standard forms of anti-European sentiment are repeated. At the same time, the peculiarities of British capitalism are not considered as the site from which accelerationism tries to accelerate away from. Europe is ended, but what Husserl called the 'Europe-problem' is reproduced.

Conclusion: Spirits of Crisis

Crisis now seems to have settled in to being a constant state, if that wasn't always the case. What Berardi calls 'austeritarian rule' has not only settled in across Europe, and globally, but also taken on aggressive populist and potentially proto-fascist forms. In this situation, Europe endless, Europe as the infinite task of rationality, as the spirit and promise of philosophical reason, seems both further away than ever (including the state of philosophy as an educational subject) and more desirable than ever (for some). In this situation 'ending Europe' also appears more urgent than ever, including if we are to realise 'another Europe' or a 'new Europe' than would resolve or mitigate the global capitalist and ecological crisis, which are interwoven together.⁷¹ We could add that philosophical considerations like this one might seem, precisely, luxuries we can no longer afford, in an austerity of thought that must engage the urgency and austerity of the moment.

While understanding all this, and agreeing with some if not all of these contentions, I have also made a claim to resist an austerity of thought. To collapse the problem of Europe endless, I have suggested, is to risk repeating it, rather than working it through, to use a convenient Freudian distinction. That said, it should be evident that I share a dissatisfaction with the Kantian form of the 'regulative idea' of Europe as 'infinite task', even when that is cast in its best form: one that strives towards the 'open' and the possibilities of transformation and displacement that have composed the history of philosophical rationality (this is the effort of Jacques Derrida, Rodolphe Gasché, and others). The difficulty I have identified with this conception of Europe is its fear of actualisation and realisation, which chimes with those reactionary critiques of reason and revolution that have always feared and resisted the re-ordering of existence that such a realisation would demand.

Therefore, my conclusion is that we consider a discourse of spirit that is devoted to grasping the various shapes of consciousness and

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⁷¹ Moore 2015; Malm 2015

materiality in which spirit forms and develops. In short, the Hegelian account.⁷² Spirit and the infinite do not 'stand above' a fallen world, as judge and executioner, but work and sacrifice themselves in that world. Europe endless would then be the realisation and displacement of Europe that does not require an alternative between the world 'Europeanizing itself' or the choice of some other 'alter-modernity', but 'Europe' as a 'realisation' that is reworked and developed 'elsewhere'. We can argue that is what happened with the Haitian revolution and the Russian revolution, which involves the transformation of the 'European' and the 'non-European'.⁷³ In that process what Europe could not realise is realised and actualised, but this is not any mere 'secondary' realisation in which Europe exports its own problems. Instead, this is a realisation that returns to the sender a message it could not recognise or realise. It is also a realisation that is dependent on what is *not* European, which draws on non-European social and political forms.⁷⁴ This is a 'retroactive effect' that leaves the 'second' event as the primary event, as it leaps back to Europe.

That such possibilities of realisation seem further away than ever, in Europe in particular, should be recognised. This might speak to one particular understanding of crisis, which involves a global dimension that cannot be 'resolved' at the level of Europe. The retreat from Europe to the nation state would be another ironic effect of this global dimension and its intractability. In the face of global crisis, the retreat is to 'defend' the nation-state against any 'opening'. This must be resisted, of course, but to simply claim to relaunch the 'infinite task' of European spirit, in whatever guise, is also inadequate. Instead, I suggest we recognise forms of the actualisation and realisation of rationality, collectivity, and freedom that could resolve the situation of crisis, in and beyond 'Europe'. These include those realisations and actualisations that are global and would, again, displace or transform Europe. My conclusion is cautious in only signalling these possibilities, and therefore both of our moment and perhaps inadequate to it.

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72 Hegel 1977, see also Rose 2009

73 On Haiti, see James 2001, Buck-Morss 2009, Nesbitt 2008, and Fick 1991; On the Russian Revolution, see Trotsky 2017

74 See the debate about the commune, from the late Marx (Shanin 1983) to Venezuela (Ciccariello-Maher 2016)

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Volume 7 /
Issue 1

Is it Possible to Think Europe Beyond Capitalism?

Alessandro Russo

Abstract: The paper argues that the original crisis, upstream of that today, is rooted in the establishment of the government of the euro as a substitutive authority following the decline of the 20th-century political parties. The latter were mediators between capital and labor, acting in a political space that the search for a way out of capitalism had opened since the mid-19th century. In the early 1990s, the euro marked the revival of the ideal of a non-negotiable capital and, at the same time, the definitive decline of the political parties. The present "crisis of Europe" is the further decline of that substitutive authority, which opens a very uncertain scenario. In the current Europe labyrinth, Arianna's thread can only be what aims to create an entirely new road of a "beyond the capital." It is necessary a perspective that can measure up to the new conditions of the non-negotiable capital restored after the twentieth century's exception, and at the same time to take stock of the state communism and the process leading to its end. A complementary condition, equally essential, to rethink Europe politically is to distinguish between Europe as a set of multiple inventions of thought and a geo-cultural space.

Keywords: Euro, political parties, Long Sixties, non-negotiable capital

The series of themes that opens the Outline of this issue of *Crisis & Critique* on the "Future of Europe" touches on key points to be clarified in a situation as opaque as today. I will, therefore, follow the route of the proposed questions, starting from the first, which is the most incisive and far from self-evident. Is not today's "European crisis" the result of decisions that, in turn, aimed at dealing with a crisis? Complementary issues, the singularity of the original dilemma, and its possible connection with the decline of the "left." Moreover, two issues of a strategic nature. Can be Europe reinvented politically today? And, what Europe can be in the new circumstances of conflicts between great capitalist powers at the world level (USA, China, Russia). Finally, an essential test, what policies to adopt about nomad proletarians?

I propose some working paths on the first three points, the establishment of the current forms of government in Europe, the crisis they were trying to tackle, and their current crisis. On a possible political rethinking of Europe, I confine myself to some preliminary considerations. Rarefaction of political thought marks our time, new theoretical perspectives should be invented to think politics, and I hope that this issue of *Crisis & Critique* opens a new space for reflection.

1.

My starting point is to suggest that the original crisis, upstream of that today, is the crisis of political parties of the twentieth century. Today, "Europe" indicates mainly the euro, understood, not only as a new currency but as a new form of government. In the early 1990s, the euro is not an administrative readjustment of the European state system,

nor is the realization of an idea of the relationships between European countries tracing back at the end of World War II, even less is an answer to monetary needs as such. The euro is the new government authority, or "governance" as it is said more often today, that European economic and state potentates impose with the utmost urgency at the time of the collapse of the previous forms of authority, consisting primarily of the parliamentary parties.

The chronology of the process of the establishment of the euro helps to clarify this step. The Treaty of Maastricht is contemporaneous with the collapse of the Soviet Union. It is indeed a decision made in previous years and accelerated after the fall of the Berlin Wall when it becomes clear that the Soviet bloc is on the verge of disintegration. However, the fact that the preparatory meetings of the Treaty (December 1991) and its formal approval (February 1992) take place in the same months of the end of the USSR shows the maximum timeliness of those decisions, to which all European governments adhere almost unanimously.

Despite the ideological exultation for the "triumph of democracy" and the "end of totalitarianism", current currency at that time and today still mainstream, the end of the socialist states centered on the USSR actually opens up a scenario of profound instability in the forms of government in Europe, in the face of which powerful forces immediately arise to find substitute solutions. In the span of a few years, the system of parliamentary parties enters an irreversible crisis. The Italian situation is indicative of the rapidity of this crisis. Just the day after the fall of the Berlin Wall, in 1989, the Italian Communist Party changes its name (in the Democratic Party of the Left), initiating a process of self-dissolution whose extreme offshoots reach the present day. The year after the end of the USSR, in 1992, the crisis of the Christian Democracy and the Italian Socialist Party also began, overwhelmed by corruption investigations. In short, the entire apparatus of the so-called "First Republic" parties are undoing at the very moment when the device of the treaties establishing the euro is coming into force.

The euro imposes a series of constraints, especially concerning the autonomous capacities of national governments' economic and financial policies, to which the European parliamentary parties submit themselves without substantial objections. Their very nature explains the unanimity to accept these constraints. They constitute a transfer of authority to a supranational superior governmental body by the whole of the party apparatuses, whose authority had been in decline for years. A decline that started more than two decades earlier, but that the end of the USSR brought out in all its gravity. The urgency to find a substitute authority was, in that time, the vector of the decisions to establish the euro and its specific government apparatuses.

All the parties competed to speed up this process and to make it incontestable, namely, with the inclusion of those constraints imposed by

the euro system in the very Constitution of the individual states, as the limit of 3% of the deficit on GDP. The new authority of the euro imposes itself not only as superior to the previous one but as unquestionable. "Europe is asking for it" was the most repeated slogan to impose "austerity" policies, that is to say, the rapid dismantling of all policies aimed at reducing inequalities, the "welfare state," which in previous decades had oriented government interventions of European capitalist states.

2.

Various aspects of this story remain to investigate. First of all, why does the dissolution of the Soviet Union bring about the crisis of the parliamentary parties so quickly? Had they not been two distinct camps of states, capitalist and socialist, separated by an "iron curtain"?

Looking carefully, far from being strictly separated, they both composed the horizon of state forms of much of the twentieth century. The existence of a politics aimed at an organization of society and government beyond the limits of capitalism has deeply marked the history of political parties. This perspective of a road "beyond the capital" had been the real condition of the existence of political parties.

The mass parties were not the natural evolution of the previous "parties of notables." The system of the twentieth-century parties – the one that allowed Lenin to say "the masses are divided into classes and the classes are represented by the parties" – could only be established starting from the legalization of the workers' parties. Yet these organizations, initially illegal and harshly opposed by the capitalist governments, embodied the "beyond the capital" perspective – the "idea of communism," as Badiou says – that arose since the mid-nineteenth century with Marxism. In short, it was the existence of workers' parties that allowed the formation and extension of parliamentary systems.

In the tortuous history of the twentieth-century party systems (self-destruction of the workers' parties with their support for the First World War, the seizure of power of the Bolsheviks in Russia, the Nazi-fascism, the Resistance), the most flourishing period was the thirty years following the World War II. The establishment of a vast set of socialist state systems, from Yugoslavia to China, which claimed to embody an alternative to capitalism, had the effect of stabilizing and consolidating party systems in capitalist countries.

Although Cold War ideology branded socialism as the negation of parliamentary democracy, the proclamation of the existence of a "beyond the capital" entailed that in the capitalist nations the peculiar role of the party system reached its peak. In fact, during the Cold War, one key point in the competition between the two systems of government was which of them provided the best conditions of welfare and equality. In the European capitalist countries, those that the French economists have called "Les Trente Glorieuses" were, at the same time, a period

of reduction in social inequalities, economic growth, and affirmation of the parliamentary political parties. For over thirty years, they formed the ground for negotiation between capital and labor.

3.

When and how does this negotiation ground close? So when and how does the role of the twentieth-century political parties come to an end? Of course, the collapse of the USSR and the satellite countries marks the closure of state space outside capitalism. However, it is necessary to consider the whole process of which that passage is the deferred result.

I propose that to examine the crisis of the parties, and the urgency of a new principle of authority that leads to euro, it is necessary to distinguish two cross processes and to take into account a temporal décalage. Upstream of the process of decay of political parties, is the political configuration of the Sixties and their violent closure, though it happened ten years before the collapse of the USSR.

What we can call the Long Sixties start in the first half of the 1960s and end up in the late 1970s with a series of coups, between 1976 and 1980: the arrest of Maoist leaders in China after Mao's death, arrest of leaders of Autonomia Operaia in Italy, coup in Poland against Solidarnosc. The 1980s are an intermediary phase. The crisis of the parties does not fully emerge but proceeds underground to explode only at the end of the decade. In fact, since the 1980s, the closure of the previous limitations of capitalism has been solidly established. This passage is the most tangled to decipher.

The core of the global political configuration of the Sixties, I suggest, was the critical examination, by large mass movements, of the historical experience of a "beyond the capital," concerning both the socialist countries and the left parties of capitalist countries. The closure of the long Sixties primarily consisted of suppression and discrediting of any value of that mass scrutiny, labeled as a senseless disorder, anarchy, and terrorism.

However, the political Sixties had existed and had decisive long-term consequences, despite the forced interruption in the late 1970s. The nucleus of that critical examination was the idea that the fundamental condition for the existence of a communist politics should be the mass experimentation of new roads outside capitalism and the assessment of previous experiences. Without constantly renewing and rethinking their foundations, the twentieth-century exceptions to capitalism were destined to go back to the rule. Such a crucial political thesis was the nub of Maoist criticism of "capitalist restoration" in the USSR, and the thrust of the Cultural Revolution.

Therefore, the end of the Sixties inevitably leads to closure of the entire previous existence of a political space "beyond the capital." If those critical questions to the routes undertaken to overcome capitalism were worthless, those same routes had no value in themselves.

I suggest, therefore, that the disintegration of the USSR was a delayed consequence of the Long Sixties. Consider the effects of the suppression of the Polish worker movement in the late 1970s. That movement, whose shutdown marked the end of that innovative political season, had addressed the crucial question: was it possible to experiment with the political existence of workers outside the ways of state communism? And ultimately, did those roads lead beyond capitalism? Did they allow a genuine alternative to the wage slavery regime? The 1967 January Storm in Shanghai raised the same question, as well as the worker radicalism of the 1960-70s in Italy.

The coup against Solidarnosc obliterated that mass scrutiny but was also the primary antecedent to the collapse of the USSR a decade later. When in a state of the Soviet bloc, a military coup suffocates a massive worker movement, as Solidarnosc was, which also involved the entire Polish society, the claim that such a state constitutes the political organization of the "working class" on the route beyond capitalism also vanishes. Yet at the same time, the very existence of a state-space heterogeneous to capitalism in the twentieth century loses all credit.

The Polish coup d'état completes the violent suppression of the Long Sixties, which began with the coup d'état in China in 1976 and with the radical denial of any political value of the Cultural Revolution. In the late 1970s, the turning point of Deng Xiaoping nullifies any difference of principle that the state communism had claimed to possess towards capitalism. From that moment, the Chinese government imposes a fully capitalist command on wage earners, in one of the most flexible labor markets in the world, protected by the authority of a communist party with 80 million members. (The issue of the resilience of the authority of the CCP, and its coordination with capitalist authority overcomes the limits of this article).

4.

While the Eighties are the closure of the Long Sixties, they are also the ultimate proof of the central thesis formulated by that political configuration. Without a fundamental clarification on the experience of the twentieth-century communism, and without new mass experimentations of that exception to capitalism, the triumphant return of the rule was inevitable. In a few years, the ideal of a non-negotiable capital quick returns in vogue. A capital, that is to say, available to negotiate, and of course negotiate downwards, just the price of wage, i.e., of commodities necessary to the reproduction of the labor force

Looking carefully, the ideal of non-negotiable capital is the basic tendency of capitalism itself, lacking those elements of moderation that the "beyond the capital" induced, and that served as the primary condition for the existence of the political parties of the twentieth century. The decline of the latter is inversely proportional to the restoration of the former.

However, the restoration of the non-negotiability of capital does not immediately eliminate the parties. While it initiates them into a radical crisis, this remains latent and only fully explodes at the end of the 1980s. For the whole decade, those parties even seem to have recovered their authority, self-satisfied to have cleared all the criticisms suffered for fifteen years, and at the same time, they consistently advocate the "neoliberal" turning point.

In Italy in the 1980s, the left parties are very active, so in the anti-terrorist legislation that eliminates any value of the Sixties, as in supporting measures that impose the increasing "flexibility" of labor, i.e., the extension of precarious work. The role of the Socialist Party in France is even more central. Mitterrand had come to power with a program of radical nationalizations, but in a few years, he worked hard to implement policies aimed at guaranteeing the primacy of financial powers, policies which in turn became fundamental in the establishment of the euro.

The right-wing parties, in turn, are obviously in the front row. Margaret Thatcher proclaims, "There is no alternative," which, together with the equally well-known "Less state, more market," is the slogan that opens the era of non-negotiable capital. The meaning is obvious: "no alternative" to capitalism, and the "state" to be restricted indicated precisely the terrain of negotiation between capital and labor. So "less state" also meant "the end of the twentieth-century parties," and "no alternative" meant that no distinction between "right" and "left" made more sense. The right-wing parties, too, existed within that negotiating space. In general, the latter negotiated on behalf of the capital, while the left-wing counterparts on behalf of the labor. There were undoubtedly intermediate positions, mutual opportunisms, dependence on the interstate competitions of the Cold War, but the negotiation between a right and a left who considered themselves mutually "alternatives" had been the *raison d'être* for both.

In the 1980s, despite the apparent consolidation of government, the proclamation of the exhaustion of any "alternative" undermines the very structure of the parliamentary party systems. Their authority, that is to say, the ability to obtain obedience rapidly weakens. That authority rested on their role as mediators between imperatives of valorization of capital and the conditions of existence of ordinary people. With the collapse of the states alternative to capitalism, which ultimately legitimized that mediation, the loss of authority of the parties appeared to be irreversible.

Hence the urgency, at that precise moment, to establish a principle of substitutive authority in European capitalist countries. No coincidence that such an authority pivots around the role of a currency. Following the symbolic order of capital, the general equivalent of the exchange quickly becomes the new governing authority of Europe. Marx wrote that the government is the "managing committee of the

bourgeoisie." In the era of non-negotiable capital, the "bourgeoisie" has its own "managing committees," taking autonomous decisions of which governments are mere executors.

5.

To complete this review, perhaps too brief, of political archaeology of euro, I try to outline some of its developments in Italy. Despite all the particular local conditions, due to the fact that the parliamentary system was right on the borderline of the Cold War (the two major parties, DC and PC, defended the stance of the two superpowers), therefore was subject to the most destabilizing consequences of the collapse of the USSR, the Italian situation reflects a general trend.

In the 1990s, the undoing of the parties of the "First Republic" leads to the emergence of a "personal" party organized around Berlusconi's companies, with the alliance of the neo-fascists and the secessionist Northern League. The new government puts an end to half a century of relations among the parties of the so-called "constitutional arch" (those that had participated in the drafting of the new Constitution after the Second World War). To contend for power, a "center-left" composed of an alliance between the remains of the two leading contenders of the previous era, the Communist Party and the Christian Democracy.

These post-parties aggravate the disintegration of the parliamentary system of the First Republic. For short periods, they seem to be new forms of authority, but their differences are more and more insignificant on crucial points. Both the parliamentary blocks confirm adherence to the policies of European austerity, aggravate the flexibility of labor contracts, and dismantle the previous welfare policies. In practice, the transfer of authority to the euro government goes on, and these parliamentary alliances gain in exchange temporary reflex authority. Despite the differences in the facade, everyone speaks in the name of "Europe."

The global economic crisis of 2007, which from the United States is rapidly toppling over Europe, also overwhelms in Italy this readjustment of the "substitute" parties of the previous parliamentary system. In the early 1990s, "Europe" imposed a "technical" government that was no longer an expression of the parties, but was headed by an adviser of Goldman Sachs, that is one of the financial holdings that had caused the catastrophic subprime crisis, and who are now determined to make the ordinary people pay the bill. The President of the Italian Republic, Giorgio Napolitano, boldly declares that "we have lived above our possibilities." The government of the euro not only imposes drastic austerity measures but also imposes the narrative that the "waste" of lazy peoples, who must be adequately punished by their governments, are guilty of the financial crisis. Syriza's turnaround against the popular referendum of 2015 and the acceptance of the diktat of the "troika" was the most exemplary episode.

In the decade following the crisis of 2007, on the one hand, the decomposition of the parties worsens, and in practice, they have nothing in common with the parties of the 20th century, but on the other hand, the authority of the euro proves insufficient. New potentates try to replace the government of the euro, proclaiming themselves defenders of a "sovereignty," that is, of an authority, which defends the identity of the "people."

Within a few years, in Italy a tiny party that formerly was beating the drums of "identity" of some northern regions, and invokes even "secession" against a South of thieves ("robber Rome" was the slogan), is transformed without blinking in the standard-bearer of national Italian identity, and achieves rapidly exorbitant consensus (almost 40% in the last European elections). Significantly, the Northern League (now "League for Salvini") proclaims the defense of an "identity" as such, without any need to sustain historical, cultural, and even "ethnic" values. Nor it gave any explanation of the insults to "national unity" on which it had marched for over twenty years.

The success of the League arguably depends on the precariousness of any "identity" as such, the Achilles heel of every subjective existence, both individual and collective. The end of the parties, which as a whole "represented" the unitarian image of the "fragmented body" of "nation," aggravates the vulnerability. Moreover, this "defense of identity" consists exclusively of the destruction of the Other, in this case, the nomad proletarians who try to reach Italy. However, since the Other is intrinsic to the Same, its destruction is self-destructive, following what Lacan called the "suicidal nature of narcissism."

Today's situation is very opaque but always fueled by coups at the top of the power system. For now, Salvini's rapid rise has been held back by his very greed for power. He had appealed to a popular plebiscite that granted him "full powers," without foreseeing that other power groups could join forces to overthrow him, despite having left him a free hand for over two years.

At this time (October 2019), the government is composed of a coalition between two "parties," which until recently were mutually hostile (M5S and PD). The prime minister is the same one who had supported the rise of the League until the previous month, but he has no electoral mandate and does not belong to any party. It is difficult to predict the stability of this coalition, which is the result of a temporary compromise and is subject to competition from other power groups that seek to undermine it. For now, the government stands in the "golden mean." It tries to be a little "Europeanist" and a little "sovereignist-populist," it can neither defend at all costs the government of euro nor focus solely on a self-destructive defense of "identity."

6.

As for the strategic questions posed by the Outline, in this moment of political bewilderment, my arguments are here even more tentative than the previous ones. Nevertheless, I still run the risk of asserting two conditions to rethink Europe politically.

First, in the current Europe labyrinth, Arianna's thread can only be what aims to create an entirely new road of a "beyond the capital." It is necessary a perspective that can measure up to the new conditions of the non-negotiable capital restored after the twentieth century's exception, and at the same time to take stock of the state communism and the process leading to its end. Rethinking the essential novelties of those experiences and not repeating their impasse is an urgent task for every new political experimentation, but it is also an inescapable analytical condition. The present circumstances of capitalist domination remain unintelligible without examining them as rooted in the whole process of that end.

Another condition, equally essential, is to distinguish between Europe as a set of multiple subjective inventions in all fields of thought and a "European" geo-cultural space. The issue is, in the last analysis, the distinction between thinking and knowing. Sure, without the first, the second could not exist. Without inventions of thought, there would be no knowledge, culture in all its meanings. However, thought is not transitive to knowledge; subjective inventions are not the building blocks of a culture. Instead, they are exceptions to a given cultural space; indeed, the more they are essential and profound, the more they constitute discontinuities in the field of knowledge. It is well known that to exist they have always had to fight long battles against the current.

The same is also true for Europe. About all its immense tradition of thought, the problem is how to regain the novelty of those inventions. In other words, how to rethink their universality, at a distance from any particular "European" determination? The idea that it is a question of saving a cultural "identity," leads to the worst roads, and ultimately concerns how to defend certain governmental circumstances. In any case, it implies the annihilation of a threatening otherness, also in the milder vision that a "dialogue" among culture can be established only by cultivating and defending the different identities. However, is it ever possible a "peaceful dialogue" among cultures? Are there not, instead, only encounters, essentially aleatory, among singular inventions of thought localized as exceptions in various cultural spaces?

But Europe, one hears, is at least the source of modern thought, even the "homeland" of fundamental concepts of which it would be essential to claim the origin. Let us say clearly: the concepts, the intellectual creations in every field, have no homeland. What does it matter that Marx was German, or European? Only by addressing the "proletarians of all countries," he measured the value of his discoveries. Just as, at the beginning of the Cultural Revolution, Mao turned to rebel

students, reminding them, not that they were "Chinese," but that "only by liberating the entire humanity can the proletariat liberate itself."

To rethink Europe politically must necessarily pass through an infinity of political inventions able to look at a way out of capitalism, or as says Badiou accurately, a way out of the "Neolithic." But this way can be found only by the capability to keep the distance from any defense of "European identity." Only new "stateless" inventions may recapture all the roads that, both in Europe and everywhere in the world, have explored the communist perspective, and to find new ones.

7.

In the current world situation, the search for a new road beyond the capital, and at the same time, the renunciation to identity narcissism, are conditions even more essential for rethinking Europe politically.

On this issue, the developments of recent years require correction to the set of critical analyses on "globalization" prevailing in the last few decades. It emerges now clearly an acceleration of the contrasts between the two world's major capitalist powers. The "trade war" between the US and China, seemingly destined to worsen, shows the illusory nature of "peaceful globalization" in the sense of a worldwide extension without conflicts of the capitalist rule. This misjudgment echoes the thesis of Kautsky's "ultra-imperialism," which during the First World War Lenin harshly criticized.

Indeed, a century later, the situation has changed, the conditions of existence and the contemporary tendencies of imperialism are different, as well as the contrasts that cross them. More precisely, the current conjuncture is not merely that of a global extension of the capitalist rule, but of its re-establishment after a period of exception. Capitalism was intrinsically "globalized" since the time of Marx; the current one is capitalism reestablished after a time of alteration of its original rules. But it is vain to believe that there can be "peaceful" capitalism.

It is hard to predict in what sense will the contrasts between the USA and China evolve. However, what could prevent today's "trade war," which is also a war on technology and finance, from becoming a military war? A comparison with the Cold War would be misleading. In that case, a principle of moderation of the military clash was due not so much, as is often said, to the mutual "nuclear blackmail," but to the opposition between different ideologies, systems of government, even "visions of the world." Today, conversely, lacking any difference in principle, mirror propagandas of identity, which each of the contenders deploys to strengthen its domestic authority, fuel the conflict. "Make America great again" means recovering the supremacy as a world superpower. What can prevent the "Chinese Dream" to be the desire of becoming a new world superpower?

Europe is undoubtedly in a weak position, both in terms of economic and military power and government stability. Which "euro government" could be able to achieve authority with a call for making Europe "great again" or appealing to a "European dream"? Of course, in Europe, individual national governments can play the card of the defense of identity, as in facto they do, but in a scenario of military conflict among superpowers, it would be a bluff, not without its ferocity. In any case, any appeal to national identity, which is ultimately the result of today's weakening of the authority of the euro, weakens the "European identity."

Is this good or bad? It is harmful in terms of conflicts among capitalist powers. On the other hand, if the condition for rethinking politically Europe is to invent new ways out of the capitalism, remote from any identity of Europe, this weakness also has a positive aspect, it is a significant obstacle less, the propaganda of a "dream" of becoming, or returning to be, a "superpower" plagues less public opinion. In a situation of conflicts among "strong identities," a weak "European identity" can become the "weak link in the chain" of contemporary non-negotiable capital. That this weakness can be an advantage, be it clear, does not depend at all on the current governmental circumstances as such, but depends on the ability to invent new political roads.

8.

Finally, as for the nomadic proletarians who reach the borders of Europe. First of all: what are they looking for in Europe? They seek happiness, seek a place to invent the conditions of existence worthy that they cannot find in their countries. They are men, women, children of great courage, they are not victims, much less threatening aggressors of the identity of the places and "cultures" in which they try to move. The only fair policy towards them is not to hinder their search for happiness; theirs as of anyone else.

Let us take a young European philosopher who "migrates" to the United States or another European country, in search of conditions of existence of his intellectual life, of his thought, of his philosophical desire, conditions that he does not find in his country for the most various reasons. What is the difference between his nomadism and that of a young African peasant woman who, overcoming immense difficulties, reaches Europe to try to exist, to live a dignified life, to pursue her subjective happiness?

The difference in principle between a philosopher and a longshoreman, Marx wrote, is less than between a hunting dog and a watchdog. Even less is the difference between a migrant philosopher and a migrant peasant. That the first pretends to teach the latter why she must not seek happiness, when the latter would never imagine to teach that to him, is one of the absurdities of our time from which we must free ourselves.

An Alliance of War and Peace: Europe and the Necessity of Diplomacy

Alexander Stagnell

Abstract: This essay seeks to approach the current tensions within the European Union through the lens of the philosophy on perpetual peace. Beginning with Kant's pamphlet *On Perpetual Peace* and his depiction of it as "an infinite process of gradual approximation", the text moves through Hegel's concept of the necessity of war in order to develop an understanding of the emergence of war between modern nation states. Finally, it approaches Derrida's critique of both Hegel and Kant as well as his own understanding of the conditions for peace in Europe, in an attempt to provide an explanation for the tensions haunting the EU during the last two decades.

Keywords: Perpetual Peace, Necessity of War, Kant, Hegel

Every Communist must grasp the truth, "political power grows out of the barrel of a gun."
Mao Tse-Tung

[W]e know that although democracy will flourish and endure in times of peace and security, it has already been destroyed twice now during war
Isocrates

When the European Union was awarded the 2012 Nobel Peace Prize by the Norwegian Nobel Committee, one could have argued that Kant's dreams of an everlasting peace on the European continent, almost 220 years after the publication of his *On Perpetual Peace*, finally had come true. Among the EU's many achievements – attained through hard work and a dedication to "peace and reconciliation, democracy and human rights" – the Nobel Committee listed the Union's role in furthering a resolution to the tensions in the Balkans and its efforts in strengthening and stabilizing democracy in both south and east Europe after the fall of fascism and communism respectively. But the perhaps biggest achievement was, in the words of the Committee, how the institutions of the EU had made sure that "[t]oday war between Germany and France is unthinkable." The EU, taking the form of what Kant called a *foedus pacificum*, had as a league of nations not only ended one war but brought an end to "all wars for good", at least on the European continent.

However, even though one might argue that the peace prize was primarily awarded on the back of achievements past, the new millennium has time and again illustrated the frailty of the European partnership. Beginning with 9/11, tensions in Europe have ever since been on the rise, and the union and its values of democracy, collaboration, and freedom is often described as under attack, from without as much as from within. In an article from 2003, written by Jürgen Habermas and co-signed by Jacques Derrida, we could for instance read:

The gap between continental and Anglo-American countries on the one side, and “the old Europe” and the Central and East European candidates for entry into the European Union on the other side, has grown deeper. [...] The Iraq crisis was only a catalyst. In the Brussels constitutional convention, there is now a visible contrast between the nations that really want a stronger EU, and those with an *understandable* interest in freezing, or at best cosmetically changing, the existing mode of intergovernmental governance. This contradiction can no longer be finessed. The future constitution will grant us a European foreign minister. But what good is a new political office if governments unify in a common policy? A Fischer with a changed job description would remain as powerless as Solana.¹

Since then, the hopes of establishing a mutual understanding between nations inclined to strengthen the power of Brussels and those yearning for more independence seem to have grown increasingly dim. Simultaneously, the constant drawing and redrawing of the line between, on the one hand, the democratic, tolerant and peaceful, and, on the other, the authoritarian, conservative, and potentially violent – both within individual member states as well as in relations between them – has further shaken the foundation of the Union. In such a moment we should, perhaps, return to the intellectual roots of the European project of peace – establishing a line of continuity stretching from Kant and the French Revolution to Habermas and the War on Terror – in order to re-actualise the questions surrounding the relationship between peace, war, and democracy. Hopefully, such an endeavour might aid our understanding of the origins of our current, and seemingly always returning, predicament. Might the incessant return of tensions, as Habermas claims, signal that the legal framework of the joint European democratic project must be strengthened in order to withstand the pressure of anti-democratic and nationalist forces? Or is it rather a sign that the Union has gone too far, stripping the peoples of Europe of their democratic rights to such an extent that autonomy must be reinstated and power returned to the nation states? Or is it simply the fact that democracy, ruled by the will of the masses, by its very nature opens up for the possibility of demagogues and warmongers persuading the people to act against their own best interest?

Peace and Sovereignty

The idea that establishing a confederation for peace constitutes the primary solution to the problem of war is in no sense a modern invention. Neither is the idea that democracy provides the best antidote to war. In a discourse known as *Περὶ εἰρήνης* or *On the Peace*, Athenian orator and

.....
1 Habermas & Derrida 2003, 292.

rhetorician Isocrates put forth his proposition to end the so-called Social War between Athens and its allies that plagued the Aegean region during the middle of the fourth century BCE. What he proposed, in a vein similar to Kant's, is not simply a treaty ending one specific war, but a common peace (*κοινὴ εἰρήνη*) including all Greeks. Since, he continues, in such a situation

we will govern our city with great security, we will be freed from the war, dangers and confusions that now govern our relations with one another [...]. We will see the city take in twice the revenues it does now and be filled with merchants, foreigners, and metics who have deserted it for now. Most importantly, all men will be our allies not by force but by persuasion, and they will not just accept us in secure times because of our power and then leave us when we have troubles but will behave as true allies and friends.²

The argument presented here by Isocrates, calling for what we with Derrida and Habermas might call the true self-interest of the people, could just as much have been lifted verbatim from any of the works written by the great Enlightenment thinkers of perpetual peace, ranging from Abbé St Pierre, via Voltaire and Rousseau, to Kant. During the end of the eighteenth century, the revolutionaries claimed that what they had dubbed the “diplomacy of the old courts”, supposedly waging wars and signing peace treaties only to serve the whims of the prince and the coffers of his aristocratic ministers and ambassadors, had to be supplanted by “a new diplomacy” of trade and commerce aimed at increasing tranquillity and wealth for all the peoples of Europe. This opposition between the war-torn old diplomacy and its peaceful new counterpart, reminiscent of Socrates’ famous exposition on how the origins of war could be found in the needs of the luxury state to always expand, can also be found in Isocrates’ speech as he described how the Athenian assembly was divided between two opposing views on the waging of war. The present perils, he claimed, beset the Athenians because the assembly hailed demagogues who urged for war as a means to regain (or at least to withhold) property in other states while, at the same time, the few vying for peace and invoking the need to limit one’s desires and to “be content with what we have at present” were met with silence or even ridicule.³ The Athenians, he continued, seemed to have forgotten what had made them *primum inter pares* among the Greeks; that democracy commanded them to listen to all views and then vote for the one supported by the strongest arguments, not the one which simply satisfied the already established *doxa* of the masses. Thus,

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2 Isocrates 2004, 20-21.

3 Ibid., 6-7.

in order to secure a long-lasting peace, the Athenians, according to Isocrates, had to start leading the Greeks by example, choosing the path of negotiation and showing their neighbours a peaceful way of working together by finding a solution beneficial for all rather than enforcing their submission through the use of ruthless mercenaries. A democratic legion of Greeks offered, in Isocrates view, the only viable road to a sustainable and prosperous peace.

The argument that a government based in the will and interests of the people – democratic or republican – holds the secret to securing a stable and lasting peace between different political entities thus seems to resonate in everyone from Isocrates via Kant to Habermas, Derrida, and the Norwegian Nobel Prize Committee. Effectively, since the proper procedure to diminish the risks of the outbreak of war boils down to a question concerning the choice of government, the problem of war also appears as one of sovereignty: it is taken for granted that the natural inclination of any sovereign is expansion, and only by turning the waging of wars into a moral or economical risk might the sovereign favour negotiation, limitation, and peace over threats, brute force, and endless expansion. Seen from this perspective, war, as both Isocrates and Plato claim, is inevitable when any land mass is inhabited by several, clearly distinguished, social and political communities. These tensions, as Socrates puts it, arise because humans, when indulge ourselves “in the limitless acquisition of material goods and go beyond the bounds of basic necessities”, are forced “to appropriate part of our neighbors’ land if we are going to have enough for stock and arable farming.”⁴ It thus appears as if we already in antiquity can find a formulation of Kant’s claim, referencing Hobbes’ famous *bellum omnium contra omnes*, that

[p]eoples who have grouped themselves into nation states may be judged in the same way as individual men living in a state of nature, independent of external laws; for they are a standing offence to one another by the very fact that they are neighbours.⁵

Regardless of how one chooses to explain the contingent origins of some specific war (is it because of demagogues and warmongers, the sophists of the court, the desire for luxuries, too much or not enough authority etc.), everyone from Plato, via Hobbes, to Kant nevertheless seem to agree that war is a natural (although not necessarily unavoidable) part of state relations: as long as no overarching authority (legal, ethical, military) forces political entities to co-exist peacefully, someone will sooner or later overstep its existing boundaries and declare war on its neighbours in an attempt to overtake them. But does this mean that the

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4 Plato 2013, 373d-e.

5 Kant 1991, p. 102.

return of tensions in Europe only signals the normal or natural state of affairs in international relations, meaning that the long peace between Germany and France that awarded the EU a Nobel Peace Prize eventually would have to give way to growing tensions and, perhaps, ultimately to war? Is, in other words, war an unavoidable aspect of the nature of sovereignty against which enlightened reason fights a never-ending battle? In order to approach this question, let us first expand on Kant’s understanding of the circumstances of perpetual peace.

As already mentioned, the advent of modernity resurrected the claim that the will of the people offers the best possible basis of government for anyone hoping for a long-lasting peace. Kant for instance writes:

If, as is inevitably the case under this [the republican] constitution, the consent of the citizens is required to decide whether or not war should be declared, it is very natural that they will have a great hesitation in embarking on so dangerous an enterprise. For this would mean calling down on themselves all the miseries of war from their own resources, such as doing the fighting themselves, supplying the costs of the war with their own resources, painfully making good the ensuing devastation, and, as the crowning evil, having to take upon themselves a burden of debt which will embitter peace itself and which can never be paid off on account of the constant threat of new wars.⁶

The people, when freed from the grip of the self-interested aristocracy and their unpredictable monarch, was believed to be the best guarantor for peace, since the ultimate price of war is paid in their own blood. However, in the second edition of his *On Perpetual Peace*, Kant adds to this hope a caveat: the predilection for peace found in the people in no way completely dispels the problem of sovereignty. When attempting to dissolve the apparent “antinomy between politics and morality” in the sphere of international law, Kant for instance encounters this limitation when returning to his “transcendental formula of public right”. The fundamental claim that he puts forth against those who claim that war is inevitable is that it may be avoided if all states followed this maxim of publicness, since the intention to go to war in order to gain some profit would be severely damaged if these plans were proclaimed publicly. It is thus here, in this attempt to prove that wars could be prevented if everyone was forced to explicitly announce their justification for war, that Kant’s understanding of peace and sovereignty comes upon its own limit. While, as he points out, a small state, threatened by the growing power of its neighbour, would have its plans halted if it publicly announced its

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6 Ibid., p. 108-109.

intention of committing a pre-emptive strike in order to save its own independence (since it would give the more powerful neighbour time to counter-act), not every intention to go to war would be hindered by being publicly proclaimed. Sidestepping the question if Kant, through this argument, actually succeeds in dissolving the antinomies between politics and morality by referring to his formula of public right, he nevertheless acknowledges at least one situation in which his formula definitely would fail: when the power of one sovereign completely outweighs its neighbours, publicly announcing every intention to go to war will not harm the intended outcome in any way. Wars, in other words, can be declared (and won) without breaking the formula that “[a]ll actions affecting the rights of other human beings are wrong if their maxim is not compatible with their being made public.”⁷ As a solution to this dilemma, Kant claims that for international right to be made possible in the first place, it must, *a priori*, be based in “a federative association of states whose sole intention is to eliminate war”.⁸ Thus, in the same way as the citizen’s public right must be preceded by the state, international right must be preceded by the existence of a federation. The issue, however, is that such a position takes for granted what it is supposed to prove, namely the possibility of ever establishing a perpetual peace, since the international right supposed to secure it already assumes the existence of a federation established with the sole aim of securing peace. Although never explicitly acknowledging this issue, Kant nevertheless ultimately forsakes his goal to end all wars. In the last paragraph of his second edition, he instead opts for perpetual peace as “an infinite process of gradual approximation [...], a task which, as solutions are gradually found, constantly draws nearer fulfilment, for we may hope that the periods within which equal amounts of progress are made will become progressively shorter.”⁹

War, in order words, seems to not only be natural but also necessary, at least as long as we do not live under a global authority backed by an immense power capable of dissolving every conflict through the threat of violence. The tensions now haunting the Europe Union thus ultimately appears as an unavoidable effect of the impossible coincidence of individual sovereignty and external peace that Hobbes pointed out in his famous section on everyone’s war against everyone:

[I]n all times, Kings, and Persons of Sovereigne authority, because of their Independency, are in continuall jealousies, and in the state and posture of Gladiators; having their weapons pointing, and their eyes fixed on one another; [...]. But because they uphold

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7 Ibid., p. 126.

8 Ibid., p. 129.

9 Ibid., p. 130.

thereby, the Industry of their Subjects; there does not follow from it, that misery, which accompanies the Liberty of particular men.¹⁰

However, is there not a risk that such a perspective leans too heavily on what appears as an ahistorical trait of sovereignty, what Hobbes calls the continual jealousies between sovereigns? Furthermore, another difficulty with this perspective is that the current tensions in the EU cannot simply be reduced to the contradictions between nation state, but rather we see how it confront us with a complex relationship between external and internal tensions, that is, between war and civil strife. Adopting the Kantian perspective, the risk is thus not only that we might end up naturalizing external war, making it an unavoidable part of sovereignty, we might also end up obfuscating the relationship between civil strife and external war. Kant himself can be seen as illustrating this as he turns the struggle for power within a nation state into a mirror image of the battle between multiple sovereigns: the effect of this move is that he effectively renders any attempt to seize power illegal since the revolting party (in Kant’s case the revolutionaries) attempt to establish their sovereignty on false pretences (namely breaking the maxim of the transcendental formula of public right when using force as a way of overthrowing sovereignty). Considering our contemporary issues, the case of the European Union has shown that the split underlying tensions cannot not simply be located on the level of the state, as if it was a question of different sovereigns with contradictory wills finding it hard to reach an agreement. Rather, the tension is just as much internal to each of the member states, dividing not only states but also their respective populace into some variety of the opposition between, on the one hand, globalist, liberal, individualist and, on the other, nationalist, conservative, and traditionalist. But if tensions are only an effect of the struggle for sovereignty, is it simply a coincidence that the same contingent causes appear as the origins of a split appearing on all levels within the Union? The issue here, when taking sovereignty as the origin of inter-state tension, is that we also risk taking the cohesion of that sovereignty for granted, leaving us to conclude that civil strife and inter-state war have little, if anything, to do with each other. Such a position is, for instance, clearly present in Habermas and Derrida’s call for a “European identity”. Here, the contradictions within the EU are only played out on the level of nation states, which is why a common European identity is not only intended to battle the “destructive power” of nationalism, but just as much continue the pacification of class conflict achieved by the welfare state. In other words, civil strife only appears as an indexation of the division separating the European nation states.

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10 Hobbes 1988, p. 187-188.

War and the Modern Nation State

In order to offer another perspective and to further historicize the understanding of war, let us first turn to Hobbes who, in the quote above, points us to an important development that might distinguish a properly modern understand of war between nation states from how, for instance, war between ancient Greek city states was discussed by Plato and Isocrates. While the latter point out that war is an ultimately destructive activity when seen from the perspective of the citizen (diminishing trade, draining the coffers of the state etc.), Hobbes seems to claim the opposite: the prosperity of the citizen is guaranteed by the continued bellicose stance of sovereigns. Another proponent of the thesis of the necessity of war highlighting its relationship to the inner workings of the state was Hegel, who, in his critique of Kant's ideas on perpetual peace, claimed that

[i]n existence [*Dasein*] this *negative* relation [*Beziehung*] of the state to itself thus appears as the relation of *another* to *another*, as if the negative were something *eternal*. The existence [*Existenz*] of this negative relation therefore assumes the shape of an event, of an involvement with contingent occurrences coming *from without*.¹¹

For Hegel, it is not simply the case that the sovereign must remain hostile to its neighbours in order to uphold their industriousness, but rather that, in the image of the external threat, the state is met with its own immanent negativity. As Žižek often emphasizes:

Hegel's point here concerns the primacy of “self-contradiction” over external obstacle (or enemy). We are not finite and self-inconsistent because our activity is always thwarted by external obstacles; we are thwarted by external obstacles because we are finite and inconsistent.¹²

Although Hegel is often mentioned together with Machiavelli and Hobbes as one of the precursors of modern Realism, his theory of the necessity of war differs significantly from the perspectives presented hitherto. As we have seen, the necessity of war is often understood as an ahistorical effect originating from the nature of sovereignty, more precisely from the inevitable desire of the sovereign to overstep existing boundaries (regardless of if this force emanates from the citizens' want for more luxuries, the ministers' need to appear relevant or the princes' desire to increase their domains). However, this means that although war is a necessary occurrence among political entities existing in proximity to

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11 Hegel 1991, § 323.

12 Žižek 2012, p. 200.

each other, every actual instance of war is the outcome of some specific contingency: a shift in the balance of forces, the lack or abundance of some commodity, the whims of a particular ruler. Hegel opposes precisely this explanation, pointing out how war

should not be regarded as an absolute evil [*Übel*] and as a purely external contingency whose cause [*Grund*] is therefore in itself contingent, whether this cause lies in the passions of rulers or nations [*Völker*], in injustices etc., or in anything else which is not as it should be. Whatever is by nature contingent is subject to contingencies, and this fate is therefore itself a necessity.¹³

So, it is not simply that war is the necessary outcome of the lack of an overarching authority, and thus that the antidote to war might lie in an infinite labour of counteracting this lack by reducing the contingent risks leading to tension, either through taking legal measures against war or through the establishment of diplomatic federations. Instead, Hegel claims that also the contingencies leading to specific historical wars are the effects of necessary processes. Thus, Kant's infinite labour of drawing nearer to (but never fully reaching) perpetual peace is dismissed by Hegel as another instance of bad infinity, since a properly perpetual peace remains impossible. Hegel continues:

Thus, Kant proposed a league of sovereigns to settle disputes between states [...]. But the state is an individual, and negation is an essential component of individuality. Thus, even if a number of states join together as a family, this league, in its individuality, must generate opposition and create an enemy. Not only do peoples emerge from wars with added strength, but nations [*Nationen*] troubled by civil dissension gain internal peace as a result of wars with their external enemies. Admittedly, war makes property insecure, but this *real* insecurity is no more than a necessary movement.¹⁴

Within Political Science, the difference between Hegel and someone like Kant (i.e. the difference between Realism and Idealism) on the topic of war and peace is usually treated as purely philosophical, ultimately based in two opposed views on the ideal nature of states and the ways in which they formally relate to each other. Against this, it is however possible to claim that Hegel's understanding of the necessity of war constitutes a proper break within the theory of war, differentiating him just as much from Isocrates and Plato as from Kant. To make such a claim, Hegel's

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13 Hegel 1991, § 324.

14 Ibid.

dialectics must be read, following Žižek, as “a theory of the break between tradition and modernity,” through which a rift is introduced in nature just as much as in humanity, making them both forever unstable.¹⁵ This is also why a conception of the necessity of war that avoids the pitfalls of essentialism cannot be but a modern invention, since it depends on the failure of nature as much as that of the human. Reading Hegel’s concept of the necessity of war as the first properly modern understanding of the return of war could, therefore, offer us a perspective on the tensions that haunt our present which would be capable of taking into account the specificities of the modern democratic nation state.

The difference between Hegel and Kant can, thus, be expressed as one between foregrounding self-contradiction or external opposition rather than an opposition between Realism and Idealism. What follows from this depiction is, furthermore, that this difference indexes a change, or rather a break or rift, opened up by the birth of modernity. As we have seen, at the heart of the question of war Kant places the problem of sovereignty, perfectly captured by his attack on Absolute Monarchy and its diplomatic corps:

[U]nder a constitution where the subject is not a citizen, and which is therefore not republican, it is the simplest thing in the world to go to war. For the head of state is not a fellow citizen, but the owner of the state, and a war will not force him to make the slightest sacrifice so far as his banquets, hunts, pleasure palaces and court festivals are concerned. He can thus decide on war, without any significant reason, as a kind of amusement, and unconcernedly leave it to the diplomatic corps (who are always ready for such purposes) to justify the war for the sake of propriety.¹⁶

However, what modernity brings with it is not simply the possibility to point out the illegitimacy of one specific king (that he only goes to war on the basis of some personal whim). In other words, the claim that the king is a king only because the servant believes in him is simply not enough. Instead, the difference between traditional and modern sovereignty should be expressed as the difference between pointing out a false king and expressing the falsity of monarchy as such. While the former retains a stability through preserving the nature of “kingness” as such, the latter locates the antagonism in the notion itself, showing us that a true king is no longer a king but only someone required “to say ‘yes’ and to dot the ‘i’.”¹⁷ Hence, the dispelling of “false consciousness” involved in pointing out that this or that historical ruler is illegitimate is only bound to repeat

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15 Žižek 2016, p. 3.

16 Kant 1991, p. 100.

17 Hegel 199, § 280.

itself if it is not paired with another destabilisation of the sovereign’s nature. In the seventeenth seminar, Lacan names the deciding factor behind this historical transformation:

Something changed in the master’s discourse at a certain point in history. We are not going to break our backs finding out if it was because of Luther, or Calvin, or some unknown traffic of ships around Genoa, or in the Mediterranean Sea, or anywhere else, for the important point is that on a certain day surplus *jouissance* became calculable, could be counted, totalized. This is where what is called the accumulation of capital begins.¹⁸

Lacan here points to an effect on the sovereign brought about by the start of accumulation of capital: when surplus-value became calculable, it also inaugurated, as already Marx and Engels pointed out, the process of deterioration of all “feudal, patriarchal, idyllic relations”. At the core of this transformation we find the concept of labour, which, for Hegel, constitutes the cement keeping modern societies together:

In Athens, the law obliged every citizen to give an account of his means of support; the view nowadays is that this is a purely private matter. On the one hand, it is true that every individual has an independent existence [ist jedes Individuum für sich]; but on the other, the individual is also a member of the system of civil society, and just as every human being has a right to demand a livelihood from society, so also must society protect him against himself. It is not just starvation which is at stake here; the wider viewpoint is the need to prevent a rabble from emerging. Since civil society is obliged to feed its members, it also has the right to urge them to provide for their own livelihood.¹⁹

Here, Hegel’s properly modern understanding of the state shows itself: the rabble, the immanent negation of the state, is not simply the name for a contingent appearance of discontent within this state, but rather a necessary potentiality born out of inescapable emergence of poverty in civil society. Although poverty, in its subjective aspects, always arises out of the arbitrary effect of some contingent circumstance, Hegel still shows how it, at the same time and as an effect of the fact that civil society keeps “*expanding its population and industry*”, also necessarily appears in all modern societies. The reason behind this, he explains, is that, on the one hand, wealth is accumulated in fewer hands while, on the other, not only the specialization but also the limitation of work in the state makes it

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18 Lacan 2007, p. 177.

19 Hegel 1991, § 240.

harder for this growing population to sustain their own livelihood. Hegel continues:

When a large mass of people sinks below the level of a certain standard of living – which automatically regulates itself at the level necessary for a member of the society in question – that feeling of right, integrity [*Rechtlichkeit*], and honour which comes from supporting oneself by one's own activity and work is lost. This leads to the creation of a *rabble*, which in turn makes it much easier for disproportionate wealth to be concentrated in a few hands.²⁰

As such, the *rabble* “is the Hegelian name for the emergence of an indeterminacy which decomposes the state”, appearing in the contradiction between property (citizen) and non-property (poor), negating the state's supposed totality and, through this process, revealing this inner inconsistency or self-contradiction.²¹ In other words: the modern state necessarily produces the poor, which in turn, because they cannot sustain themselves, run the risk of turning into a rabble since their sense of belonging, created out of the act of partaking in the ethical life of the state through labour, is denied them. As Frank Ruda has illustrated, the fact that Hegel fails to acknowledge that this necessary development calls for a sublation of the modern nation state does not belittle the fact that he nevertheless captured how the capitalist system brings with it an unavoidable process of decay and deterioration. It is this shift, referenced by Lacan in his comment regarding the change of the Master's discourse, that makes possible Hegel's concept of the necessity of war. Returning to Hegel's point that “war makes property insecure” – an insecurity which in itself is a necessary part of the movement of property – we can see how the move from internal contradiction in the negation of the state (rabble) to external opposition between states (war) is a way to ensure the “*security of the life and property* of the individual”.²² Without this movement, life and property in modernity would suffer from the rot [*Fäulnis*] of the rabble, potentially destroying property itself in the horrors of civil war or revolution. As such, “nations troubled by civil dissension gain internal peace as a result of wars with their external enemies.”²³ In other words, in order to protect property from itself, from its own contradictions, it must pass through the insecurity of war exposing it to the risk of being lost as spoils.

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20 Hegel 1991, § 244.

21 Ruda 2013, p.164.

22 Hegel 1991, § 324.

23 Ibid.

With the rise of calculable surplus-value, all spheres, including that of the Master, came under threat of commodification. Here, modernity's brake with the pre-modern division of the universe into two spheres – the high, eternal, and heavenly realm and the low, finite, and corrupted world – in favour of the one limitless and immanent field of modern science is, in other words, intimately linked not only to the capitalist mode of production but to the inescapable repetition of the rise of tensions within the modern state system. In this transformation, moving from two separated into one unified sphere, lack itself was inscribed within the world, making it calculable (as surplus value) but also rendering this sphere unstable since modern science in general, and Newtonian physics in particular, “had expelled every divine shadow from the heavens.”²⁴ This meant that the sphere of modern science (and capitalism), on one hand, could continue on indefinitely (since it never would experience any contradictions, nothing remained outside its grasp, everything could become a commodity) while, on the other, it was put under the constant threat of disintegration since negation and contradiction, instead of appearing between two spheres, returned from within, from the Real. Hence, as Samo Tomšič puts it, this counting of surplus needed to be counteracted: “In order to account for the existence of the subject, capitalism produces a system of economic, political and juridical fictions, which strive to conceal the politically subversive and destabilising non-identity that constitutes the subject, and more importantly, which strive to disavow the impossibility of the integral commodification of the subject.”²⁵ So, while the Master no longer could be considered as the “essence”, part of another world and thus the guarantor for the stability (but also the fear) of the subject, it “had inwardly fallen into dissolution, trembled in its depths”, meaning that everything “fixed within it had been shaken loose”.²⁶ This is what separates not only Hegel but also Kant, as modern thinkers, from someone like Isocrates, the former accepting the unescapable instability of the modern system of state (making way for the necessity of war). Simultaneously, Kant denies the necessary conclusion of this situation (the impossibility of a perpetual peace) in favour of the spuriousness of the “infinite process of gradual approximation”, illustrating how the system offers an ideological position with a semblance of stability, a fetish for the subject to hold on to just as it descends into the void. The same could also be said about the traditional realist position in modern Political Science. Although it accepts the infinite and inescapably undecidable character of the field of international relations, it simultaneously grounds this undecidability in the complete certainty of the so-called *balance of power* as the naturalization of the

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24 Lacan 2007, p. 12.

25 Tomšič 2015, p. 235-236.

26 Hegel 1991, § 194.

capitalist world view. The hope is that what appears as an external two might be subsumed under a new stable One as we move from war to peace.

Peace and Mediation

So, the Kantian perpetual peace hides a hope for a stable Master capable of one day overcoming the contradictions leading to war. It is here, at least at a first glance, that also Derrida's critique of the Hegelian understanding of war hits its mark, the fact that "the master has to live on in order to cash in and enjoy the benefits of the death risk he has risked."²⁷ The fact that war is exclusively a question of the sovereign, the one with "direct and sole responsibility for the command of the armed forces, for the conduct of relations with other states through ambassadors etc.", and that every war must be waged in a way so it will not endanger "the possibility of peace" (by respecting ambassadors, international institutions etc.), shows that Hegel's incapability to perceive the rabble's call for the sublation of the state is a blindness destined to save it. Against this, Derrida seems to propose that the total annihilation of nuclear war has turned these practices impossible since no benefits will remain to be enjoyed. However, although properly describing the Hegelian movement from internal to external contradiction, Derrida's critique nevertheless misses its mark. Instead it, as well as Derrida and Habermas' joint statement for the future of European politics, reminds us of Lacan's famous quip from the seventeenth seminar: "What you aspire to as revolutionaries is a master. You will get one."²⁸

When condemning Hegel as another expression of the Master's dream "to capitalize (on) what is gained from the risk, from war and from death itself", Derrida concludes that the fact that nothingness is the necessary driving force behind war also entails that nothing stands to be gained from it. In other words, that the prize promised to the Master as he emerges on the other side of war is nothing but a fantasy destined to cover over nothingness itself and the fact that there is nothing to gain for no one. However, the externalization and destruction of the rabble's negativity in war is, as we have seen, not simply a bourgeois fantasy, it is a description of the necessary precondition of the system's existence, allowing for it to continue the counting of negativity in the form of surplus-value by expelling the negativity that threatens to overthrow it. The problem is thus not that Hegel – in a world where the nuclear threat is unavoidable although perhaps no longer imminent – would represent the fantasy of the rewards handed out after the apocalypse. His concept of the necessity of war should not be read as a simple endorsement of the current system, but rather as an indexation of its supposed all-

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²⁷ Derrida 1984, p. 30.

²⁸ Lacan 2007, p. 207.

encompassing nature. If our presumptions about the modern dialectic between war and peace are right – its necessary movement, being the effect of an antagonism internal to the modern nation state as it was born out of the French revolution – we should be reminded about Hegel's own words from the lectures on *Philosophy of History*, that "this nodus, this problem is that with which history is now occupied, and whose solution it has to work out in the future."²⁹ This nodus, the impossibility of the state's totality which makes war unavoidable, is what he names the rabble.

Thus, what Derrida offers us is not the path beyond this system. Instead, his apocalypse without apocalypse appears just a transformation of the image of the traditional Master (risking his life for future gains) into the fantasy of the Master as diplomatico-bureaucratic mediator. In the final paragraph of his meditation on nuclear war, directly following this critique of Hegel, he writes:

[A]ll wars are waged in the name of the name, beginning with the war between God and the sons of Shem who wanted to "make a name for themselves" and transmit it by constructing the tower of Babel. This is so, but "deterrence" had come into play among God and the Shem, the warring adversaries, and the conflict was temporarily interrupted: tradition, translation, transference have had a long respite. Absolute knowledge too. Neither God nor the sons of Shem [...] knew absolutely that they were confronting each other in the name of the name, and of nothing else, thus nothing. That is why they stopped and moved on to a long compromise. We have absolute knowledge and we run the risk, precisely because of that, of not stopping. Unless it is the other way around: God and the sons of Shem having understood that a name wasn't worth it – and this would be absolute knowledge – they preferred to spend a little more time together, the time of a long colloquy with warriors in love with life, busy writing in all languages in order to make the conversation last, even if they didn't understand each other too well.³⁰

Regardless of which of these two interpretations we follow, they both remain predicated on the assumption that the moment of war can be postponed, either through knowing that all wars are ultimately useless (thus avoiding it) or by not knowing this but (in contrast to the supposed certainty of the nuclear age) approaching this lack of knowledge with caution. Instead of the ever-expanding Master we thus get a Master which appears as a form of mediator, limiting not only himself but also other Masters in order to allow for warriors and people to, as he puts it, write, love, and translate. By knowing that there is nothing to gain from

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²⁹ Hegel 2007, p. 452.

³⁰ Derrida 1984, p. 31.

war (or by being cautious faced with one's ignorance about possible gains), the Masters can thus proceed in ways which allows for their subjects to prosper. It is, in other words, a dream of a permanent state of diplomacy as endless capitalism without contradictions in which every tension and possible war is eternally postponed by mediation and care. In Habermas and Derrida's joint text on the war in Iraq, this figure of the mediating Master is even more clearly expressed in the hopes for a new European identity as the way to save the not only the collaboration but peace as well. In a time when "the driving forces" of marketisation are exhausted, the Union, it is claimed, needs to develop a "European identity", a "consciousness of a shared political fate." However, they continue, "only the core European nations are ready to endow the EU with certain qualities of a state."³¹ Hence, only if Europe's giants retreat from the policy of only following their economic interest, realizing that their greater interest lies in "strengthened cooperation, can the Union realize its full potential as a force of peace:

Taking a leading role does not mean excluding. The avant-gardist core of Europe must not wall itself off into a new Small Europe. It must – as it has so often – be the locomotive. It is from their own self-interest, to be sure, that the more closely-cooperating member states of the EU will old the door open. And the probability that the invited states will pass through that door will increase the more capable the core of Europe becomes of effective action externally, and the sooner it can prove that in a complex global society, it is not just division that counts, but also the soft power of negotiating agendas, relations, and economic advantages.³²

This hope, that war could be eternally postponed by the mediating Master, clearly remains within the Kantian horizon, understanding the origins of tensions not as an effect of internal negation but as arising from an external opposition (here from the difference in perceived self-interest causing a divide separating "continental and Anglo-American Europe" from "Old", Central, and Eastern Europe). Thus, are we not, employing Badiou's Maoist terminology, faced with an understanding of war which once again coincides with the formula the "two fuse into one"?³³ That is to say, that peace is to be achieved only through the synthesis of existing contradictions, regardless of if it entails offering a new all-encompassing identity or in realizing that our unity lies in our impossibility of reaching complete identity. By turning this around and following Badiou's favoured formula of the "One divides into two", can

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31 Habermas & Derrida 2003, p. 292.

32 Ibid., p. 293.

33 Badiou 2007, p. 60.

we not, however, capture the insight regarding war that Hegel himself remained blind too. Here, Mao's points on war in his reflections on the relationship between principal and non-principal contradiction offers an illustrative example:

In a semi-colonial country such as China, the relationship between the principal contradiction and the non-principal contradictions presents a complicated picture. When imperialism launches a war of aggression against such a country, all its various classes, except for some traitors, can temporarily unite in a national war against imperialism. At such a time, the contradiction between imperialism and the country concerned becomes the principal contradiction, while all the contradictions among the various classes within the country (including what was the principal contradiction, between the feudal system and the great masses of the people) are temporary relegated to a secondary and subordinate position.³⁴

The point here is that the revolutionary forces, in order to save the possibility to dissolve the proper primary contradiction between the feudal system and the masses had to join forces with the representatives of this system when faced with the imperialist threat of Japan, in turn making the latter contradiction, between imperialist and the colonised, into the primary concern. However, this did not entail that the original contradiction – the first one dividing into two – is solved simply because peace is achieved. Instead, it is not only that the latter contradiction, between imperialist and colonized, becomes primary as a result of the threat it poses to the solution of the original. Its sole reason for appearing, as Mao points out, is as a way to save the supposed One of the state from the negation that threatens it. War and diplomacy are, thus, not radically opposed, but rather two steps of the necessary movement of property, first being risked in its in-itself through going to war before (after the real, immanent, threat is dissolved) bringing it back into itself and returning to the state by negotiating a truce. Herein lies Hegel's failure, as he defines war in the terms of an "event, of an involvement with contingent occurrences coming *from without*." But it is not "the state's *own* highest moment – its actual infinity as the ideality of everything finite within it."³⁵ Rather, it is just a movement it must pass through in order to save itself. Perhaps we might, departing from this, claim that in some sense Mao's understanding of the situation during the Sino-Japanese war also holds true for the situation in Europe. With a European left divided between, on the one hand, rejecting the neo-liberal system of the

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34 Mao 1967, p. 331.

35 Hegel, 1991, § 323.

EU and returning to a modern version of “socialism in one country” and, on the other, a vision of a new Europe of radical equality, it also remains caught in a choice between siding with Scylla (chauvinist national-populism) or Charybdis (globalist neo-liberalism). Whatever side is picked in this battle, the thesis of the necessity of war should teach us that the solution is not to engage in diplomacy and mediation as a way of ending tensions and bring back peace to the continent. Instead, the apparent contradiction between nationalism and globalism should be approached as nothing more than a mirage so that out of its solution the proper contradiction, signified by the rabble, may emerge. Otherwise, the present war between nationalism and liberalism will only remain another way of saving “the ethical health of nations” from the internal rot, “just as the movement of the winds preserves the sea from stagnation which a lasting calm would produce.”³⁶

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36 Hegel 1991, § 324.

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The International State System after Neoliberalism: Europe between National Democracy and Supranational Centralization

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Abstract: In 1945 Karl Polanyi outlined a vision of a peacetime global state system with a political economy in which small countries could be both sovereign and democratic. The present essay reviews developments between then and now in the light of Polanyi's analytical framework. Particular attention is paid to the history of the European Union, which after the end of Communism turned into a mainstay of the neoliberal project, culminating in its restoration of an international gold standard under Monetary Union. In the crisis of 2008 the advance of neoliberalism got stuck due to "populist" resistance to austerity and the shift of governance from the national to a supranational level. The paper explores the prospects of current attempts to replace the "Social Europe" and "trickle-down" narratives of European superstate formation, which have lost all credit, with a story about a European army as a necessary condition of a successful defense of "the European way of life".

Keywords: Political Economy, Polanyi, Democracy, Neoliberalism, European integration, NATO, International Relations

In 1945, a year after his *Great Transformation*, Karl Polanyi published a short, densely argued article in a journal called *The London Quarterly of World Affairs*, under the title of "Universal Capitalism or Regional Planning?" (Polanyi 1945).² In this article Polanyi explores the relationship between what he calls "the organization of the international life" and the structures and politics of the leading states of his time, arguing that changes under way potentially offered a prospect of new, "far-flung and meaningful policies which may, albeit incidentally, fulfil the deeply rooted aspirations of the common man". Focusing on "Great Britain, Russia, and America" – the three global powers left standing after the Second World War – Polanyi argues that what was now "at issue" between them was "not so much their place in a given pattern of power, as *the pattern itself*" (italics in the original). Here, "the tremendous event of our age" was "the simultaneous downfall of liberal capitalism, world-revolutionary socialism and racial domination – the three competing forms of universalist societies".³ According to Polanyi, it was precisely because of the end of globalist universalism that "a new era of international politics" had become possible, allowing for peaceful coexistence of different regimes of international order in different regions of the world, based on and including different settlements of the class conflict:

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1 Lecture in Human Sciences at the Institut für die Wissenschaft vom Menschen (IWM), Wien, June 5, 2019.

2 Reprinted in Cangiani and Thomasberger (2018, 231-240). I am grateful to Michael Brie for drawing my attention to this important text.

3 While Polanyi is not explicit on where he sees "racial domination", I believe he includes in this category both colonialism and German Nazism.

World-revolutionary socialism was overcome by 'regional' socialism in the sufferings and glories of the Five Year Plans, the tribulations of the Trials, and the triumph of Stalingrad; liberal capitalism came to an end in the collapse of the gold standard, which left millions of unemployed and unparalleled social deprivation in its wake; Hitler's principle of domination is being crushed on a battlefield co-extensive with the planet he attempted to conquer; and out of the great mutation various forms of inherently limited existence emerge – new forms of socialism, of capitalism, of planned and semi-planned economies – each of them, by their very nature, *regional*.

Polanyi's principal example for the salutary international consequences of the change he saw from universalism to particularism is the breakdown of the gold standard in the interwar years, ending "the nineteenth century system of world economy" and resulting "in the immediate emergence of economic units of limited extent". Each of these was now forced "to look after its own 'foreign economy'⁴ which has formerly 'looked after itself'":

New organs had to be developed, new institutions had to be set up to cope with the situation. The peoples of the world are now living under these new conditions... Their 'foreign economy' is the government's concern: their currency is managed; their foreign trade and foreign loans are controlled. Their domestic institutions may differ widely, but the institutions with the help of which they deal with their 'foreign economy' are practically identical. The new permanent pattern of world affairs is one of regional systems co-existing side by side.

To explore the emerging pluralist "pattern of world affairs" further, Polanyi first considers the United States, which he regards as a "notable exception" and, in this respect, a potential source of systemic instability. The U.S., he writes, "has remained the home of liberal capitalism and is powerful enough to pursue the Utopian line of policy involved in such a fateful dispensation", namely to attempt "to restore the pre-1914 world-order, together with its gold standard" – "utopian" because, according to Polanyi, such restoration is "inherently impossible". For various historical reasons, Polanyi continues, "Americans still believe in a way of life no longer supported by the common people in the rest of the world, but which nevertheless implies a universality which commits those who believe in it to reconquer the globe on its behalf". This was different from the Soviet Union where "[t]he victory of Stalinism over Trotskyism meant a change in her foreign policy from a rigid universalism, relying on the

4 In a footnote Polanyi explains that by "foreign economy" he means "the movement of goods, loans and payments across the borders of a country" – probably an English translation of the German concept of *Außenwirtschaft*.

hope of a world revolution, to a regionalism bordering on isolationism". The "startling novelty of Stalin's policy" was that he was willing, Polanyi maintains, to content himself with building a *cordon sanitaire* around Russia, of countries that did not have to be socialist or communist provided their class structures were reshaped so that they were no longer likely to support deadly attacks on Soviet Russia. All that was needed was "the destruction of the political power of the feudal classes" – a revolution "far safer than the traditional, unlimited socialist one which, at least in Eastern Europe, would either provoke a fascist counter-revolution, or else could maintain themselves [sic!] only with the help of Russian bayonets, *which Russia has no intention of providing* [my italics]". "Nothing", Polanyi continues, "could be less appealing to the conventional revolutionary" than the Stalinist turn from revolutionary universalism to this new kind of regionalist particularism.

The upshot, then, was that "the British commonwealth and the U.S.S.R." now were parts of a new system of regional powers "while the United States insist[ed] on a universalist conception of world affairs which tallies with her antiquated liberal economy". Regionalism as a formula for peace among neighboring countries takes into account the communitarian particularism of the human condition and draws practical lessons from the observation during the war of "how overwhelmingly the people rally behind policies designed to protect the[ir] community from external danger". It was in exchange for a "secure national existence", so Polanyi, that the Russia of 1945 asked its regional neighbors to "rid themselves of incurably reactionary classes" through "expropriations and eventually confiscations", reorganizing themselves, not in order to adopt a universal model of a good society, but to be capable of living in peace with their neighbors. "Socialization of the new kind", Polanyi writes with reference to Eastern Europe and the regional neighborhood of the victorious Soviet Union, was "emphatically not an article for export. It is a foundation of national existence".⁵

It is in his further examination of what he thought was the emerging postwar peace settlement for the Eastern European region that Polanyi arrives at the core of his argument in favor of a regionally subdivided and regionally regulated, planned global order. Eastern Europe, Polanyi notes, was traditionally beset with "at least three endemic political diseases – intolerant nationalism, petty sovereignties and economic non-cooperation". Here as elsewhere, the rise of nationalism, according to Polanyi, "coincided with the territories brought under the control of a credit system by autochthonous middle classes". Ethnic conflicts – in Polanyi's words "unresolved racial issues" – were also reinforced by unfettered

5 I cannot judge the accuracy of Polanyi's judgment at the time of his writing. On the surface there is much that speaks for it; that things turned out differently later (see below) may have been contrary to the intentions of the Soviet leadership at the time. For the present argument, which is systemic not historical, it doesn't matter if Polanyi's intuition was historically correct or not.

economic competition between countries, with a gold standard “foreign economy” forcing governments to leave it to the market to balance their countries’ external accounts. This, Polanyi claims, came to an end wherever during the interwar period “market methods were”, under Soviet-Russian leadership, “discarded for planned trading”. Then, “intractable chauvinisms lost their viciousness, national sovereignty became less maniacal, and economic cooperation was regarded again as being of mutual help instead of being feared as a threat to the prosperity of the state. In effect, as soon as the credit system is based no longer on ‘confidence’ but on administration, finance, which rules by panic, is deposed, and sanity can prevail.”

The lessons Polanyi drew from this for the rest of the world were far-reaching. “If”, he writes, “the Atlantic Charter⁶ really committed us to restore free markets where they have disappeared, we might thereby be opening the door to the reintroduction of a crazy nationalism into regions from which it has disappeared.” Liberal capitalism would then become “a matter of foreign policies”, based on “foreign buying and selling, lending and borrowing, and the exchange of foreign currencies carried on between *individuals*, as if they were members of one and the same country”, with the market expected to balance the economic relations between countries “automatically – that is, without the intervention of their governments”. This failed in the 1930s, and the gold standard had to be abandoned. Now, however, regional planning offered “new methods of ‘foreign economy’” that were conducive to international peace and cooperation, as they allowed for a mutually beneficial “distribution of raw materials, the stabilizing of prices, and even the ensuring of full employment in all countries”. It was only the United States that was placing its hopes on a “universal system of marketing”, although this “would involve the impossible task of first restoring the market system throughout the world”. While it might take time for the United States to understand that its concept of international political economy is “doomed to failure”, the promising “alternative to the reactionary Utopia of Wall Street is deliberate development of the new instruments and organs of foreign trading, lending and paying, which constitute the essence of regional planning”.

Polanyi ends his discussion with a fascinating analysis of the situation of the United Kingdom, the country where he was then living. Polanyi saw Britain as dependent on imports, “for maintaining a civilized standard of life” and “the survival of the Commonwealth”, on “free cooperation with overseas dominions” which were no longer colonies. A “planned foreign economy” would enable the country to “reap the huge economic and political advantages of the regional organization of the world”. In

⁶The Atlantic Charter was drafted by Roosevelt and Churchill in August 1941, meeting aboard the battleship HMS Prince of Wales near Newfoundland. It defined the political and economic goals of the Allies for the time after the war, months before the United States officially entered it. One of the eight items listed was a general lowering of trade barriers.

fact, after the changes it had undergone since the 1930s, Britain was “no longer a free-trading country” at all, which had made it more of a popular democracy than ever – “more healthily united with every year that has passed since she left the atmosphere of liberal capitalism, free competition, the gold standard, and all the other names under which a market-society is hallowed”. This, however, was irreversible. “The real issue today”, Polanyi wrote, was that “reactionaries still hope that it is not yet too late for Britain’s own system of foreign economy to be changed back so that it may fall in line with that of America”. This way Britain would not just lose the advantages of equal cooperation with the United States and the Soviet Union but would also be deprived “of those organs of external trade which she needs for her survival”, as well as of “her freedom of action, a rising standard of life, and the advantages of a constructive peace for a long time to come”. American-style economic universalism would imply a return to the gold standard, in substance if not in name, in that it would involve “the balancing of ‘foreign economy’ through automatic movement of trade, i.e. through the undirected trade of private individuals and firms. The battle over the gold standard”, Polanyi adds, “is in reality a battle for and against regional planning”. Fighting that battle on the side of “a universalist conspiracy to make the world safe for the gold standard” were the old ruling classes of British society, afraid of “a new egalitarian impulse” that might “fuse Disraeli’s Two Nations into one... Contrary to national interest, they might attempt to restore universal capitalism, instead of striking out boldly on the paths of regional planning.”

The Rise and Decline of Neoliberalism

What became of the world as projected by Karl Polanyi at that fateful historical turning point, the end of the twentieth century’s Great Destruction? While some of his predictions were obviously falsified by the course of events, others were not. Even his misses and near-misses, however, appear astonishingly productive for description and analysis of developments since 1945. What I believe stands out in Polanyi’s approach is how he relates the political institutions of countries, their states, especially with respect to their democratic character, to the nature of their economic relations with other, in particular neighboring countries, relating this in turn to, and in part conceiving it as conditional upon, the overall architecture of the encompassing global order. Linking regional national statehood to the global international state system, Polanyi manages to shed light on the connection between national democracy and the way it is embedded, or not, in international markets, and national autonomy, or sovereignty, especially of small countries and states, as affected by the surrounding global order including its ability to keep peace. In this, Polanyi has, as I see it, forged a conceptual toolkit that carries his analysis far beyond its historical setting, the world of 1945, and indeed right into our time. In the following I will make an attempt to apply Polanyi’s analytical grid to the European state system

of today and explore what we can learn with its help for the future prospects of Europe.

To begin with, the regionalization of socialism inside the *cordon sanitaire* around the Soviet Union's communism in one country proved less resilient to U.S. universalistic expansionism than hoped for, with far-reaching consequences for the international order. As Polanyi anticipated, the United States did indeed do its utmost to export its system to the rest of the world, in confrontation with the other remaining superpower, and was remarkably successful. Offers of Marshall Plan aid to Eastern European countries, conditional on the adoption of a market economy, threatened to turn the Soviet Union's regional neighbors into hostile allies of its expansionist global rival, and were countered by military support for a revolutionary conversion to the Soviet political-economic order. For roughly four decades, Eastern and Central Europe became incorporated in a more or less tightly integrated Soviet-Russian empire, confronted by and confronting a Western alliance of democratic-capitalist ("liberal-corporatist") states built, originally, on the model of the American New Deal. That other, Western empire held together even when its hegemonic power, beginning in the 1980s, embarked on a global return to the precepts of economic liberalism pure and simple, no longer allowing its client states to choose between different national economic and social policies under the protection of Bretton Woods Keynesianism. This coincided with the Soviet Union finally losing the support, not just of its client peoples, but also of its own citizenry, as a result of both heavy-handed repression and the lures of consumer capitalism. In 1990, then, communism was ready to collapse into global capitalism, which subsequently felt free to abandon even the pretense of democratic redistributionism at home and pluralist institutionalism abroad.

What looked like victory, however, even like unconditional surrender, was only of short duration. Very soon the sole remaining superpower, by then the uncontested hegemon of the, by now, capitalist world, began to suffer from overextension, just as previous imperial powers inevitably had. Lost wars, beginning in Vietnam and not ending in Afghanistan, and failed projects of "nation-building", like in Iraq, or of "regime change" like in Syria, Iran and Libya, came together with continuing neglect of domestic problems, like a decaying infrastructure and rising inequality, as economic growth became reserved for a tiny oligarchy of private beneficiaries from public empire. Strong isolationist tendencies among the electorate and resounding calls for economic protection against a world market in which the United States was no longer able to guarantee its citizens a secure *seigneurial* paved the way to the U.S. presidency for an apparent isolationist-cum-protectionist – "America first!" – like Donald Trump. The result was a stand-off between the capitalist imperialism of the entrenched internationalist elites of the East Coast, aligned with the country's huge military establishment, and

a new, "populist" mainstream interested neither in international adventures nor, in Polanyi's term, a free-market "foreign economy".

Turning to Western Europe, we find another historical trajectory that fits Polanyi's concepts while deviating from his predictions. In the 1950s, in good part at the instigation of the United States, Western European countries did in fact engage in what came remarkably close to what Polanyi had called regional planning. The European Community for Coal and Steel in particular was created, along with similar institutions, to jointly administer a specific sector of neighboring countries' national economies, taking into account their different economic needs and interests and thereby stabilizing peaceful relations among what were now the European members of an anti-Communist Western Alliance. Placing the key industries of industrial capitalism under supranational control was to prevent them being used for nationalist rearmament in defeated Germany, like in the 1930s. It also gave European countries secure access to German coal, making it unnecessary for France in particular again to occupy the *Ruhrgebiet*, the center of German heavy industry, as it had from January 1923 to August 1925, with disastrous consequences for peace in Europe. Moreover, it helped manage the economic fortunes of an industry with strong trade unions and a tradition of labor conflict. Later, yet another sector, nuclear power, believed at the time to be of foundational importance for a modern industrial economy, was in the same way entrusted to a special international authority, EURATOM, once more very much in line with the model of regional planning envisaged by Polanyi in 1945.

Soon, however, regional sectoral planning changed into something else. Step by step the scope of supranational jurisdiction increased, and so did the number of countries involved, from six originally to twelve in 1989 and no less than 28 today. What had set out as joint sectoral planning began to appear, for a short while in the 1970s, as a prelude to regional state-building. Sectoral technocratic administration seemed to be turning into general political authority, prospectively replacing national states with a supranational European superstate, and indeed super-welfare state, as horizontal cooperation seemed to be shading into hierarchical federalism. But rather than sovereign national states merging into a sovereign supranational state – something that, incidentally, never came to pass anywhere since the era of the nation-state began in earnest after the Second World War – what happened in fact was the dissolution of national economies through international treaties into a sectorally encompassing, supranational market economy. That economy was released from redistributive state intervention, not by the political will of a democratic state coterminous with it – a state that might by popular pressure be moved to reverse its political direction – but by a regional cluster of states banding together to keep each other in the neoliberal fold. Proceeding alongside with the return of the United States to its historical drive for unfettered market liberalism, state-free market-building in economically integrated but politically un-united, and therefore only

negatively integrated, Western Europe moved, after the collapse of communism and the break-up of its East European empire, on to international empire-building – a liberal empire of 28 states embedded in a stateless, supranational, post-democratic, pre-Keynesian market economy kept together by a hard, German-style common currency.

As Polanyi would not have been surprised, the transition in the final decades of the twentieth century from “regional planning” to a new-old pattern of capitalist universalism institutionalized in a neoliberal regional superstate – for Polanyi a regressive reversal of postwar historical progress – revived the national and international conflicts of the era of the gold standard. In particular within EMU, relations between European countries are worse today than they ever were in the postwar period. Germany in particular, the new hegemon under the hard currency it has bestowed, willy-nilly, on its Western European allies, has become the target of deep nationalist animosities, especially among Mediterranean countries including France.⁷ As countries find themselves and their “foreign economies” in unmitigated competition with one another – a condition that they cannot do anything about under the “four freedoms” and, in particular, the common currency that have become constitutive for the Europe of “European integration” – the democratic substance of their national political economies is being eroded. In response, popular countermovements have sprung up that are rediscovering the institutional resources of national democracy to force governments to abandon their studied passivity and protect their societies’ economic fortunes and accustomed ways of life from the creatively destructive forces of “globalization”. After in most if not all of the countries involved, the center-left had by the 1990s at the latest tied its future to a neoliberal revival of capitalist growth through economic internationalization, it is only the nationalist right that is today offering protectionist political rhetoric that speaks to those who feel threatened by an “open society” identified with a neoliberal economy.

Since 2008, declining confidence in neoliberal “global governance” and its promise of universal economic advancement for those who “work hard and play by the rules” (Bill Clinton in the 1992 presidential campaign) fueled the rise of new political parties – denounced as “populist” by the established political class and its media – that have broken up the centrist politics of postwar Western Europe. The result is a profound impasse between two incompatible political-economic projects: the neoliberal, supranationally centralized top-down *technocracy* of “globalization” – a neoliberal superstate, or better a super-market without a corresponding state, held together by a firmly institutionalized *de facto* international

7 A striking symptom of how German economic hegemony, and the ideological claim to moral leadership that inevitably came with it, has shattered European peace are the recurring demands in countries like Greece and Italy, but also Poland, for German reparations, more than seventy years after the end of the War.

gold standard – and the anti-liberal, nationally decentralized bottom-up *democracy*⁸ of, often reactionary, popular countermovements of various kinds. One issue this raised was that of political scale: whether it was preferable for a political jurisdiction to be large or to be small, to merge with others to form a larger or split from others to form a smaller unit of governance.⁹ Today it appears that in this impasse the neoliberal advance has come to a halt, resulting for the time being in a political interregnum in which, to quote Gramsci, the old order is dying while a new order cannot yet be born – a time in which all sorts of monstrosities can happen.¹⁰

Polanyi’s analytical toolkit may also be profitably used to shed light on British Brexit politics – on the particularly complex configuration of interests and perceptions vis-à-vis the European Union that is breaking up the British party system.¹¹ For reasons of space I cannot go into this here.¹² Instead I will turn to how not just Britain but the European region of the global economy as a whole – the European state system – might evolve under the cross-pressures of the post-neoliberal interregnum, pres-

8 Note that here “democracy” does not mean a catalogue of (middle-class) “values” to which “democrats”, if they want to be ones, must subscribe. Rather it means institutions that give losers, political as well as economic, a chance to organize in order to accumulate, if not capital, then political power, and thereby force the attention of the winners.

9 The problem may also be put as the question of the extent to which governance should be conducted through international relations, with constituent units small, or through domestic relations inside one encompassing large unit. For more on this see Streeck (2019). See also a recent blog piece by Lee Jones, “The EU Referendum: Brexit, the Politics of Scale and State Transformation”: <https://thedisorderofthings.com/2016/05/24/the-eu-referendum-brexit-the-politics-of-scale-and-state-transformation/>

10 „La crisi consiste nel fatto che il vecchio muore e il nuovo non può nascere ... in questo interregno si verificano i fenomeni morbosi più svariati.”

11 The manuscript was completed before the December 12 elections.

12 For a brief sketch, “taking back control”, the slogan of the “Leavers”, can mean two things. One is cutting Britain loose from a neoliberal European superstate with its “four freedoms” that bind the country into an international market economy and prevent any sort of planning of its “foreign economy”. The other is setting it free to join a borderless neoliberal globalism and economic universalism as promoted by the United States. While the former aims at restoring democratic economic governance on a smaller political scale than supranational Europe – a tendency toward local autonomy that is also present in Scottish separatism – the latter is to insure Britain against any possibility, however remote, of the EU subjecting the political economy of its member states to democratic interventionism. Both schools of Brexit supporters want to restore national sovereignty, but for opposite objectives: to domesticate market forces by means of sovereign national politics, and to merge into a United States-led universal market system, with “automatically” balanced national accounts. While pro-market Brexiteers see, and fear, in the EU a potential supranational welfare state, from which globalism is the escape, anti-market Brexiteers regard the EU as a neoliberal supranational market state designed to preclude anything like national economic planning. Correspondingly, among “Remainers”, some want to stay in the EU for protection from totalitarian neoliberalism, whereas others emphasize the advantages for the British economy of the EU’s internal market, in particular its “four freedoms” productively exposing British firms and, above all, workers to international competition. Overlapping political alignments of this kind make for a messy politics between the lure of an elitist “market society” preserving the power and status of an old capitalist-colonialist ruling class – as represented by reactionaries like Rees-Mogg and Boris Johnson, who despise the postwar institutions of class compromise and hope to leave them behind by blending into United States capitalist universalism – and the post-neoliberal prospect of a return to a mixed economy administered by a sovereign democratic nation-state.

asures for both political-economic centralization and decentralization, for global capitalism on the one hand and democratic “regional planning” on the other, for neoliberal superstatism and democratic nationalism, and for economic universalism as well as particularism. Following the lead of Polanyi, I will discuss this with reference to Europe’s broader global context.

A New Global Context

Comparing today’s world with Polanyi’s in 1945, the position in the latter of the Soviet Union is now filled by another, presumably, Communist country, China. There are similarities between the Soviet Union then and China today, but also differences. China, like Stalin’s postwar Soviet Union, at least as seen by Polanyi, has no desire to export its regime, let alone engage in world revolution, and indeed never in its long tradition as a nation seems to have aspired to anything like international hegemony.¹³ On the other hand, unlike the Soviet Union under Stalin, the China of today is in important respects a capitalist country, although how precisely the capitalist core of its economy and society relates to its Communist shell remains a mystery in need of further research.¹⁴ Capitalism, however, is and inevitably must be expansionary, in particular where it is housed in a country too big to free-ride on another country carrying the burden – and reaping the benefits – of capitalist hegemony. Capitalism as a political-economic system needs a *Machtstaat* (Weber) as a *center* capable of securing for it a *periphery* where markets for raw materials and final products are safe and free to grow; as Rosa Luxemburg put it, it is by its very nature “land-grabbing”. That this may be so even for Communist capitalism, if such a thing can exit, is indicated in recent years by the so-called New Silk Road initiative of the Chinese state. Also referred to as the One Belt One Road (OBOR) project, it is to extend the territorial reach of the Chinese economy, to an important if uncertain extent capitalist, along the southern rim of the Eurasian continent to the Balkans and the Mediterranean and well into West Africa. All of these places have for long been part of the European and later the American peripheral backyard and are today considered by the, more or less united, “West” as their and only their legitimate domain.

If, informed by Polanyi’s analysis of 1945, we want to understand the prospects for the European regional state system – centralized or decentralized, hierarchical or cooperative, vertically or horizontally organized – a key issue seems to be how the relationship between China and the United States will evolve. Points to consider include whether the two can work out a peaceful coexistence of different political-economic systems in a pluralist world order, like Polanyi had hoped for the postwar

13 For more on this see Anderson (2017, 117-144).

14 For a fascinating analysis of the extent to which China is, or acts, capitalist, and what consequences this may have for its insertion of the global economy, see the recent book by Changing Kwan Lee (2017).

era, or alternatively can agree on a regime of dual hegemony and shared responsibility for a jointly governed capitalist world economy, or manage a peaceful transfer of power and privilege from the declining to the rising hegemon, all of which against the historical odds. Much of this would depend on whether the isolationist tendencies in the United States will prevail over the country’s military and foreign policy establishment; whether the U.S. can avoid falling into the so-called Trap of Thucydides,¹⁵ given its huge although declining military superiority¹⁶ and the extreme vulnerability especially of the land-based branch of the New Silk Road; and what the geostrategic constraints and opportunities are of artificial intelligence and cyber war technology.

None of this can be known with any degree of certainty at this time. Since becoming capitalist, in part or entirely, China has attempted several times to mend fences with the U.S., perhaps even to fit itself into a U.S.-dominated capitalist world system. As Susan Watkins writes in an exemplarily concise analysis of Chinese-American relations today, Beijing had no ambition after the demise of the Soviet Union “to challenge head-on the new inter-state order”. Instead it tried to “upgrade [its] status within the American-run international system... ‘Maintain a low profile, hide brightness, do not seek leadership, but do some things’, in the wisdom attributed to Deng Xiaoping” (2019, 9f.). Lack of military capacity can be assumed to have played a role, perhaps also a longer time perspective on the part of what considers itself the oldest civilization on earth.¹⁷ China sought membership in the WTO and, according to Watkins (2019, 10), “with an eye to pleasing the Americans, it has lurched into aggressive moves against ‘fraternal’ regimes: the disastrous invasion of Vietnam in 1979; dispatch of Uighurs to support the American-backed Mujahedeen in Afghanistan; joining the U.S. in sanctions against North Korea. Belying its occasional fulminations against hegemonism, it cast

15 Trying to understand the causes of the Peloponnesian War between Athens and Sparta, the ancient Greek general and historian Thucydides suggested that a declining hegemon, in his case Sparta, watching a rising rival, at the time Athens, building up military strength, must be tempted, and indeed rationally motivated, to start a preventive war as long as its advantage is still enough to make victory certain, to the extent that there can be certainty in war at all. As the Journal, *Foreign Policy*, claimed in 2017, “The past 500 years have seen 16 cases in which a rising power threatened to displace a ruling one. Twelve of these ended in war.” The concept, “Thucydides’s Trap”, is credited to the American political scientist, Graham T. Allison (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Graham_T._Allison#Thucydides's_Trap).

16 According to official U.S. government statistics, 165,000 active-duty military personnel were by the end of 2018 serving outside the United States. Nearly 40,000 are assigned to classified missions in locations that the U.S. government does not disclose. In 2018 the U.S. spent 649 billion dollars on its military, amounting to 36 percent of global military spending. Chinese spending is listed at 250 billion by SIPRI and 168 billion by the International Institute for Strategic Studies. Russian spending is reported by the two sources to equal 61 and 63 billion, respectively. Since 1990, the U.S. was a leading participant in twenty major wars and in an untold number of smaller military operations.

17 Allegedly, when asked, by Nixon or Kissinger, what he thought of the French Revolution, the then Prime Minister of China, Zhou Enlai, said something like, “It is too early to tell”. If the story is not entirely true, it certainly seems well invented.

its UNSC vote in favor of the occupation of Iraq and the bombardment of Libya.” Above all, China patiently financed the American budget deficits by buying U.S. treasury bills, and did its best to avoid a confrontation over Taiwan, even when the Taiwanese government fell into the hands of a separatist opposition to the One China Kuomintang.

Things may, however, have changed since the global financial crisis, which put Chinese investment in the American housing market in jeopardy; with the turn of China to domestically driven growth, requiring huge imports of raw materials, especially from the Southern hemisphere; and finally with the New Silk Road, indispensable for further Chinese economic progress but inevitably challenging American and Western European interests and positions in large parts of the world. Again, according to Watkins, “the American imperium is so vast, so overweening in its demands, that any fast-rising power must immediately grate against it. Yet its military strength makes its overthrow impossible. Either submission or impasse must result” (p. 12). The best prediction, then, might be what Watkins calls “a concertina pattern of drawn-out attrition”: a long period of wavering, on both sides, between confrontation and accommodation, like in the present trade disputes, “summit-level agreements interspersed with alarms and shadow-boxing, sudden crises over spy planes, interventions to fan or quell revolts”, alongside tense negotiations on old and new conflicts, on the New Silk Road with its innumerable pressure points, or over islands and non-islands in the South China Sea.

A New Europe?

In which direction, if at all, will the European state system move out of its present impasse into a new, stable order: *downward*, back to democratic-redistributionist politics “on the ground”, as demanded by nationalist communitarians? Or *upward*, to “more Europe” in the sense of more superstate enforcement of a politics-free market economy, as asked for by modern capital and promoted, more or less knowingly, by the European center-left, in the name of a new non-parochial, non-proletarian, middle-class-only kind of democracy? Here, Polanyi’s approach may be most helpful as it enables us to relate the structure of and the relations between the states of the European region to the evolving relationship between China and the U.S. For example, one question that Polanyi may inspire is what opportunities, if at all, that relationship may offer European centralists, faced with the resistance of populist “nationalists”, to establish credibility for a new “narrative”¹⁸ about a historical need for more “European integration”, replacing the abandoned social-democratic

18 “Narrative” has become a popular concept recently. Having migrated from literary theory into politics, it roughly means a uplifting and motivating story, often a history, told to generate acceptance for something, a decision or an institution. A “narrative” is judged by its effect, not by its truth; if it doesn’t fulfill its function anymore it is replaced with another, more effective “narrative”. Politicians who have been unsuccessful trying to “sell” something to their electorate today typically call upon their advisers to provide them with “a new narrative”.

“European social model” from the 1970s, as well as the discredited neo-liberal promise from the 1990s and early 2000s of borderless international markets producing prosperity for everybody and economic convergence for all.

In this respect, note the rising calls among European supranationalists for a “European army” to defend and expedite “European unity”.¹⁹ Building an army is a classical avenue to state-building, not least since it comes with the identification of a foreign enemy establishing a Schmittian *Freund-Feind-Verhältnis* helpful for social integration. While for some time now the designated “security risk” for Europe as an imagined community has been Russia, it is increasingly joined by China and even, in hostile reaction to Trumpist isolationism, the United States. European army-building as a pathway to European state-building had been tried before with the European Defense Community project of the early 1950s, which in the end was vetoed in 1954 by the French National Assembly. Now it is above all France that is pushing European military unification. Like in the 1950s, centrally important for this is Germany, which since 2002, confirmed in 2014, is pledged to almost double its defense spending from 1.1 (in 2017) to 2 percent of GDP in 2024. While this is in response to long-standing demands by NATO, it is also insisted upon by France with a view to the creation of a sovereign European defense capacity. By spending two percent of its GDP on defense Germany would become the biggest military power in Europe, far ahead of Russia.²⁰ Since Germany cannot and will not acquire nuclear weapons, all of its additional spending would be on conventional arms. To the extent that the German military would be Europeanized, in whatever form, increased German defense spending would ideally close the gaps in the French arsenal caused by the high costs of France’s nuclear force.²¹ Using defense as a lever for supra-

19 In October 2018, Jürgen Habermas, together with a handful of former Christian Democratic and Social Democratic politicians, issued an appeal, “For a solidary Europe”, characterized as “a Europe that protects our way of life” (published in *Handelsblatt*, October 21, 2018). “Trump, Russia and China”, according to the authors, “put Europe’s unity, our readiness to jointly stand up for our values and to defend our way of life to the test.” Further down, under the subtitle, “We Call for a European Army”, they demand “to begin now with a deepened integration of foreign and security policy on the basis of majority decisions and with the aim of a common European army”. This would not require more money, given that “European NATO members together spend about three times as much on defense as Russia”, but only “*eine Überwindung der verteidigungspolitischen Kleinstaaterei*” (roughly translated: that we leave behind our military small-state sectionalism). For more on the amount of defense spending in Europe as well as on *Kleinstaaterei*, see below.

20 If Germany would now be spending two percent of its GDP on “defense”, it would in absolute terms be spending 40 percent more than Russia, whose budget includes its nuclear hardware. The Russian defense budget is expected to decline in coming years in absolute terms.

21 It is not clear how seriously the German government takes its commitment under NATO to boost its military spending. Almost under the public radar, the Grand Coalition is spending 47.32 billion euros on defense in 2019, an increase of more than five billion compared to 2018, or of roughly twelve percent. In terms of GDP, this would amount to 1.35 percent in 2019, as compared to 1.23 percent in the previous year and to 1.12 percent in 2017. For 2020, a further increase is envisaged to 1.38 percent. As German Minister of Defense, Ursula von der Leyen promised Germany’s allies that that ratio will con-

national political integration requires that European elites can point to an unstable or hostile international environment threatening peace, prosperity and “the European way of life” (a phrase adopted by Merkel’s would-be successor, Kramp-Karrenbauer, now Defense Minister in addition to CDU party leader, in her response to Macron’s project of a “refounding of Europe”, and taken up by von der Leyen as the new President of the European Commission, where she was installed on pressure from Macron). While external dangers can always be overstated – like in the case of Russia – real tensions in the international system are obviously helpful.²²

Taking my cues from Polanyi’s 1945 essay, I conclude by discussing three ideal-typical European trajectories out of the present political-economic interregnum. The first would lead to a decentralized system of democratic nation-states, loosely integrated horizontally through negotiated economic cooperation (with Polanyi, “regional planning”) – which in Europe would require replacing the Euro with a more flexible monetary regime.²³ Globally, this would presuppose something like the international order Polanyi had hoped for: a balance of power between self-contained, non-expansionist states, or blocs of states, unwilling or in any case un-

tinue to grow to 1.5 percent in 2025, in spite of expected fiscal problems and, as a consequence, intensifying conflicts with other political objectives. In fact, the latest medium-term budget forecast provided by the (Social-Democratic) Finance Minister indicates a decline rather than a rise after 2020 in the ratio of defense spending to GDP, to 1.26 in 2023. Obviously neither the United States nor France will be happy about this. It seems that both parties to the Grand Coalition, CDU/CSU and SPD, feel more bound by the two percent goal than they admit in public, given that higher arms spending of the dimension asked for must clearly mean lower spending on more popular items, in view of the stagnant tax revenues expected for the coming half decade. Note that the first public pronouncement of von der Leyen’s successor as defense minister, Kramp-Karrenbauer, even before she was sworn in, was that Germany had to live up to its two percent commitment.

²² Although European army-building would remain difficult enough. What would be the role of the nation-states in “European” defense? Who would be Commander-in-Chief, the successor to Herr Juncker, Frau von der Leyen? Would there be an integrated General Staff? How would the French nuclear force come in? (Would it be turned over to a “European” government?) This is not to say that there wouldn’t be some short-term benefits, of the usual, frugal European Union sort. A “European army”, even if it was in fact a collection of national army units, in particular German and French ones, could presumably recruit in places like Croatia or Kosovo, where military manpower is abundant and cheap; traditionalist resistance against mercenaries is more easily overcome if they are to fight for the “European project”, for example in French West Africa. A “European army” could also be a legitimate pathway to legal immigration, from Libya or Afghanistan. It being governed by “Europe”, in whatever way, the German Bundestag may perhaps be persuaded to give up its postwar insistence on the German Bundeswehr being run as a *Parlamentsarmee*, with even the tiniest deployment of German troops having to be approved by a parliamentary majority. Probably the most practically important aspect of the “European army” project in the short term is that it comes with a commitment of France and Germany, laid down in the Treaty of Aachen of January, 2019, to merge their arms industries, with the consequence that the still quite ungenerous German guidelines on arms exports would be effectively preempted. (Maybe this is why several seasoned CDU politicians, now earning their money in private industry – in particular someone like Friedrich Merz – joined Habermas in his newly acquired love for military action.

²³ There is now a long literature on alternatives to the euro in its current form. It includes splitting the euro between North and South, or allowing for dual currency regimes, with national currencies floating against the supranational euro, as currently envisaged by the “populist” government of Italy (“Mini-Bots”). This is not the place to discuss the various projects and its prospects.

able to impose their economic and political systems on the world at large – a non-imperialistic, non-universalistic “peaceful coexistence”, in particular between China and a United States that would, somehow, be cured from its neoliberal one-world sense of mission. Interstate relations, although not necessarily inter-society relations, would be governed by respect of difference. International economic relations could by and large be free from colonialism and post-colonialism, and European countries might even be able to work out a peaceful settlement with what is now their appointed *bête noir*, Russia. Strong incentives to create an integrated European military would be lacking; the project of a “European army” would lose plausibility and become unfit as a vehicle for the formation of a European superstate; and the “war on terror” could be delegated, as it long should have been, to cooperative international police-work.

Numerous questions would arise, in particular on the capacity of a decentralized state system based primarily on voluntary cooperation to respond to global problems such as climate change, tax evasion and the regulation of finance and money. This can only be touched upon here, the central point being to remember how little if anything both “rule-based global governance” and European superstatism have achieved on these crucial matters in the three or four decades of their existence. A turn to “regional planning” might set in motion an overdue search for effective local and national policies, leaving behind the internationalist mantra that global problems can be resolved only by global government – which would not only have to happen in the absence of democratic control but would also be unlikely to happen in the first place, making calls for it a comfortable excuse for doing nothing. Keywords include capital controls; the nationalization, in the sense of de-globalization, of banks and other financial firms; shifting the tax base to immovable assets and unearned (“windfall”) capital gains; building regional planning alliances among adjacent, similar countries; adapting infrastructures to climate change by increasing public spending, also on large-scale geo-engineering; the mobilization of local and national pride on good environmental behavior (CO-free cities), etc. I cannot see that in terms of their effectiveness, such measures would necessarily be inferior to what internationalists have offered until now and what they can realistically hope to offer in the, crucially important, near future.²⁴

²⁴ In the German discussion, those who insist on the benefits and potentialities of nation-state economic sovereignty tend to be accused of *Kleinstaaterei* (as happened for example to this author; Habermas 2013). The concept was invented by German nationalists in the early nineteenth century in their polemic against the traditional political organization of the Holy Roman Empire of the German Nation (*Altes Reich*), which sustained a large number of free cities and small principalities. Today the term is used by advocates of a centralized European superstate against proponents of a less hierarchical and more voluntary, cooperative instead of imperial European state system. Their answer (Streeck 2013) is in turn to accuse their opponents of *Großstaaterei*, a concept invented in response, as a reminder of Max Weber’s fatal belief that Germany had to become a *Machtstaat* in order to defend its “culture”, or “way of life” (?), in a hostile international environment.

Returning to the global context of Europe, it appears that just as in Polanyi's analysis, the main obstacle to a pluralist global order may be the United States. Having conquered the Soviet Union, the U.S. would have to learn to withdraw from its far-flung network of allies and outposts and confirm "America first" to mean prioritizing domestic over international needs. The question is, of course, if this is possible – whether for example the U.S. economy has become too dependent on its country's international dominance to be able to do without it. In this case the U.S. would have to perceive the rise of China as a deadly threat, as it would mean diminished American access to global resources and higher prices for American imports of raw materials. Also, continued American hostility to countries like Iran might make these natural allies, not just of Russia but also of China, which would further exacerbate tensions between the two twenty-first century superpowers. Such tensions would, of course, advance the credibility of a military justification for a superstate-like centralization of the European state system.

The armed superstate project of "European integration" apparently comes in two versions, French and German, linked to different perceptions of the constraints and opportunities inherent in a Chinese-American struggle for global hegemony.²⁵ In both, European state-building proceeds via European empire-tightening, curtailing the autonomy and suspending the democracy of member states. The French version sees Europe as a third big player in rough equidistance from the U.S. and China, whereas the German version envisages something like a sub-empire of the United States joining it in its fight with the Chinese and, for not entirely obvious reasons, the Russians. In practice, distinguishing between the two "visions" is not always easy, not just because the exact nature of the future American-Chinese relationship is not known, but also because France and Germany are struggling over the EU's *finalité* while hiding as much as possible their quite fundamental disagreement. The matter is further complicated by the fact that there still is in the German foreign policy establishment a minority "Gaullist" faction contesting the pro-American majority "Atlanticist" faction, as represented above all by Angela Merkel and her hand-picked could-be successor.²⁶

A few selected points must suffice to illustrate the differences between the French and German visions of a European state system or-

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 25 Discussions on the subject, to the extent that they are taking place at all, are cloaked in diplomatic secrecy, as are all other important discussions on "European integration". One is forced here to rely on personal contacts and current reporting in the "quality press", the latter restrained by a strong determination not to appear "anti-European".

26 Merkel has, as is generally characteristic of her, avoided taking a public position, both denying that there are differences at all and liberally making unfulfillable and incompatible promises to all sides, hoping to get away with it by contingently arising emergencies diverting attention from them or rendering them outdated. That time is running out for politics of this kind, also because too many promises have been accumulated which sooner or later require to be either redeemed is one reason why Merkel's time is also running out.

ganized as an armed European superstate. The French concept of a third hegemon presupposes global tensions strong enough to unify Europe but not strong enough to force it to choose sides. It also presupposes the hefty increase in German military spending that is currently being promised, which will compensate for the large share of French defense expenditure having to be spent on the national nuclear force. Since the *force de frappe* will remain under French control, it will ensure a dominant role for France in the geopolitics of a future European superstate, also because France will after Brexit be the sole EU member state with a permanent seat on the United Nations Security Council. German conventional forces under European command, in particular German ground troops, will be needed to fight postcolonial wars in French Africa and perhaps the Middle East, in order to secure European access to natural resources and keep Europe's Chinese and American rivals in Southern Europe and Northern Africa at bay. Inside Europe, priority would be given to keeping the Mediterranean countries on board and ready to be governed from the European center, which would require compensation for the damage inflicted on their economies by the hard common currency. One form of such compensation could be a special budget for the Eurozone paid for, in effect, by Northern European surplus countries, above all Germany. A French third hegemon strategy would also allow for some sort of *détente* with Russia, given the lower importance for France of Eastern compared to Southern Europe and, importantly, Northern Africa.²⁷

Unlike the French European superstate, its German alternative would fundamentally be a *market state* with strong interests in the European East, in potential collision with Russia and with a strong Trans-Atlantic affinity to the U.S. National, or supranational, security would be derived, in addition to Europe's own efforts, from a nuclear military pact with the United States. Its hour would come with a reassertion of American expansionism and a serious confrontation with Chinese expansionism. One role of Europe as a sub-empire of a re-founded American-led West, perhaps including the United Kingdom in a "special relationship" after its separation from the EU, would be to keep Russia in check, preventing it from projecting its power into the Middle East and the Mediterranean and binding Russian forces that might otherwise be used to support an alliance with China in Africa or elsewhere. A confrontational European stance with Russia would also keep the Eastern European countries in the Western European empire, insuring their elites against the risks of taking a hostile view of Russian regional security interests (preventing, in other words, the kind of regional peacemaking through "regional planning" envisaged in 1945 by Polanyi or later practiced in Scandinavia in the form of what came to be called "Finlandization"). German conventional superiority over Russia would be backed up by Ameri-

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 27 In a nutshell, what is Eastern Europe for Germany is Northern Africa for France.

can nuclear power, which would be enlisted for European interests by providing the United States with vital logistical support for their Middle Eastern wars, for example and in particular through military bases in Germany.²⁸ In political terms, an imperial “European project” integrated in an American-led “West” might be difficult to sell to voters outside of Eastern Europe as long as Trump or another “ugly American” holds power in Washington. But the same may be true under a new-leftist Democratic president. While culturally a Kennedy of the twenty-first century (for example Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez!), politically he or she might be even more isolationist than Trump initially tried to be. It would seem that the German version of a military path to European unity, unlike the French one, presupposes a return to power (or at least a realistic possibility of such a return) of Clinton-style American liberalism or, more likely, a successful resistance of the American “deep state” – the country’s military-industrial-intelligence complex – against isolationist attempts, left or right, to subordinate international priorities to domestic ones.

Conclusion

An interregnum is a time of high uncertainty, with respect to both how long it will last and how it will end. Nobody knows how the United States and China will settle their relationship, if at all. They may for an indefinite period be wavering between conflict and accommodation, between peace, cold war, and war, shrinking back or not from the abyss as they (perhaps repeatedly) approach it. Nor do we know what the ongoing rapid digitization of military technology will contribute: drones being only the beginning, followed by robots fighting robots as they attack infrastructures and troops, accompanied by ever more sophisticated cyber warfare against vital domestic telecommunications and data processing systems.

Equally uncertain is how long the “populist” defense within the European state system of local autonomy against supranational centralism will endure. International scare mongering by integration-minded European elites may push back centrifugal forces, or it may not. French hopes for a more isolationist United States and German hopes for an American return to “multilateralism” may both be disappointed as the United States may remain torn between an “America first” electorate and an internationalist military establishment. Moreover, French and American expectations, nourished by the Merkel government, of a Germany arming

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28The biggest of them, and indeed the biggest installation of the U.S. Airforce outside of the United States, is Ramstein in Rhineland-Palatinate. It houses about 9,000 troops, including civilian personnel. The air base is used as a European hub for the transport of troops, materiel and prisoners worldwide. It is also used for evacuation flights as it is close to Landstuhl Regional Medical Center, the biggest military hospital outside the United States. The hospital is also used for debriefing American troops and the interrogation of prisoners. Importantly, from Ramstein Air base the U.S. military plans and controls its “war on terror” drone operations in Iraq, Afghanistan, Somalia, Yemen and Pakistan (https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ramstein_Air_Base). All in all there are currently about 32,000 American troops stationed in Germany.

itself to the teeth and placing its military under non-German command, thereby extracting it from national parliamentary control, may be frustrated by German voters and parties. And who will win the battle in Germany between the “Gaullists” and the “Atlanticists”? The former needs a France that is not Lepenist, the latter a United States that is not Trumpist. Perhaps here, too, all one can predict is a drawn-out period of indecision, amid doubts whether Germany will be able and willing to pay the rising price of keeping its liberal European empire together, above and beyond the two percent for a larger and better military.

What we may be in for, then, is a long *Hängepartie*, a period of irresolution with uncertain events but still productively conceivable within the parameters of Polanyi’s 1945 essay: universalism vs. pluralism, one world or more, gold standard vs. “regional planning”, empire vs. sovereignty, countermovement from the right vs. the left, etc. In all this uncertain complexity, or complex uncertainty, the architecture of the European state system – its politics of scale and hierarchy – may remain an open question, preventing Europeans from politically defining and pursuing their interests in peace, democracy, and prosperity. Playing around with military means to centralize European politics, European political elites may at some point cease to understand what they are getting into and, like in 1914, unintentionally start a wildfire beyond their control.²⁹

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29The politics of the arming of Europe is in rapid flux. By the end of 2019 an open rift had appeared between Germany and France, caused not least by Macron’s and the French military’s refusal to hand over the *Force de frappe* to “European” control. In response Germany confirmed its commitment to NATO, Trump and all, after Macron had publicly pronounced NATO “braindead”. For a preliminary assessment see a brief analysis I contributed to the Spanish internet magazine, El salto: <https://wolfgangstreeck.files.wordpress.com/2019/12/el-salto-19-11.pdf>.

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Race, Class, Tragedy. Nietzsche and the Fantasies of Europe

Alberto Toscano

Abstract: This essay revisits Nietzsche's meta-political (or archi-political) speculations about Europe through the interlocking prisms of class and race. It explores the extent to which something like a 'class racism' – or, in Domenico Losurdo's formulation, a 'transversal racism' – can be seen to operate in Nietzsche's anti-democratic visions of European unification. In a concluding section, it traces elements of Nietzsche's later problematisation of a European 'great politics' in the often-neglected political dimension of his writings on Ancient Greek tragedy and the cultural necessity of slavery, while also touching upon the way in which these writings have served as a resource for anti-colonial poetics.

Keywords: Aimé Césaire, class racism, Domenico Losurdo, Friedrich Nietzsche, Wole Soyinka, slavery, tragedy

The attempt to unify Europe and to turn it into the ruler of the Earth ... is not placed at the margins of Nietzsche's philosophy, but at its centre.

– Karl Löwith, 'European Nihilism'

The homogenizing of European man is the great process that cannot be obstructed: one should even hasten it. The necessity to create a gulf, distance, order of rank, is given *eo ipso* – *not* the necessity to retard this process.

– Nietzsche, *The Will to Power*, § 898

There is a handwritten draft in which Caesar instead of Zarathustra is the bearer of Nietzsche's tidings. That is of no little moment. It underscores the fact that Nietzsche had an inkling of his doctrine's complicity with imperialism.

– Walter Benjamin, *The Arcades Project*

Therefore, comrade, you will hold as enemies – loftily, lucidly,

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1 An early version of this paper was delivered at the University of Salford in 2007, under the title 'Nietzsche, (Class) Racism, and the Fantasies of Europe'. Many thanks to Carlos Frade for the original invitation.

consistently – not only sadistic governors and greedy bankers, not only prefects who torture and colonists who flog, not only corrupt, check-licking politicians and subservient judges, but likewise and for the same reason, venomous journalists, goitrous academics, wreathed in dollars and stupidity, ethnographers who go in for metaphysics, presumptuous Belgian theologians, chattering intellectuals born stinking out of the thigh of Nietzsche...

– Aimé Césaire, *Discourse on Colonialism*

Over and above the struggle between nations the object of our terror was that international hydra-head, suddenly and so terrifyingly appearing as a sign of quite different struggles to come.

– Nietzsche, letter to Carl von Gersdorff, 21 June 1871

Europe United Against Itself

What would Friedrich Nietzsche make of the preamble of the TCE, the Treaty establishing a Constitution for Europe, signed in 2004 (and left unratified after its rejection in French and Dutch referenda in 2005)? This evidently facetious question is meant to indicate just how alien the German philosopher's diagnosis of and prognosis for Europe, together with his conceptual persona of the 'Good European', is from the reformist homilies that preface the treaty, especially once it was controversially purged of its specific reference to Christianity. The treaty sets out by declaring that it draws its inspiration from 'the cultural, religious and humanist inheritance of Europe, from which have developed the universal values of the inviolable and inalienable rights of the human person, freedom, democracy, equality and the rule of law'. Could there be a more exhaustive enumeration of everything that Nietzsche perceives as the engine of European decadence, its succumbing to slave morality after 'the last great slave rebellion which began with the French revolution'?² Wouldn't Nietzsche perceive this as the constitution of the untouchable 'Chandala', of the 'unbred people, the human hodgepodge',³ when the TCE states that it will continue on Europe's path of progress and civilization for the sake of 'the good of all its inhabitants, including the weakest and most deprived'? This is the 'unmanly' Europe incessantly castigated by Nietzsche, the one

2 *Beyond Good and Evil*, par. 46, Nietzsche 1966, p. 61.

3 "'Improving" Humanity', in *The Twilight of the Idols*, Nietzsche 2005, p. 184.

that suffers from the 'bad taste' of indulging in pity and 'a pathological sensitivity and receptivity to pain'.⁴

There is no congruence between the consensual, gradualist image of a united Europe offered by today's capitalist parliamentarianism and Nietzsche's insistent attempts to think Europe as a site both of decadence and transvaluation; indeed, we could even say that in Nietzsche's work we may locate an anticipatory diagnosis of the impasses of precisely such a Europe.⁵ My contention, however, is that this Nietzschean critique, useful as it may prove in corroding the vapid self-confidence of a rudderless Europe, must in turn be taken apart, and radically criticized for its reliance on a whole host of arbitrary, reactionary and sterile themes and affirmations – chief among them the notions of rank and mastery, with its associated treatment of the agonies and birth-pangs of civilization as a psycho-cosmic drama detached from the vicissitudes of historical struggle and of what we may call the 'uneven and combined development' of nihilism. More succinctly, it will be argued – in the wake of Domenico Losurdo's monumental critical reconstruction *Nietzsche, the Aristocratic Rebel*⁶ – that though we can still cherish and refunction Nietzsche thought's for its destructive-diagnostic insight, at the level of programme and prognosis it represents a dead end, or a deadening beginning.

But what does European unification mean for Nietzsche? In *Beyond Good and Evil*, he paints a Europe whose leaders and peoples are wilfully ignoring the tendency towards, and need for, unification. We encounter here one of the relatively invariant themes in Nietzsche's mature thought, after an earlier infatuation with the 'German essence' (*das Deutsches Wesen*), his contempt for what he calls 'the pathological estrangement which the insanity of nationality has induced, and still induces, among the people of Europe',⁷ which, joined to the 'demagogic character and the intention to appeal the masses ... common to all political parties',⁸ accounts for the baleful state of late nineteenth-century Europe. It is against the myopia of populist politicians and their doomed 'separatist' policies that Nietzsche affirms that '*Europe wants to become one*'.⁹ What does this unification signify? First of all, it is important to keep in mind that it is in the works of a disparate republic of geniuses ('Napoleon, Goethe, Beethoven, Stendhal, Heinrich Heine, Schopenhauer', and

4 *Beyond Good and Evil*, § 293, Nietzsche 1966, p. 231.

5 See the incisive article by Benjamin Noys in this issue for an interrogation of the broader resonances and impasses of Nietzsche's figuration of Europe. See also Elbe 2002.

6 Losurdo 2002 and 2019. See also the précis in Losurdo 1999.

7 *Beyond Good and Evil*, § 256, Nietzsche 1966, p. 196.

8 *Human, All Too Human*, Volume I, § 438, Nietzsche 1996a, p. 161.

9 *Beyond Good and Evil*, § 256, Nietzsche 1966, p. 196.

even a rehabilitated Wagner) that the ‘new synthesis’ is prepared and the ‘European of the future’ is anticipated experimentally. Secondly, the suggestion that these towering figures are media for the tormented birth of Europe indicates that Nietzsche’s concept of Europe is not *stricto sensu* political, or geopolitical, but ‘spiritual’. Speaking of his precursors of the European man, Nietzsche writes: ‘In all the heights and depths of their needs, they are related, fundamentally related: it is Europe, the one Europe, whose soul surges and longs to get further and higher through their manifold and impetuous art’¹⁰ – this is a Europe, of course, whose destiny remains unwritten and uncertain. Third, for Nietzsche European unity is a question of rank: these great thinkers, as he put it, taught ‘their century ... the century of the *crowd!* – the concept “higher man”’.¹¹

The synthesis of a spiritual Europe for the sake of the production, or enhancement, of a higher breed of men – this is what lies at the basis of Nietzsche’s passion for European unification. But, of course, Nietzsche does not shrink back from a political, or rather archi-political, understanding of Europe – if we understand ‘archi-political’, following Alain Badiou, as what qualifies a declaration that can only manifest itself in a ‘subjective exposition’ (and ultimately in Nietzsche’s final political delirium), for, having no event as its condition, it presumes that politics can arise from the act of thought alone, and is thus incapable of ‘distinguishing its efficacy from its announcement’.¹² As Badiou argues in ‘Who is Nietzsche?’:

Nietzsche’s anti-philosophical act, of which he is at once the prophet, the actor, and the name, aims at nothing less than at breaking the history of the world in two. I would say that this act is archi-political, in that it intends to revolutionise the whole of humanity at a more radical level than that of the calculations of politics. Archi-political does not here designate the traditional philosophical task of finding a foundation for politics. The logic, once again, is a logic of rivalry [versus politics], and not a logic of foundational eminence.¹³

In his ‘European Nihilism’, a text written in 1939 in his Japanese semi-exile and significantly subtitled ‘Reflections on the Spiritual and

10 Ibid.

11 Ibid., p. 197.

12 Badiou 1992, p. 14. See also Badiou 2015, for the seminars coeval to this conference on Nietzsche. In a fascinating pre-war engagement with Nietzsche, combining sympathy and admiration for the German philosopher’s ‘tragic dialectic’ with trenchant critique of its insuperable limits, Henri Lefebvre already pointed out Nietzsche’s tendency to try and resolve through desperate, lyrical decrees (as well as failed recoveries of possibilities past), the uneven, motley interregnum in which he was condemned to live – a product, in Lefebvre’s view, of the arrested impetus of the 1848 revolutions. See Lefebvre 1939.

13 Badiou 2002, p. 4.

Historical Background of the European war’,¹⁴ Karl Löwith identified Europe as the key concept in Nietzsche’s conception of a new ‘ordering’ that would overcome the impasses of nihilism:

The great goal for Nietzsche is the spiritual and political dominion of Europeans over the earth. To force Europe to this ‘great politics’, which is at the same time a ‘war between spirits’, it must be confronted with the question ‘whether its will to down-going “wills”’, that is to say, what is at stake is whether Europe will overcome its own nihilism, once again willing itself as a whole and as something decisive. This active and ‘ecstatic’ nihilism is a powerful impetus and a hammer that obliges the degenerate nations and the Russians to surrender, and creates a new order of life.

What is specifically archi-political in Nietzsche’s stance, once again following Badiou’s definition, is the identification between Europe and his own person. As Löwith puts it: ‘The fate of Europe coincides in Nietzsche’s thought and sentiment with himself’. But, beyond this coincidence, what are the modalities of political unification envisaged by Nietzsche? If we avoid the position of a ‘hermeneutics of innocence’ that would regard all of Nietzsche’s pronouncements as metaphorical – a choice that enervates his thought, turning him into a Rortyan liberal ironist or an eclectic anarchist – it is difficult to deny that Nietzsche’s vision of Europe is one based on the emergence of a radical hierarchy that could give a form to the continent’s political chaos, breaking asunder national populisms for the sake of a new, tendentially planetary ordering. As Löwith notes, in order to forge the single, decisive will necessary for such a great politics, now ‘that the time of the small politics of nationality is past’, Nietzsche envisages the necessity of ‘a dominant caste with long-term aims, capable of taming the masses to this end’.

Democracy, Class Racism and the ‘Good European’: Racialisation Without Race?

The political horizon of a united and fiercely hierarchical Europe of breeding and affirmation is inextricably linked to another connotation of Europe that for Nietzsche poses at once the danger of a depleting passive nihilism and the opportunity for a kind of post-Christian regeneration. Democratisation is thus, in Derridean parlance, a kind of *pharmakon*, or at the very least an occasion to be seized in the battle against so-called ‘slave morality’. But how could the levelling occasioned by ‘democratisation’ presage anything affirmative? After all, one of Nietzsche’s invariant convictions, from his early writings onwards, seems

14 Löwith 1995.

to posit the need for social stratification (and more brutally, slavery¹⁵) for the sake of cultural enhancement and the intensification of spiritual life. In an aphorism entitled 'Culture and caste', he writes: 'A higher culture can come into existence only where there are two different castes in society: that of the workers and that of the idle, of those capable of true leisure; or, expressed more vigorously: the caste compelled to work and the caste that works if it wants to'.¹⁶ This seemingly obvious lesson from ancient Greece and Indian caste-society, which Jacques Rancière has relentlessly invalidated,¹⁷ is further specified by Nietzsche in an aphorism, also from *Human, All Too Human*, entitled 'My Utopia'. There we read that in a 'better ordering of society the heavy work and exigencies of life will be apportioned to him who suffers least as a consequence of them', in a rank-ordering from the 'most insensible' labourers to the 'most sensitive' masters, who find suffering even at the apex of comfort.¹⁸

That is, there is a difference in kind, or difference of nature, registered at the level of 'sensitivity' between the dominant and the dominated, the lords and the slaves. Nietzsche's utopia is thus a naturalised translation of these pre-political affects and competencies into a social order understood primarily, it should be noted, at the level of the division of labour (and of the division of labour into the manual and the intellectual). But how could the levelling process that appears to accompany the 'evolving European' permit such a political translation of differences of nature? And, most importantly, isn't such an identification of essential political types in tension, if not stark contradiction, with Nietzsche's unsparing assault in *On the Genealogy of Morality* on the metaphysics of a doer behind the deed, of a subject behind the action – something that could also be extended to cover his treatment of Europe as spirit and subject?

Allegedly considering Europe's 'democratic movement' *sine ira et studio*, Nietzsche limns a process of blending and deterritorialisation: 'The Europeans are becoming more similar to each other; they become more and more detached from the conditions under which races originate that are tied to some climate or class; they become increasingly independent of any *determinate* milieu'.¹⁹ But Nietzsche's hopeful gaze, as ever, is not turned towards the collective effects of this 'physiological' transformation, but to the kinds of possibilities such a transformation affords for the breeding of a new type of creative and affirmative being. The future European man in the making is thus 'an essentially

15 Ruehl 2018.

16 *Human, All Too Human*, Volume I, § 439, Nietzsche 1996a, p. 162.

17 Rancière 2004.

18 Ibid., § 462, pp. 168-9.

19 *Beyond Good and Evil*, § 242, Nietzsche 1966, p. 176.

supra-national and nomadic type of man ... a type that possesses, physiologically speaking, a maximum of the art and power of adaptation as its typical distinction'.²⁰ But Nietzsche is too disabused, or perhaps too materialist an aristocratic thinker to consider that the emergence of his new type could do without the deep-seated and frequently brutal inequalities that accompany higher, 'affirmative' cultures.

Thus, for the process of European unification and democratisation really to present an escape from the mere dilution of cultural energies, to propose new values, which is to say new hierarchies, then it requires, unwittingly perhaps, to generate a new stratification. And this is exactly what Nietzsche stipulates: 'The very same conditions that will on the average lead to the levelling and mediocratization of man – to a useful, industrious, handy, multi-purpose herd animal – are likely in the highest degree to give birth to exceptional human beings of the most dangerous and attractive quality'.²¹ Thus the new adaptive and affirmative type will be accompanied in Europe by 'the production of a type that is prepared for slavery' in the shape of 'manifold garrulous workers who will be poor in will, extremely employable, and as much in need of a master and commander as of their daily bread'.²² In linking democratisation with a new tyranny, Nietzsche thus repeats an argument encapsulated in § 956 from *The Will to Power*: 'The same conditions that hasten the evolution of the herd animal also hasten the evolution of the leader animal'.²³ In other words, the 'pathos of distance' might be reborn through the very physiology of levelling: this is Nietzsche's hope for Europe, as a land where the order of rank could identify a transnational *Herrenvolk*, or master-race, supported by the ranks of an insensitive, enslaved sub-proletariat. Losurdo has argued that this vision of a class and/or race aristocracy whose members celebrate themselves as equals is widespread in nineteenth-century thought, pitilessly cutting across the putative divide between 'liberals' and 'conservatives'.

It is a hope that was already present in Nietzsche's presentation of the conceptual persona and archi-political figure of the 'Good European' in *Human, All Too Human*. In aphorism § 475 of that book, entitled 'European man and the abolition of nations', Nietzsche salutes the 'destruction of nations' and the emergence, on the basis of nomadism and 'continual crossing' of a new, mixed race, the European.²⁴ He advances a powerful analysis of the demagogic uses of nationalism by 'princely dynasties' and 'certain commercial and social classes'

20 Ibid.

21 Ibid.

22 Ibid.

23 Nietzsche 1968, p. 501.

24 Nietzsche 1996a, p. 174.

and presents such a European unification as the only cure against the sickness of anti-Semitism, which is a corollary of pathological fanaticism and manipulative policies surrounding the nation. Is this seemingly 'progressive' anti-nationalism at odds with the relentless insistence on rank-ordering and breeding? Does this paean to 'crossbreeding' remove Nietzsche's associations with nineteenth-century racism and Social Darwinism?

Trying to move beyond Lukács's schematic and frequently untenable treatment of Nietzsche's anticipations of imperialist ideology and 'indirect apologetics' for capitalism,²⁵ the Italian Marxist historian of ideas Domenico Losurdo has proposed a manner of conceptualising the persistence of a thinking of race and hierarchy in Nietzsche without falling into the patently contradictory pursuit of presenting him as a German nationalist or an anti-Semite. In his *Nietzsche, the Aristocratic Rebel*, Losurdo makes an important conceptual distinction between what he calls 'horizontal racialisation' and 'transversal racialisation'.²⁶ The first of these relates to the essentialist identification of certain nations or groups as simply and invariably superior or inferior. But Nietzsche, as his diagnosis of European democratisation makes patent, can have no truck with a mere reiteration of populist, traditional 'sectarian' drives. On the contrary, as his future-oriented, speculative eugenic schemes imply, the generation of new evaluative hierarchies and the breeding of new types cut across – specifically, by way of 'crossbreeding' – received national and racial distinctions. But what does remain invariant in this process is precisely the idea of rank and the naturalisation of inequality that Nietzsche had already outlined in his 'utopia' from *Human, All Too Human*.²⁷ In other words, the master-race may, or must, be mixed.

The core element of Nietzsche's practice of differentiation within the process of European levelling and hierarchical separation is, according to Losurdo, the racialisation of class, a racialisation which is transversal inasmuch as it cuts across customary distinctions between races and nations (German, French, Jewish, etc.): 'The constant element in the Nietzsche's complex evolution is the tendency to racialise subaltern classes',²⁸ which are treated alternatively as a barbarian caste of slaves, a fanatical rabble, a collection of instruments of labour for the dominant classes, a crowd of 'semi-bestial' beings, or a motley crew of failures and biological rejects. Nietzsche thus partakes of the tendency within Western liberal and anti-revolutionary thought that treats the

25 Lukács 1981, esp. Ch. 3: 'Nietzsche as founder of irrationalism in the imperialist period'.

26 Losurdo 2002, pp. 433-7 and 823-6.

27 On the centrality of hierarchy to Nietzsche's political thought, from his first to his last writings, see the introduction in Nietzsche 2004.

28 Losurdo 2002, p. 823.

proletarian as an *instrumentum vocale* (Edmund Burke) or 'biped tool' (the abbé Sieyès). It is for this reason that a crossbreeding of 'higher men', of elites derived from the most varied 'nations', is perfectly compatible in Nietzsche with, as Losurdo puts it, 'an international civil war, which transcends state borders, and witnesses "civil" European elites jointly battling the threat posed by "barbarians", whether internal or external to the West'.²⁹ We can thus see why Christianity and socialism represent for Nietzsche a conjoined nemesis, especially inasmuch as Christianity crystallises 'the general revolt of the downtrodden, the miserable, the malformed, the failures, against anyone with "breeding", – the eternal vengeance of the Chandala as a *religion of love*'.³⁰

In this respect, Nietzsche's thinking can be recontextualised in terms of a long tradition of anti-socialist nineteenth-century thinking which depended, as Étienne Balibar has shown, on the '*institutional racialization of manual labour*'.³¹ This is a position, we might also note, which rests on a nostalgic and utterly deficient understanding of the relationship between cultural 'enhancement', exploitation and the division of labour – note the constant references to Nietzsche to systems of hierarchy and caste where the combination of stratification, homogenisation and class conflict proper to the nineteenth-century European context would be averted. It is in this sense that Nietzsche's vision of a unified and hierarchical Europe, in which internal domination would presage external power, is a phenomenon of the '*new racism* of the bourgeois era ... the one which has as its target the *proletariat* in its dual status as exploited population ... and politically threatening population'.³² It is worth noting, in light of Nietzsche's unsavoury fixation on the 'Chandala', that Balibar regards contemporary racism not only as constantly overdetermined by class struggle, but as the transposition of notions and practices of caste.³³

Perhaps the driving reason behind Nietzsche's partaking of this form of anti-socialist nineteenth-century class racism lies in his inability to distinguish between a levelling equivalence and an innovative and

29 Losurdo 2002, p. 426.

30 "'Improving" Humanity', in *The Twilight of the Idols*, Nietzsche 2005, p. 185. Note how the orientalist framing of an Indian or 'Aryan' caste-system functions here as the counter to all the improvers of mankind, with their concealment of the immoral foundations of any morality.

31 Balibar 1992, p. 210.

32 Balibar 1992, p. 209.

33 Balibar 1992, p. 207: Several historians of racism (Leon Poliakov, Michele Duchet and Madeleine Reberieux, Colette Guillaumin, Eric Williams on modern slavery, and others) have laid emphasis upon the fact that the modern notion of race, in so far as it is invested in a discourse of contempt and discrimination and serves to split humanity up into a 'super-humanity' and a 'sub-humanity', did not initially have a national (or ethnic), but a class signification or rather (since the point is to represent the inequality of social classes as inequalities of nature) a caste signification'. On the relation between race, class and caste, see also Cox 1948.

‘transvaluing’ equality. As Mazzino Montinari has argued, against Lukács, a certain suspicion if not critique of equality as a political category was even shared by the likes of Engels; and it might further be argued that Nietzsche himself was more acquainted with a bland, Christian socialism than with the more affirmative and uncompromising aspects of Marxist and communist thought³⁴ – though his class panic at the deeds of the Paris Commune, to which I’ll turn in the conclusion, may not incline us to judge that his hostility would have been attenuated by a better acquaintance with the revolutionary vulgate. Nietzsche’s handling of the problem of the proletariat in his own work is never capable of breaking out of the alternative between necessary subordination (such as in his speculations about the necessary ‘Sinification’ of the European working class³⁵), on the one hand, and colonial expansionism via the working or *lumpen* elements of the European population, on the other. In other words, the racialised domestication of class into caste, accompanied by a supercharged settler-colonialism, seems to exhaust the utopia of a cosmopolitanism of domination. Thus, in *Daybreak*, a seemingly rousing attack on the mechanisation of the labour-force and ‘impersonal enslavement’, and a related critique of the idea of a social-democratic discipline of the working-class in view of future victories, issue into nothing more than a kind of social-imperialist epic, in which Europe is expanded and renewed by ‘an age of a great swarming-out such as has never been seen before, and through this act of free emigration in the grand manner to protest against the machine, against capital, and against the choice now threatening them of being compelled to become either a slave of the state or the slave of the party of disruption’.³⁶ Hence the slogan: ‘Let Europe be relieved of a fourth part of its inhabitants! They and it will be better for it!’ The criminal degeneration of the working-class will thus, in Nietzsche’s imaginings, give rise – as European virtues go a-wandering across the globe ‘in distant lands and in the undertakings of swarming trains of colonists’ – to a ‘wild beautiful naturalness and be called heroism’ (and Europe itself might make do with ‘numerous Chinese’ with their ‘modes of life and thought suitable to industrious ants’ and even lend Europe some Asiatic perseverance by way of cross-breeding).³⁷

34 Montinari 2003.

35 Losurdo 2002, pp. 330-4.

36 *Daybreak*, § 206, Nietzsche 1997, p. 207. p. See Brennan 2014, pp. 173-4. Brennan’s chapter on ‘Nietzsche and the Colonies’ is of particular interest for its foregrounding of the relation between counterphilology, antiphilosophy and a kind of imperialist meta-politics in Nietzsche’s work.

37 Ibid.

Beyond European Universalism

In Nietzsche’s musing on the ‘impossible class’, as in his thoughts about tyranny, slavery and democratization, or his fervent anti-nationalism, we encounter an important archi-political theme in his work: the need for Europe somehow to separate itself from itself. This epochal selection and sublimation of European culture is at the core of the very idea of transvaluation. It is a theme that gives rise to a whole host of peculiar oscillations and contradictions. Thus, Christianity is deemed to be a kind of Oriental illness, a symptom of slave revolt or untouchable morality polluting (alternatively) a Greek, Roman or Jewish European (or Western) matrix. We also see a drive for geographical exodus which translates a need to break with the decadent dialectic of ‘European nihilism’ and the political options (liberalism, socialism, nationalism, populism) it gives rise to. More interestingly, towards the end of his conscious life, Nietzsche increasingly tests out the possibility of the superiority of other civilisational lineages over against Europe. In his treatments of Islam, or Hinduism – all of which are explicitly anti-liberal, hierarchical and frequently misogynist – he considers the possibility that an affirmative culture might entirely separate itself from the Christian, Western heritage. As he writes in *The Anti-Christ*: ‘Christianity cheated us out of the fruits of ancient culture, and later it cheated us a second time out of the fruits of *Islamic* culture. ... In itself, there really should not be any choice between Islam and Christianity, any more than between Arabs and Jews. The decision is given, no one is free to have any choice here. Either you *are* a Chandala or you are *not*... “War to the death against Rome! Peace, friendship with Islam!”: this is what that great free spirit felt, thus us how he *acted*, the genius among German emperors, Friedrich II’.³⁸ Though this Islam may be purely ‘semiotic’,³⁹ a mere signifying foil and provocation, it does suggest two things: one, the fact that as Nietzsche’s work advances any stable identity to the archi-political or philosophical concept of Europe, or indeed the West, is thrown into doubt; two, that the hierarchical invariants of his thinking remain determining in his evaluation of cultures – as he writes in *Beyond Good and Evil*, the superiority of Islam stems from the fact that we are dealing with a world ‘where man believes in order of rank and *not* in equality or equal rights’.⁴⁰

Despite the unsavoury reasons for this civilisational dislocation, it is nevertheless true that in its extreme consequences we could say, following the Italian philosopher Biagio de Giovanni, that Nietzsche’s thought brings into crisis ‘the self-representation of Europe’,⁴¹ and

38 Nietzsche 2005, pp. 63-4.

39 Almond 2003.

40 § 30, Nietzsche 1966, p. 42.

41 De Giovanni 2004.

with Losurdo, that Nietzsche strikes a blow against the *Christian* imperialism that in his epoch (let us recall that the Berlin Conference and the scramble of Africa under the threadbare cover of anti-slavery morality are contemporary with Nietzsche's major works) seeks to justify Europe's 'civilising mission'. More, Nietzsche's 'hammer' destroys the genealogical myth of Europe and the West, whether Christian-Aryan-Germanic or Hebrew-Christian-Greek-Occidental in its imaginary lineage. But the aim, consistently with Nietzsche's early work, is to destroy not just the hypocritical universalism that is harboured in such saccharine ideologies which cloak the fundamental brutality of imperialism, but to jettison universalism altogether – and, as some passages intimate, to empower imperialism and transvalue domination. To separate the excavation of the dark side of Christian and Occidental morality from the abiding drive to reinvent a hierarchy that remains 'European' is a supremely difficult alchemical operation.

In this respect, it is worth recalling, that a number of non-European anti-colonial intellectuals found in Nietzsche a tool for the total critique (to borrow Deleuze's important formulation) of what Immanuel Wallerstein has called 'European universalism', and for a recasting of that universalism and humanism on a planetary scale – embracing the *pars destruens* of Nietzsche's thought while judging his philosophy of the future incurably compromised by the residues of the colonial past.⁴² Edward Said's description of Fanon's relationship with Freud, Marx and Nietzsche in *Culture and Imperialism* can provide an initial indication of the uses of Nietzsche for total critiques of domination: 'In the subversive gestures of Fanon's writing is a highly conscious man deliberately as well as ironically repeating the tactics of the culture he believes oppressed him'. He treats his predecessors as 'of the West – the better to liberate their energies from the oppressing cultural matrix that produced them. By seeing them antithetically as intrinsic to the colonial system and at the same time potentially at war with it, Fanon performs an act of closure on the empire and announces a new era'.⁴³

The Birth of Tragedy Between the Commune and Decolonisation

By way of conclusion, I want to sketch the possibility of such an antithetical reading of Nietzsche's corpus, one that takes some of his inaugural texts on Greek tragedy as its starting point. In Nietzsche's *Birth of Tragedy* we find both the traumatic trace of Nietzsche's fervent anti-socialism (and of the 'class racism' that undergirds it) and a cultural metaphysic that magnetised an important seam of anti-colonial thought

42 Wallerstein 2006. For a contrasting view, emphasising the anti-Nietzscheanism of anti-colonial intellectuals, see Brennan 2014, pp. 142-3.

43 Said 1993, pp. 268-9.

and practice.

As several commentators have explored, what is arguably the foremost poetic work of anti-colonialism, Césaire's *Notebook of a Return to the Native Land*, was animated in part by the Martinican poet and politician's immersion into the early Nietzsche. Césaire himself, in a 1946 lecture delivered at an international philosophy conference on epistemology in Port-au-Prince, Haiti – entitled 'Poetry and Knowledge', and published in the Martinican journal he co-edited under Vichy occupation, *Tropiques* – would place his practice under the sign of the polarisation of the Dionysian and the Apollonian.⁴⁴ Césaire dates the 'revenge of Dionysus over Apollo' to 1850, and to Baudelaire's 'penetration of the universe', but the Nietzschean frame is unmistakable, not least in the poet's asseverations against the cold rationalism of the natural sciences and his invocations of the creative powers of tragic experience ('Fascination and terror. Trembling and wonder. Strangeness and intimacy'; 'a knotted primitive unity, the bedazzlement of which poets kept for themselves'). Particularly striking in this respect is Césaire's paean to poetic violence, channelling a certain Nietzschean rhetoric while turning for guidance to surrealism's dark beacon, Lautréamont:

In this climate of fire and fury that is the poetic climate, currencies lose their value, courts cease to make judgments, judges to sentence, juries to acquit. Only the firing squads still know what to do. The further one advances, the clearer the signs of breakdown become. Regulations choke; conventions are exhausted. The Grammont laws for the protection of men, the Locarno laws for the protection of animals abruptly and marvellously renounce their virtues. A cold wind of disarray blows.⁴⁵

This tragic register is faithful to Nietzsche in articulating a creative affirmation of destructive powers that is irreducible to a dialectical register. In this regard, as Donna V. Jones has perspicuously argued, Césaire's flight from any (anti-)colonial dialectic of recognition presages the staging of the tragic as an anti-dialectical affirmation of difference in the work of Deleuze and others. As she notes:

The Césaire of *Notebook* simply cannot be seen through the Hegelian-Marxist dialectic of recognition and labor, for he simply could not have found in slave labor the possibility of *Bildung*. Nor could he have believed that any master could confer, or was even interested in conferring, recognition on the slave. ... [The slave]

44 On the significance of the Dionysian/Apollonian distinction to the philosophy of négritude, in both Césaire and Léopold Senghor, see Diagne 2011 and 2018. See also Harcourt 2016.

45 Césaire 1996, p. 141.

simply does not care one whit about the recognition of the other (or the educative function of gang labor!). Here – and the irony cannot be lost – Nietzsche, an often crude exponent of eugenics, emboldened Césaire to rise above the need for confirmation, which can only imply conformation. Here are the roots of what is often perceived as the volcanic aggression of his poetics and the unapologetic call for violence in his student Fanon.⁴⁶

The turn to Nietzsche's conception of tragedy as a resource for an anti-colonial poetics – one that seeks to break the circle of a dialectic of liberation which in the final instance would always remain internal to the West – does not stop with Césaire. The Nigerian playwright and theorist Wole Soyinka draws even more extensively on the framework of *The Birth of Tragedy* to explore what he regards as the nexus between ritual loss of individuation and an aesthetic of communal immersion in African drama – one which will ultimately dislocate Nietzsche's own (Greco-German) conception of the tragic. Writing of the God Ogun in Yoruba tragedy, Soyinka describes how he 'surrender[s] his individuation once again ... to the fragmenting process; to be resorbed within universal Oneness, the Unconscious, the deep black whirlpool of mythopoietic forces'.⁴⁷ Tragic drama is thus incomprehensible without a cosmic orientation, without a 'communal compact whose choric essence supplies the collective energy for the challenger of chthonic realms'.⁴⁸ This Nietzschean inspiration is explicitly bound up in Soyinka with a rejection of historicism and an affirmation of an unabashedly metaphysical conception of the tragic, which shows 'man's recognition of certain areas of depth-experience which are not satisfactorily explained by general aesthetic theories; and, of all subjective unease that is aroused by man's creative insights, that wrench within the human psyche which we vaguely define as "tragedy" is the most insistent voice that bids us return to our own sources'.⁴⁹

How are the anti-colonial and post-colonial uses of Nietzsche's metaphysics of tragedy affected by recovering the political content of the *Birth of Tragedy*? In the self-critical retrospect that accompanied the 1886 edition of the book (whose title replaced *Out of the Spirit of Music* with *Or Hellenism and Pessimism*), Nietzsche was forthright about the situation the book was responding to:

.....
46 Jones 2010, p. 168. Césaire is himself not exempt from biologicistic temptations; he was 'led back at times against his own predispositions to an ahistoric naturalism of racial biologism and noumenal racialism, not through a simple failure to break with racist culture but paradoxically through his very attempt to rise vigorously and vitally above the oppressive racial culture that he had inherited' (p. 174).

47 Soyinka 2006, p. 153.

48 Ibid., p. 37.

49 Ibid., p. 140.

Whatever underlies this questionable book, it must be a most stimulating and supremely important question and, furthermore, a profoundly personal one – as is attested by the times in which it was written, and in spite of which it was written, the turbulent period of the Franco-Prussian War of 1870-1. While the thunder of the Battle of Wörth rolled across Europe, the brooder and lover of riddles who fathered the book was sitting in some corner of the Alps, utterly preoccupied with his ponderings and riddles and consequently very troubled and untroubled at one and the same time, writing down his thoughts about the Greeks – the core of this odd and rather inaccessible book to which this late preface (or postscript) is to be dedicated. A few weeks later he was himself beneath the walls of Metz and still obsessed with the question marks he had placed over the alleged 'cheerfulness' of the Greeks; until finally, in that extremely tense month when peace was being discussed at Versailles, he too made peace with himself and, whilst recovering slowly from an illness which he had brought back from the field, reached a settled and definitive view in his own mind of the 'Birth of Tragedy from the Spirit of Music'...⁵⁰

The spirited montage no doubt hides the horrors experienced by a volunteer medical orderly on the frontlines, but it also cloaks a more specifically *political* trauma that accompanied the gestation of Nietzsche's first major work. In his critical intellectual biography and 'balance-sheet', Losurdo compellingly demonstrates the intimate link between Nietzsche's metapolitical figure of the tragic – the cultural-political project harboured by his inventive Greco-German synthesis – and his horrified *reaction* at the apocryphal news of the incineration of the Louvre at the hands of the insurrectionaries of the Paris Commune. In Losurdo's interpretation, the Commune, viewed through this stark juxtaposition between levelling plebeian violence and the summits of aesthetic creation, serves as a kind of negative event that indelibly marks the anti-revolutionary animus of Nietzsche's philosophy. In a letter of 21 June 1871 to his friend Carl von Gersdorff, Nietzsche writes:

When I heard of the fires in Paris, I felt for several days annihilated and was overwhelmed by fears and doubts; the entire scholarly, scientific, philosophical, and artistic existence seemed an absurdity, if a single day could wipe out the most glorious works of art, even whole periods of art; I clung with earnest conviction to the metaphysical value of art, which cannot exist for the sake of poor human beings but which has higher missions to fulfill.⁵¹

.....
50 Nietzsche 1999, p. 3.

51 Nietzsche 1996b, p. 81. In another letter, he referred to the day when he came to hear of the Louvre's

Losurdo detects the obvious repercussions of this presence in an important passage from *The Birth of Tragedy*, which also speaks to the themes mined in the earlier parts of this paper, namely the relevance of the notion of 'class racism' to a critical valuation of Nietzsche's thought. The passage, tellingly, is one in which Nietzsche gives full vent to his polemic against the figure of Socrates, twinned here with Euripides, though not yet fused with the castigation of Christian morality which will define his mature philosophy:

We should not now disguise from ourselves what lies hidden in the womb of this Socratic culture: an optimism which imagines itself to be limitless! We should not now take fright when the fruits of this optimism ripen, when the acid of this kind of culture trickles down to the very lowest levels of our society so that it gradually begins to tremble from burgeoning surges and desires, when the belief in the earthly happiness of all, when the belief that such a general culture of knowledge is possible, gradually transforms itself into the menacing demand for such Alexandrian happiness on earth, into the invocation of a Euripidean *deus ex machina*! It should be noted that Alexandrian culture needs a slave-class in order to exist in the long term; as it views existence optimistically, however, it denies the necessity of such a class and is therefore heading towards horrifying extinction when the effects of its fine words of seduction and pacification, such as 'human dignity' and 'the dignity of labour', are exhausted. There is nothing more terrible than a class of barbaric slaves which has learned to regard its existence as an injustice and which sets out to take revenge, not just for itself but for all future generations.⁵²

As Losurdo comments, the *Birth* could have easily, and perhaps more aptly, carried the title or subtitle: *The Crisis of Civilisation from Socrates to the Paris Commune*.⁵³ The emphasis on discontinuity and difference that is elsewhere associated with Nietzsche's critique of historicist modes of thought, not least in the *Genealogy*, is absent here; in its place, we find a continuity so improbable (between Alexandrian culture under the sign of Socrates-Euripides and nineteenth-century revolution) as

destruction as the worst day of his life. Quoted in Ruehl 2004, p. 87 (who nicely terms the fantasised event an 'act of proletarian iconoclasm'). Nietzsche, like many of his contemporaries believed the 'fake news' about the destruction of the Louvre. While the Tuileries palace had been burnt down, the Louvre was unharmed. Losurdo skews the case in his favour for a seamless image of Nietzsche as a counter-revolutionary by not quoting the following lines from the letter: 'But even when the pain was at its worst, I could not cast a stone against those blasphemers, who were to me only carriers of the general guilt, which gives much food for thought' (ibid.). This does not gainsay the evident presence of an anti-plebeian and reactionary animus in *The Birth of Tragedy*, with Nietzsche willing himself to be far less magnanimous in print, and more resolutely donning the armour of the cultural warrior.

52 Nietzsche 1999, pp. 86-7.

53 Losurdo 1999, p. 11; Losurdo 2002, pp. 13-17.

to constitute a kind of counter-myth – a tale about the remote origins of decadence that will later be relayed, in terms of the same lexicon of domination, as the slave revolt in morality. Even more relevant perhaps for our purposes, is Nietzsche's claim, repeated *ad nauseam* in published and unpublished works alike, but stated here with exemplary clarity about the cruel presuppositions of morality, the violence at the heart of piety, the anti-human foundations of humanism. Walter Benjamin's much-quoted adage about there being no document of civilisation that was not simultaneously a document of barbarism is a *leitmotiv* of Nietzsche's thought, with the momentous difference that for Nietzsche this was something to be *affirmed*. Here, as José Emilio Esteban Enguita has persuasively argued⁵⁴ is the abiding core of Nietzsche's tragic politics, and the early source of his efforts to reinvent or transvalue aristocracy after the implosion of feudalism, the Ancien Régime and their threadbare moralities and metaphysics – efforts perhaps best encapsulated in the notion of a *pathos of distance*, the capstone of Nietzsche's thinking of hierarchy, rank and authority. As Nietzsche wrote in a fragment from 1870-1:

Art is the excessive and free force of a people that does not waste away in the struggle for existence. Here is demonstrated the *cruel* reality of a *culture*, to the extent that it erects its triumphal arcs over subjugation and annihilation.⁵⁵

That this conviction – which we could also formulate as the indissoluble if infinitely mutable nexus of slavery and culture, domination and genius, exploitation and vitality – did not prove such an obstacle to the refunctioning of *The Birth of Tragedy* for the sake of an anti-colonial poetics, is also a function of Nietzsche's own moves away, during the drafting of his first major work, from an explicitly political articulation of his recovery of the traduced origins of the tragic. In April 1870, when Nietzsche was still thinking of entitling his work-in-progress *Socrates and Instinct*, he envisaged a quadripartite structure, with four chapters respectively devoted to ethics, aesthetics, religion and mythology, and, last but not least, the theory of the state.⁵⁶ In autumn 1870, he was considering a different title: *Tragedy and Free Spirits: Considerations on the Ethico-Political Meaning of Musical Drama*. By the Spring of 1871, Nietzsche had reframed his project in a register far closer to its final shape – now entitled *Origins and Purpose of Tragedy. An Aesthetic Treatise. With a Preface to*

54 'La máscara política de Dioniso' [Dionysus's Political Mask], Introduction to Nietzsche 2004, pp. 9-50.

55 Nietzsche 2004, p. 61.

56 Ugolini 2007, p. 9.

Richard Wagner.⁵⁷ This subtraction of the political could lead us to qualify somewhat the starkness of Losurdo's thesis. That said, the text on the theory of the state that Nietzsche excised from his now aesthetic treatise and gifted to Cosima Wagner on Christmas 1872 as one of five prefaces for unwritten books is a powerful record of the political philosophy of hierarchy that the young Nietzsche felt he could extract from an anti-Socratic reading of Ancient Greek politics.⁵⁸ This 'politics of tragedy' is largely articulated around the thesis of the necessity of slavery – a thesis that at the end of his philosophical life, Nietzsche would repeatedly link to the requirement to invent new forms of domination, new orders of rank which, rather than looking nostalgically to ancient or feudal pasts, would assume the reality of democratic levelling and internationalisation as their battlefield. As Nietzsche declares in 'The Greek State':

we must learn to identify as a cruel-sounding truth the fact that slavery belongs to the essence of a culture: a truth, granted, that leaves open no doubt about the absolute value of existence. This truth is the vulture which gnaws at the liver of the Promethean promoter of culture. The misery of men living a life of toil has to be increased to make the production of the world of art possible for a small number of Olympian men.⁵⁹

The continuation of his argument is illuminated by the (false) fires of the Commune, inasmuch as the refusal to accept domination as the precondition of culture brings together all the strains of rationalist, progressive thought, while simultaneously insinuating the possibility that beyond acts of proletarian iconoclasm may spread out a far more devastating horizon, one in which compassion – which Nietzsche here seems to sympathetically inhabit *malgré lui* – could swamp creation:

Here we find the source of that hatred that has been nourished by the Communists and Socialists as well as their paler descendants, the white race of 'Liberals' of every age against the arts, but also

.....
57 Ibid., p. 13-14. Ruehl 2004 suggests that the depoliticization of *The Birth* may have been at Wagner's insistence (p. 83), a product of the latter's idealisation of the ancient *polis* and humanist belief that slavery – what he also called 'the fateful hinge of world history' – was at the root of Athens' demise.

58 On 'The Greek State', see Ruehl 2004, with its stress on the anti-democratic influence of Jacob Burckhardt and its fascinating discussion of the Prometheus-frontispiece to the first edition of *The Birth of Tragedy* as an emblematic representation of Nietzsche's desire 'to liberate himself from his *Über*-father Wagner and the anti-capitalist, egalitarian ideas that the latter continued to embrace twenty-three years after the failed revolutions of 1848-1849'. Ruehl stresses that among the reasons for Nietzsche's increasing anti-socialist phobia was the restive character of the working classes in Basel itself, which only four months after his inaugural lecture as a professor of philology had hosted the Fourth Congress of the International Working Men's Association, with the presence of Wagner's old comrade from the Dresden uprising of 1849, Mikhail Bakunin.

59 Nietzsche 2006, p. 166.

against classical antiquity. If culture were really left to the discretion of a people, if inescapable powers, which are law and restraint to the individual, did not rule, then the glorification of spiritual poverty and the iconoclastic destruction of the claims of art would be more than the revolt of the oppressed masses against drone-like individuals: it would be the cry of compassion tearing down the walls of culture; the urge for justice, for equal sharing of the pain, would swamp all other ideas.⁶⁰

And, in painting his crowning image of the tragic (anti-)dialectic of cruelty and culture, Nietzsche also suggests – in an intuition that would return repeatedly in later works – how what distinguishes the present is the incapacity (which could also be interpreted as bad faith or hypocrisy) to *assume* the cruelty, domination and hierarchy required for the establishment of any social and cultural order of valuation – including one that imagines itself to be moral, or humanist. What's more, behind the castigation of sensitivity is an emphasis on the inability of the present to rise to the level of tragic *pathos*, and thus to wed a theory of culture to a theory of the state. Given how relatively neglected this remarkable encapsulation of Nietzsche's early politics of tragedy has been, it is worth quoting it at some length:

[W]e may compare the magnificent culture to a victor dripping with blood, who, in his triumphal procession, drags the vanquished along, chained to his carriage as slaves: the latter having been blinded by a charitable power so that, almost crushed by the wheels of the chariot, they still shout, 'dignity of work!', 'dignity of man!' Culture, the voluptuous Cleopatra, still continues to throw the most priceless pearls into her golden goblet: these pearls are the tears of compassion for the slave and the misery of slavery. The enormous social problems of today are engendered by the excessive sensitivity of modern man, not by true and deep pity for that misery; and even if it were true that the Greeks were ruined because they kept slaves, the opposite is even more certain, that we will be destroyed by the *lack* of slavery ... Whoever is unable to think about the configuration of society without melancholy, whoever has learnt to think of it as the continuing, painful birth of those exalted men of culture in whose service everything else has to consume itself, will no longer be deceived by that false gloss the moderns have spread over the origin and meaning of the state. For what can the state mean to us, if not the means of setting the previously described process of society in motion and guaranteeing its unobstructed continuation?⁶¹

.....
60 Nietzsche 2006, pp. 166-7.

61 Nietzsche 2006, pp. 167-8.

It is likely that the integration of 'The Greek State' into *The Birth of Tragedy* would have made the anti-colonial translation of Nietzsche's tragic metaphysics and poetics, by Césaire and others, far more arduous. And yet we could also think of that delinking of tragedy and hierarchy – a delinking that made it possible to transcode *The Birth* in an anti-Eurocentric register – as the invention of a possibility that was latent in some of Nietzsche's early investigations into the musical dramas of the Ancient Greeks, namely that of collective cultural forms that would undermine the forms of individuality and subjectivity, *but also of domination*, coterminous with the European 'civilising project'.

In his Basel courses of 1869-70, Nietzsche repeatedly stressed the collective, mass mysticism lying at the heart of Greek tragedy; tragic action is subordinated to the lyrical and pathetic lament of the chorus. The widely disputed idea of an emergence of tragedy from the cult of Dionysus, in the dissolution of individuation within a cosmic order, the initiation to transcendence through extreme fright, is here bound to the fusional-democratic character of the Dionysian games, which Nietzsche calls 'a great festival of freedom and equality in which the servile classes recovered their original right'.⁶² Tragedy draws on 'popular mass poetry' which the dithyramb masters.⁶³ As the young Nietzsche declared: 'The dithyramb is a popular chant, even one principally issuing from the lower classes. Tragedy has always conserved a democratic character; just as it was born from the people'.⁶⁴ Contrariwise, modern tragedy is modelled after the law court and was never really able to recover its popular base, which is a precondition of the truly tragic. Before the trauma of the commune, Nietzsche can thus be seen to have briefly articulated an image of tragedy that strangely foreshadows the anti-colonial reinvention of the tragic in the fires of decolonisation.⁶⁵

62 Nietzsche 1994, p. 37.

63 Ibid., p. 40.

64 Ibid., p. 43

65 On tragedy and decolonisation, see Scott 2014 and Glick 2016.

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Confronting Europe's Failure

Sophie Wahnich

The European Union, or the corruption of a political ideal

The dream of Europe in the 18th century was to be a cosmopolitan space where human-to-human relations and people-to-people relations would be governed by humanist and democratic norms. The fantasy of Europe involves sharing the same juridical norms with moral value, the same ways of being in the world and the project of a future not pacified but capable of always reinventing a good life. In fact, the reality of the European Union even at its beginnings is quite different. Those who built it used this fantasy to promote the organization of a technocratic club of powerful people that has nothing democratic or humanist about it.

This raw reality appears today. Not only is the dream of Europe not the European Union, but Europe turns its back on it. When peoples refuse to continue the reality of the European Union in these terms, they are either ignored and the vote no longer has any sacred value, or they are violently punished as we can see in Greece but also in the demonstrations in Catalonia in 2017, in the French demonstrations severely repressed from 2016 to 2019, whether those against COP21, against the state of emergency, against the labor law or even those of yellow vests.

Should we leave the European Union?

The United Kingdom chose to leave the European Union by a referendum vote. As a first collateral consequence, Scotland could become a dissident of the United Kingdom and separate from the country.

"When in the course of human events it becomes necessary for a people to dissolve the political bonds that have bound it to another and to take, among the powers of the Earth, the separate and equal place to which the laws of Nature and of the God of Nature entitle it, the respect due to the opinion of humanity obliges it to declare the causes that determine its separation," said Thomas Jefferson.

For Jefferson, these causes are the violation of fundamental rights: equality between men and peoples, life, freedom, the search for happiness. According to him, governments are established among men to guarantee these rights, and their rightful power stems from the «consent of the governed». The logic of the free peoples' political responsibility towards other free peoples presupposes for each one a constant responsibility towards their own government. In fact, if the principles were no longer shared, it would be impossible to enter into reciprocal relations and, without reciprocity, relations would be tyrannical: either conquest or the vassalization of other peoples.

The displaced peoples, bearing a name that depends only on the good will of their tyrant, cannot defend any principle. They are not peoples, but mere collections of individuals who evolve according to the conquests and defeats of their tyrant.

Brexit, the desire of Frexit, reminds us that men do not make «societies of nations» spontaneously, and that it is appropriate to institute humanity as the norm of this society of sovereign and equal peoples. Historically, it has only been the process of regaining

sovereignty that led to the affirmation of Freedom (obeying the laws that one gives oneself), Equality (reciprocity of this freedom) and Fraternity (community of affections between political equals and likes, individuals and peoples).

If a constituted people or an entity did not respect these principles, it would be guilty of a «crime against humanity». For, in this reciprocal logic, “he who oppresses one nation declares himself the enemy of all”.

But today, the separation or union of peoples does not produce any immediate meaning, and especially not in the sense of the sort of cosmopolitanism promoted by Thomas Jefferson, and later by the French revolutionaries.

When economic tyranny dominates politics, the continued union of Greece in the EU affirms the vassalization of a people despised like a flock. The exit of the UK from the EU does not strengthen its own unity or defend a more solid concept of human rights. As for the enlargement countries, Hungary, the Baltic countries, they do not seem to be concerned about guaranteeing these rights. Nor does Austria or Italy... meaning is constantly blurred.

Looking at the regional scale is no less perplexing. The images of peaceful demonstrations in Barcelona where Catalans wanted to establish an autonomous state, made in 2017 a perfect contrast with the deployment of arms in Madrid. The authoritarian discourse of defending the Constitution by King Felipe VI through violent repression, seemed to make Catalonia the emblem of a desire for democracy, rejected by the right-wing central power in Madrid. Even those who did not agree with the motivations of the separatists, -the refusal to redistribute wealth from a favoured region to the poorer regions-, were frightened by the use of violent force by the Spanish state. If a spectrum haunts Europe, it would be the spectre of the “arbitrary”. Arbitrary, by definition, is not “sensible”.

A contrary, sensible right would be those motivated by arguments for justice and legitimized by a public space of universal reason, a right thought to ensure a certain stability but also a protection against the arbitrariness of the powerful. It is the role of democracy to prevent the law becoming “unreasonable”. That is why the French Constitution of 1793, in Article 28, declared that future generations would not be subject to the rights of their ancestors: “A people always has the right to review, reform and change its Constitution. A generation cannot subject future generations to its laws.” But could it have been conceivable, in 1793, that a separate group of people would try to change the legality of the national state without a civil war? Well, yes, Article 26 of the 1793 French Bill of Rights stated: «No portion of the people can exercise the power of the whole people; but every section of the sovereign assembly must enjoy the right to express its will with complete freedom.» Finally, repression of the expression of opinions is not worthy of democratic and republican legality. Article 7: “The right to express one’s thoughts and opinions, either through the press or in any other way, the right to assemble peacefully, the free exercise of worship, cannot be prohibited. The need to

state these rights presupposes either the presence or the recent memory of despotism”.

In Catalonia, holding a referendum without negotiation is indeed an abuse of constitutional law. But in 2010, the Constitutional Court rejected the 2006 agreement on the new status of autonomy of Catalonia, this rejection was a mockery of the political intelligence and negotiation that were then at work to obtain constitutional reform by the Mariano Rajoy Party. As for this desire for greater autonomy, is it strictly Catalan? Is it politically classifiable? Actually, it is not.

The current Catalan question no doubt less reflects a repetition of the Spanish Civil War than a new game of global politics where legality is used to protect the powerful and not to protect democratic equality and the right of peoples to direct themselves. Catalonia is a dramatized symptom that could go wrong. Here, the situation is well dressed in the new clothes of our political condition which is no longer normalized by a universal cosmopolitan right, but by all those who drape themselves with a legality that has become arbitrary.

Triangulation of politics

The future of Europe is thus played out in a pool of three bands, on one side, we have first, a technocracy which combines representative, so-called ‘democratic’ institutions which in reality are deeply undemocratic, and second a bank, the ECB, which operates without any governmental regulation or oversight. On the other side, people who are astonished at having lost so much sovereignty and quality of life, whether it be life as such or democratic political life. Since 1993 and the Maastricht Treaty, there has been no exit from the tunnel. Faced with this oppression some credit the experts and believe that the debts contracted by the State must be repaid, they are objective allies of the technocratic establishment. Others believe that we must invent another Europe against this technocracy, with standards and ties more in line with fantasy. In the context of climate change, increased international migration, cities in transition and refuge are making a transition between technocracy and humanist aspirations.

But the critical ecology is more often inscribed in groups that are working concretely to promote another model of society on a transnational model that goes beyond the strictly European stakes. Finally, in the face of this oppression, a final group believes that we must restore popular sovereignty and no longer let technocracy decide without the people. Either they aspire to elect strong figures, and the populist adjective gives the current outline, or they aspire to reinvent the democratic condition, to obtain an authentic democratic power, through referendums, a renewal of the institutions. They want real democracy.

As such, the yellow vests did not appear out of nowhere in November 2018, but from the latest betrayal of popular classes. Not that of President Macron, who takes money from the poor and gives it to the rich in an all-European logic. He at least was elected only by his own

people and by a passing turn of vote passes from the postponement of votes to the second round supposed to protect the country from national populism. But does not this protection from national populism serve as a barrier to, as well as a normalization of death, for those who hope to reach the shores of Europe? Isn't xenophobia a European fact?

No, the betrayal here is that of Social Democracy and it was played from 2012 to 2017 and onwards. François Hollande, a socialist candidate, chose to be elected on the word "popular" the phrase "change now", asserting that the real adversary was finance and that it had no face or party. But in the end he invited a "Macron" financier to occupy a ministry and let him fabricate a so-called responsible economic policy so as not to be left or right.

The French Social Democrats understood what had to be said to be elected but they maintained the values of economic liberalism, and their belief in austerity. They did so in full knowledge that the measures promised against the speculative banking system and *finance* would be fainthearted. They have destroyed the protective right to work and civil liberties in a social context where "terrorism" is allowed for a continued state of emergency. This continuous state of emergency is capable of repressing activists, those who are worried about the planet, those who struggle not to fall into wage slavery that does not say his name, and those who invent a new art of talking at night.

The last attempt to re-engage in the electoral discourse has deepened the gulf between the governing and governed. The yellow vests say they now make the link between injustices and this bad democratic representation. This is explained by Priscillia Ludosky who had launched a petition on taxes, denouncing their falsified character in May 2018.

«They are elected, they follow their roadmap, and there is no transparency about what they do, how they do it, how they fund it.

There is also something else that is denounced, and that is the sense of powerlessness of citizens and of the nation. The President cannot do anything without requesting the authorization of the European Commission. So there is also the issue of sovereignty to be taken into account. How the country could support itself, defend the interests of its citizens, if it cannot even make its own decisions. In terms of inequality, taxation— Everything the government decides does not seem to be in the public interest.

This calls into question the system of representativeness, and increases distrust of elected representatives, and in the sense of being part of a much larger system, Europe, which is running everything.

This has gradually become apparent, as if we had been aware for years, on certain subjects, that we were being laughed at. But the link between representativeness and injustice was not made. Now we realize that if there are these injustices, it is because the decisions are not well made. »

Greece and France

In Europe, the first long-standing rulers to have lost their stipends were the elected Greeks on 25 January 2015. Pasok, supposedly socialist, new democracy, right. No one then spoke of «degagism» but of the victory of a complex coalition, which had chosen a strategy and a tactic, while knowing that Golden Dawn, the extreme Greek right, was also waiting for its turn in ambush. This victory in the parliamentary elections came after Greece had been brought to its knees by five years of austerity imposed by the troika, the European Commission and Greece's own political representatives. Austerity had destroyed all the public services that founded the social pact of contemporary democratic societies, education, culture health and even the right to food survival.

The infant mortality rate was climbing again. The country had gone through the sequence any country goes through during wartime. But this victory has in fact remained without a glorious tomorrow. First, because institutional Europe had warned it would not let a democratic vote call into question the ordo-liberalism. It thus explained that peoples were no longer called to democratic elections but to rituals which, if they did not do their expected ritual work, namely to restore order after a moment of effervescence, would simply no longer be considered. Organized yes, but no longer considered. So the war continued in Greece, the country was sold at auction, and in a frightening way, it was similar to the diabetic illness, because the Greeks couldn't get treatment they filled the public space with new "broken mouths" to the amputated limbs. In Greece, the debt is paid and it shows.

What was at stake then was the abandonment in open country of a collective European ideal already well under way. Too few Europeans felt responsible for what happened on European soil in Greece. Whether they liked all the Erasmus programs or almost none. The expressions of support for the Greek people remained sporadic, extremely weak, as if the ordo-liberalism had been internalized as the new and only human nature of Europe.

The French President, François Hollande, who campaigned in 2012 saying that he would support the Greek cause, has never wavered. The warning given in Greece was a threat to the whole of Europe: this is what will happen to you if you protest, if you continue to believe in your sovereign power as a people, as a citizen, as a human being. It does not matter that SYRIZA immediately fought against tax exemptions, tax evasion and corruption. To obtain the promised European aid, the new Greek government would have to give up the real autonomy of its policy, just a few weeks after its installation.

It is in this sequence that the assertion, like an Open Secret, has been circulated, namely that according to the major banks, the next country concerned by the need to comply more convincingly with the liberalism would be France.

Still too inclined to maintain the achievements of the history of the labor movement with its law of expensive labor, its pensions and its

social security. France, French people should understand that it was an anachronistic anomaly. The age of Fordism and colonial outlets was over and so was the way of life.

But France was not Greece, it had more people, as well as a history of revolutionary anger. It was not necessary to play with fire. They would be playing with regulations and the law and integrating social conflicts as risks to be managed. In the end, it changed very little in the model. It would be part of the model. Here too, the public debt and therefore the cost of public services had to be reduced.

In 2010, a circular already stated that all state operators, including universities and research organizations, should “participate in the effort to control public finances and employment under conditions identical to that of the State”. In plain, explicit language, this means that one in two public jobs will not be renewed. Fewer doctors, nurses, professors, researchers, public theatres, public scenes, culture, railway workers, secretaries, billings... Less civil servants, less agents, less money spent to support the pillars of democratic life after 1945, after Nazism, after collaboration. The public services founding the unity of the territory, social equity, equal educational opportunities, but also guarantors of the inventiveness, creativity still protected by an original social pact, all of this was gradually becoming a thing of the past. Change of regime by progressive glaciation. The numerical procedural reason obliterates the sensitive reason. The thought of the immeasurable vanishes in the calculation of the return on investment.

The money fetish triumphs, annuitants receive their annuities, they accumulate them in tax havens. It will be necessary to smooth the curve of public jobs and to provide “forecasts of the management of jobs” three times a year, it is necessary to bring down, at all costs, the public payroll. Then comes the supposed optimization of purchases. Others in the private sector at the same time optimize their taxes. Finally, contemporaneous with the Greek crisis, on 23 June 2015, the circular that leads to a kind of trusteeship of all the State agencies and therefore of public service is entitled “reinforcement of the management dialogue with a view to controlling expenditures”.

The reform of the State does not date from this budgetary and public accounting management voted by the right side as well as the left side of the assembly in 2012, but rather from the LOLF vote in 2001, which was fully implemented in 2006 and which reorganized the financial framework of French political life. It has been said that the LOF vote in 2001 modernized and transformed the state-ministry and bureaucracy described by Max Weber into a state-enterprise. So the manager replaces the bureaucrat. The bureaucrat sometimes applied political decisions in a haphazard way. The manager subordinates political decisions to budgetary constraints.

Public policy disappears, politics disappears with the injunctions of “Bercy”, the Department of Finance. What allowed the LOLF to become part of the mores of the public service and of the departments was its

depoliticization. The slogan that accompanied its implementation in the seminars, trainings and intranet was: “The LOLF is neither right nor left”. This was immediately stated on the benches of the National Assembly in 2001. On February 7, 2001, Raymond Forni thanked the opposition members for understanding that the “monitoring the effectiveness of spending was neither right nor left, but merely a prerequisite for political choices in the noble sense of the word”. He was applauded both by the right and left deputies. This «new public management» is a tool of the European ordo-liberalism, and is accompanied by a new language: performance, governance, Benchmark, steering, strategy, operational objectives etc. The more the new language penetrated, the more this concept of the obliteration of politics became naturalized and the more the border between the right and the left became fragile. So, neither right nor left. This is an historical situation.

Chronicle of an embedded impotence

In this situation, have all Europeans passively witnessed the (definitive?) collapse of all political hope in Europe? Have we buried the hopes of civic action and new political forces that result from this action? Was there some kind of collective preference for disaster, a race to the abyss?

There were many ways out of this passivity. We could put pressure on our governments to abandon their positions as servants of financial interests, we could build new networks of solidarity, build on the common, refuse to invoke the sacrosanct growth without worrying about its content, fight against unnecessary big projects and defend those who put human development at the heart of political and economic choices.

We cannot say that nothing was attempted.

The Greek question, for example, has led individuals in a stubborn but sporadic way to raise the alarm as if on board a high-speed train. Many accounts of unbearable pain have tried to warn the Europeans, the French, of what was happening to the Greeks. A survey conducted in December 2011 by Ariane Monnier produced a series of filmed complaints presented in the newspaper Mediapart and screened in 2014 at the BPI in Paris. The *Volkshochschulen* of the 18th arrondissement of Paris had taken the initiative of a political proposal entitled “De peuple à peuple, interdemos”. It was a project of political solidarity with Greece through a vast fund-raising campaign for field actions in all fields (health, food, education, culture, housing, over-indebtedness, legal advice, aid to migrants).

The whole was federated in Greece by the Solidarity for All platform (solidarity4all) which received the funds and was also linked to Great Britain. This concrete utility was also the instrument of an explicit political project in the appeal: We must be constituted as a common people with solidarity in the face of what has come to destroy the very idea of all democratic control. Let us organize true social and political solidarity as a new democratic control”. The objective of this collection was both very ambitious with a desire to collect 300,000 € minimum, and

very modest in comparison with the needs. Political action was to use the money as a means of action with human ties. Not a penny of that money should go to paying down the debt. Each euro had to express the refusal of citizens to allow themselves to be pitted against each other, a commitment not to allow our common political body to be marred by policies that lead us to resentment and abyss. A lot of money was raised, around 200,000 euros, but only 1,500 people responded to this call that only Médiapart in the French press had agreed to relay.

Laure Vermeersch, a young filmmaker, directed a documentary called *Alcyons* which shows how a marriage is prepared thanks to these new solidarities in Athens. The first talks took place in front of the landfill of Phylée, the poorest district of the city, and the ecological disaster became the backdrop of what the interlocutors called "class struggle". In this film Georgia, which orchestrates Phylée's solidarity, states: We are in an economic war. They want to destroy us. That's what drives me crazy, "There were fewer deaths during the war than suicides in Greece today." Where politics is torn, the civility of Phylée's solidarity restores and strengthens a society that must rebuild. It is less a matter of inventing rituals than of reinvesting them when they could disappear in this crisis. To dehumanize a people is to eliminate the possibility that it maintains its rituals around life and death. To refuse to be dehumanized is to maintain them. This marriage restores the humanity of all, from close to close, and that is why everyone finds meaning and interest in it, that is, in relation to others. Marriage is an opportunity to realize "a society of mutual and daily relief". The wedding dress at the fripier made it possible to dream this marriage and it was in fact offered to Marilena, but also to all, so that the marriage could take place as a real marriage, within a real community.

This film was screened at the University Paris Diderot, and then at Tenons et mortaises at the exhibition of the magazine of 2015, in an evening of the Volkshochschule of the 18th arrondissement, UP 18, in an evening organized in the Greek pavilion of the international university city. It was screened again as part of the Horspistes 2018 festival at the BPI in early February.

Why do we have to insist with these stubborn, fragile little gestures?

Because in Greece and everywhere else, the problem is that of European promises are permanently damaged: peace, social and cultural emancipation, and a promise for an ecological transition that would create an opportunity for a tremendous collective reinvention, but this incentive is constantly being pushed back by short-sighted lobbyists. To support the Greeks in this arm-wrestling sequence was to help create the emergence for new anti-fatalist tendency in France and more generally in Europe. To support the Greeks affirmed that another policy, another economy, is possible that differs from those that have been presented to us for years throughout Europe as natural necessities by so-called "governing" parties. It is not a question of re-establishing oneself as a citizen opposed to the economic policies decided by our leaders, who

are so authoritarian and so uncreative. Those who were involved in this movement wanted to let themselves know that it is "Beautiful traditions of popular solidarity and mutuality: modest, but perennial, capable of producing a daily outfit and perhaps a common future."

The exit from political impotence seemed at hand. For this sequence of resistance was creative. Those who were engaged in these actions knew that loosening the grip would not be enough, that it was also necessary to think about future investments, renegotiating debts by fighting against financial oligarchs or complicit governments, redeploy credit and money creation in a non speculative way, redirecting investments towards needs to be identified and measured collectively. The "shocked citizens" who had formed themselves were not resigned to the technocratic crushing of public decision-making, nor to the nationalistic and xenophobic withdrawal of those who have been left behind for too long. The historic moment we were living through seemed to hesitate between major regressions and promising renewals.

In fact, this method of doing politics has not produced the support hoped for towards the Greek people, But despite everything, numerous citizen movements have arisen in a strange context where terrorism has invited itself to the table of history and has come to hinder the first impulses, however without preventing them.

In Spain, the movement of places had given the signal to a democratic renewal, in France it was the movement of the Zads, around the Coop 21, the initiatives taken against the state of emergency, the *Nuit Debout* movement against the labor law. Each of these gestures led to the gathering, inventing, and the production of the embodied experience of a strong utopian desire. People came together and disbanded, they came into conflict and gave up, sometimes leaving places on tiptoes, sometimes explaining that the lack of strategy led to these disorderly self-governing wills in a stalemate. Far from articulating the differences between class struggle, ecological struggle, struggle for civil liberties, struggles for the rights of foreigners, the Syrian question, the long habit of choosing a specific struggle rather than thinking their intersection, has made each investment derisory because it's too fragile.

The testimony of resistant subjectivities took precedence over political action, the demon of the internalization of defeat and powerlessness finally ruled the situation. Some sincerely regretted it, others considered that they were finally not there to win against the state of emergency, the labor law, etc., but to prepare for the fantasy future of another world, so far from the present that it became despairing to continue any dialogue.

In France, in this sequence, came the idea of fabricating a citizen's candidacy for the presidential elections, of bringing out a «name». But it is the very name of citizen candidacy that has become the object of trafficking. There have been citizen candidates with a lot of rhetoric and Emmanuel Macron himself has been able to pass himself off as such a new figure who would appeal to new elected officials, from society

rather than so-called government parties. He would build a movement in motion like history and would know how to recover all the patient work of the struggles against hegemony that had spread since 2005 and the referendum on the draft European constitution, 2008 and the sub-crisis awards, 2011 and the Arab Spring, 2015 and the victory of Syriza and Tsipras. It's called pulling the chestnuts out of the fire.

Had the elections in Greece marked a turning point in spite of everything? Perhaps not, they may have been just another symptom, but in fact there was a citizen's situation unfolding in disorder, not without illusions and sometimes even stupidity. The open door, far from allowing the emergence of something new from decades of destruction, opened to an acceleration in the form of a hold-up. The populist hold-up that declares itself everywhere the people solicited is not that of a myriad of active horizontal ties but is manufactured by a vertical link with a charismatic leader figure, that we love and hate, but each of us accepts, no matter what.

In France, this populist factory was organized on the left with Mélenchon, on the far right with Marine Le Pen, on the extreme neoliberal center with Emmanuel Macron. Everywhere in Europe it is present under more or less recognizable clothes anchored in extreme right-wing traditions or in more complex forms of political arrangements when technocracy fires all fire. It is necessary to remember the French history of Uriage where Hubert Beuve Mery supported first the national revolution of the Vichy regime then played the weather vanes when the wind turned in favor of General de Gaulle. The latter entrusted him with the creation of the World, the newspaper par excellence of the elites. But every country in Europe has its demons which it works to suppress or to split with more or less happiness. The Europeans came out badly of the Second World War and populism in all its forms may be the symptom everywhere.

Victory of European technocratic standards

Emanuel Macron became president and had full powers through his majority in the assembly and through his powers as president of the fifth republic. He constructed the most destructive neoliberal policy we have ever seen. Last, the Pari airport was sold off just like Athens airport. Melenchon's *insoumis* testify instead of playing politics because without a strategy of union, they are not strong enough. Without a balance of power in society and without a balance of power in the Assembly, France is an open country. This creates a historical weightlessness of a Start-up without a past, but with a future. One could draw out the pamphlets of the seventeenth century on the sighs of slave France. The undocumented who really know what they are talking about, headline their newspaper "tyranny on the move".

An aggravated labor law is now passed, do the European banks still have France on their list? It seems to have fallen in line. The state of emergency and its myriad of measures destructive of civil liberties is part of ordinary law.

National education, university and culture are the next places that will allow us to adjust spending. The Public Action Committee 2022 is responsible for "reforming the State" in order to reduce public spending, far from democratic control. Private organizations' persons chaired it. This committee is tasked with writing a "report identifying significant and sustainable structural reforms and economies across the public administration spectrum". To this end, it added in the circular that this committee will question the desirability of maintaining and the degree to which each public policy is carried through. This may in particular lead it to propose transfers between the various levels of public authorities, transfers to the private sector, or even abandonment of mission».

That's what it says, "abandonment of mission".

Then the arrival of Emmanuel Macron to power was the smiling little *Mahagony*, of white-collar gangsters who take over the family jewels of a democratic form of life that becomes, strictly speaking, "historical".

Democracy based on the equality of citizens before the law, equity in access to knowledge, culture and education, this foundation as a sacred good that underpins the dignity of each person in a democracy, is over. For it to come back one day, we'll have to win it back and fight, but probably this time we need to accept the weapons of political strategy and tactics, lost since the 1980s, and accept that the yellow vests had to reinvent themselves gradually by regularly encountering what they did not yet know: the violence of a post-truth and post-democracy regime.

The refusal of conflict

This situation was of course up to the actors, to us, to all those who had not managed to convince us that it was necessary to avoid this and to those, all those who were finally relieved not to have to now pursue a real political fight, since with Macron we would have the perfect tool that avoids it, being neither right nor left and being able to avoid the worst by blocking the National Front. The beavers were happy. The dam could hold because the FN was no longer alive.

But what was that relief?

It was the one who was born of the possibility of living in the barred memory of the conflict, what Nicole Loraux¹ calls "the non-vectorized time of history", the one "encysted of oblivion that politics is by itself conflict", an oversight that therefore allows us to renounce democratic conflict, which allows us to refuse the victory of 99% over the 1% provided that we do not have to take risks and fight for real.

This refusal was not born with Macron. It has a long and repetitive history, and it also has strong intellectual support, those who say that actors are little in the future of a society, because the system always prevails, not the intentions. They are the ones who carry a certain renunciation of hot history. The idea that we could take charge of our tragic destiny vanishes in the affirmation that a destiny stronger than

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¹ Nicole Loraux, *Eloge de l'anachronisme*, Paris, *Le genre humain, l'ancien et le nouveau*, 1993.

us will always prevail. In fact, political, historical, destiny is of course a tragic destiny. But in every tragedy men play their role in history. Now it is from this tragedy that the electoral rituals offload us in favor of a hectic buffoonery, where the passions exacerbate as in a carnival and then fall back before everything returns to order and apathy. The real class struggle is made invisible. The powerful remain powerful and smiling. The barred memory of conflict makes cold history. No reworked contradiction, just the movement of the capitalist system that grows and reproduces.

This cold history refers to the vows of François Furet when he affirmed “the French Revolution is over,” drew its sources from the soil of an understanding of structures, not as components of historical life, but as an obstacle to a thought of the time of the event, of the true event, that which makes subjective and not wrinkle break on the soft surface of the monster. The event that manufactures new groups in fusion in the manner of the Sartre’s *Critique of Dialectic Reason*, the one where one is aware that one is neither simple agent nor fully actor of a situation, but that nevertheless, we are responsible for it and that we have a role to play in it on a mode other than that of buffoonery or stupidity, unable to analyze our situations taking into account our demons, *practical-inertia*, incapable of strategy and tactic, caught in the quicksand of these mists, or sometimes small lonely collectives of Doomsayers who remain inaudible and lose their voice.

That in this cold history we are only agents of a system that is born of itself explains in part the impossible strategic thinking, because the strategy involves making choices, discriminating, coming into conflict precisely, and to admit that one may be mistaken in one’s choices, but that one must nevertheless choose and thus tear oneself up on the evaluation of the strategy and yet unite upstream and downstream of the conflict, once the strategy has been chosen. Let us recognize that the debate on the left side with Jean Luc Mélenchon was nevertheless, on the one hand, a strategic debate. People constituted from the outside by the offer of imago, or patient work of a constitution in interiority by a deliberative space, these are two strategies that have clashed, that emanate from the institutions of the fifth republic, which would be radically opposed to them. But without valuing the deliberative space, there is simply no strategic debate but affirmation of a strategy that turns out to be an individual bet within the framework of the liberticidal institutions of the Fifth Republic.

The Love of Leaders

The second immobile layer of time is that which, contiguous to the first, gives it its power: it is a love of leaders. This haunting love is also repetitive, voluntary servitude said La Boétie analyzed by Miguel Abensour². For Claude Lefort³, this desire for leadership is at the very heart of democracy,

2 Miguel Abensour, *La Boétie, prophète de la liberté*, Paris, Sens et Tonka, 2018.

3 « La dissolution des repères et l’enjeu démocratique » in *Le temps présent, Ecrits 1945-2005*, Belin, 2007.

which requires many of its actors. Yes, democracy demands confronting the tragic, the responsibility, the contradictions, the conflict, the anguish of uncertainty, the disappointment in the face of the tragic error. In short, this democratic condition is not easy and Jean Renoir is right to compare love for the Revolution, the love of emancipation that comes, with erotic love. For it is the same requirements that then point and make life intense, but also uncertain, the same requirements that sometimes make us as fragile as solid.

It is in this inadequacy of democracy that leaders can find their power of seduction. Claude Lefort theorized that true democracy rested on an empty place, empty in his heart and indispensable to freedom. The playing space that appears with living democracy, disappears as soon as the place is occupied by a leader, king or party leader, a reassuring and paternal figure, this occupation causes democratic beings to return to the situation of children whom love their parents because they are supposed to protect them from adversity and uncertainty. The place of the leader can also be occupied by a solid ideology, to which everyone can identify, and democratic indeterminacy then also breaks out in favor of almost divine certainties, in fact “Jupiterian”.

With Emmanuel Macron, the country has to deal with a remarkable combination, the naturalized neoliberal ideology and the leader who is there to apply it. Explaining that the French want this empty place to be occupied from now on, means a strong and active executive which, thanks to its real will, will transform the country from top to bottom, What he’s proposing is to turn everyone to little, carefree children again. Reckless in the face of terrorism, in the face of war, in the face of entrepreneurial domination at the heart of all our public and private institutions, in spite of the slavery which once again becomes a banal evil in a Libya with a European shadow as well as in the heart of Europe with the relocation on the spot described by Emmanuel Terray. Not only does it return a time when the king was the father of his people, able to protect all his children, but it reinvents this figure by making it the height of the efficiency of democratic institutions. When Emmanuel Macron asserts that the French have not recovered from the trauma of terror, and the death of the king, it categorizes the country on the right side of the Estate Assembly that has not tolerated justice for the high treason crime of a monarch who fled abroad to wage war on his people and betrayed his oaths from 1790 to 1792. The left side was certainly sad to have to killed the king, but he knew that since his escape and his arrest his place as the paternal ruler of France was empty. He felt that not only could the king not be replaced, but that it was not necessary, no dictatorship, no powerful executive among the Republicans of Year II, no personalization of power. We will have to assume the freedom we have won. We will have to assume our human condition, our tragic condition. This way of subverting the democratic ideal born in in Revolutionary France is the epitome of our situation.

Yellow vests as a symptom

In this configuration the Yellow Vests chose the French Revolution to build their scenario, march of women, take of the Bastille, oath of palm play, guillotine, Varenne... and even trial of "the king" in reality by building a case for the International Criminal Court, also in simulacrum.

Reference to the French Revolution has of course become ambiguous when not only the signage (phrygian caps, flags, Marseilles), but even the revolutionary texts were invested upstream by the extreme right-wing amalgamation of Soral, of the march for all, then by the controversial red caps of 2013. Often like Macron, this French Revolution was presented as neither right nor left, or even presented explicitly to the right. We find this difficulty in the use that the Yellow Vests have made and make of the French Revolution. But the phenomenon of the French Revolution was itself conflictual, and the movement of the Yellow Vests had this undeniable quality, restoring this conflictual dimension to it by multiple appropriations, that it is no longer possible to make the founding event a unified myth. This does not preclude the desire for "united popular classes". But popular unity is not the homogenization of political sensitivities. The goal is to reinvent a future where these sensitivities could be expressed in conflict but without deadly divisions and meaningless.

For others, it is a question of rejecting a new slavery. "The State is our servant and we do not have to be its slaves". The feeling of being deprived of freedom of speech and judgment, of the freedom to live with dignity, has led to this will of resistance also present in the songs reinvested «resists proves that you exist». "Slavery" belongs to the political vocabulary of the time of the modern despotic state, and we think of the "sighs of slave France" of Jurieu in the 17th century. To wear this statement from a vest that covers the body is to say in a different way than with the red cap, one intends to free oneself from an oppression that has lasted only too long.

Wearing dates and then revolutionary statements on one's vest is a way to make it happen. One saw yellow vests wearing 1789/2019, others writing the full statement of Article 35 of the 1793 declaration. "When the government violates the rights of the people, the uprising is for the people, the most sacred of rights and the most indispensable of duties", others still declare "the people are hungry", reconnecting with the imagination of 1789 and the aristocratic responsibility of a «famine plot», an open-air plot now because the social and economic factors that lead the rich to become richer and the poor to become poorer are well present in the critical skills of yellow vests. "Young people in trouble, old people in poverty, angry people". "For the rich in gold balls for the poor in pasta again". Tax evasion comes to the fore: "ecological transition, stop tax evasion", but also the banking system, "to get out of the misery: exposing the real state of the banking system, separating deposit banks from speculative ones." "A Ric for a national bank and get rid of debt", "Yellow vests = global revolution against finance".

This desire for a revolution, a break at the very least, will have put an end to several evils that have undermined the country as a democracy for a long time.

This desire for revolution will put an end to the rejection of conflicts and if the beginnings of the movement have been lived under the sign of a break with an implicit moral contract between rulers and governed, this moral economy of a protective demand is no longer relevant. The Yellow Vests want to decide. They act to decide their own future and that of their children and no longer believe that they will be protected if it's not by themselves.

This desire for revolution put an end to the desire of leaders who not only fail to manifest themselves but are regularly recused by the Yellow Vests. Whether it's the chief electoral officer, the sole chief strategist, the head of assembly, the master to think, they are absent. There were only messengers, facilitators, organizers who offered their services without acquiring vertically the monopoly of the elaboration, the talent, the intelligence. This intelligence remains collective and deliberative. As Claude Lefort said, the place of power remains empty. In a democracy, he explained, the Authority basically belongs to no one. Some individuals have a limited amount of time to exercise responsibilities, but the power itself remains "unthinkable, infigurable, indeterminate". Isn't that a good definition of what the Yellow Vests are inventing right now?

The national, Europe, the cosmopolitan

There is in this social imagination a rediscovery of foundations which some had perhaps too quickly declared obsolete. To revisit the French Revolution is to affirm a desire for democratic radicality as a return to the roots of a national history. This revolution thus offers two imaginary sides that of the Frexit as Priscillia Ludosky says also that of a new cosmopolitan.

«In any case, it has raised a question: that of the «Frexit» which comes up a lot in the debates that are organized by the Yellow Vests in the departments. People are wondering whether we should continue to be part of Europe. The possibility of questioning certain treaties is a matter that goes beyond borders. There is a surge in political consciousness right now. We've been on standby for years and people are asking questions of all kinds, including the question of leaving the European Union.

«The European Union must be questioned in its fundamentals»

This distrust of Europe has increased since the 2005 referendum, which was flouted and which they nevertheless made a treaty through the Lisbon Treaty in 2007. National opinions are ignored, and that calls into question our place in the community, as well as our legitimacy in making certain decisions and giving our overall opinion. The opening of consciences to sovereign stakes is in full swing.

We had given the European Union its chance. The positive points do not prevent the global problem. The original idea was a community

that had to act collectively in the interests of European citizens. The reality is the muzzling of citizens. The European Union must therefore be questioned in its fundamentals."

I wouldn't call it international support. I would say that we support each other when it comes to coordinated actions at the borders, for example. On the other hand, the movements were not born out of support for France, but because they realized that there were also some things that did not work and that they had their say. The Yellow Vest movement has awakened a certain political consciousness in countries that face problems identical to ours. All citizens of the European Union must feel concerned.

This gives a little more credibility to our movement, since we say to ourselves that we are not completely crazy to go out on the street every Saturday to denounce fiscal and social inequalities. And when we denounce what is wrong with Europe, it makes sense if the European peoples speak with one voice."

This is where we are.

*Sophie Wahnich, senior research fellow, CNRS,
August 26, 2019.*

Which Idea of Europe is Worth Defending?

Slavoj Žižek

Abstract: This paper is a critical examination of the current situation on Europe. It discusses the calls of left-liberals to rethink the values of Europe, then continues in discussing the rise of populism, explains its limits and shows why populism is never a solution to the deadlocks of contemporary capitalism. At the end, it briefly discusses what is in Europe that is worth defending and rethinking, reinventing.

Keywords: Populism, Eurocentrism, the left, emancipation, Communism

In January 2019, one of the most disgusting and misdirected public proclamations appeared in our media: a group of 30 writers, historians and Nobel laureates - Bernard-Henri Lévy, Milan Kundera, Salman Rushdie, Orhan Pamuk, Mario Vargas Llosa, Adam Michnik... - published a manifesto in several newspapers all around Europe, including the Guardian in the UK. They claimed that Europe as an idea is “coming apart before our eyes”: “We must now will Europe or perish beneath the waves of populism,” they wrote. “We must rediscover political voluntarism or accept that resentment, hatred and their cortege of sad passions will surround and submerge us.”¹ This manifesto is deeply flawed: just carefully reading it makes it clear why populists are thriving. Its signatories – the flower of European liberal intelligence - ignore the unpleasant fact that the populists also present themselves as the saviors of Europe. The catch is, of course: which Europe?

In an interview on July 15 2018, just after attending a stormy meeting with the EU leaders, Trump mentioned European Union as the first in the line of “foes” of the US, ahead of Russia and China. Instead of condemning this claim as irrational (“Trump is treating the allies of the US worse than its enemies,” etc.), we should ask a simple question: what bothers Trump so much about EU? Which Europe is Trump talking about? When he was asked by journalists about immigrants flowing into Europe, he answered as it befits the anti-immigrant populist that he is: immigrants are tearing apart the fabric of European mores and ways of life, they pose a danger to European spiritual identity... in short, it was people like Orban or Salvini who were talking through him. One should never forget that they also want to defend Europe – Europe as part of a new world order whose contours were clearly discernible at the meeting of the heads of G20 in July 2019 in Osaka.

The surrounding events provided a sad view: Trump exchanging love messages with Kim Yong Un and inviting him to the White House, Putin jovially clapping hands with BMS, and so on, with Merkel and Tusk, the two voices of old European reason, marginalized and mostly ignored. This

¹ Available online at <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2019/jan/25/fight-europe-wreckers-patriots-nationalist>

New World Order is very tolerant: they are all respecting each other, no one is imposing on others imperialist Eurocentrist notions like women's rights... This new spirit is best encapsulated by the interview Putin gave to Financial Times on the eve of the Osaka summit; in it he, as expected, lambasted the "liberal idea," claiming that it "outlived its purpose." Riding on the wave of the "public turned against immigration, open borders and multiculturalism", Putin's evisceration of liberalism "chimes with anti-establishment leaders from US president Donald Trump to Hungary's Viktor Orban, Matteo Salvini in Italy, and the Brexit insurgency in the UK. "[Liberals] cannot simply dictate anything to anyone just like they have been attempting to do over the recent decades," he said. Mr Putin branded Chancellor Angela Merkel's decision to admit more than 1m refugees to Germany, mainly from war-ravaged Syria, as a "cardinal mistake". But he praised Donald Trump for trying to stop the flow of migrants and drugs from Mexico. "This liberal idea presupposes that nothing needs to be done. That migrants can kill, plunder and rape with impunity because their rights as migrants have to be protected." He added: "Every crime must have its punishment. The liberal idea has become obsolete. It has come into conflict with the interests of the overwhelming majority of the population.""²

There is no surprise here, and the same holds for how Donald Tusk, the European Council president, reacted to Putin: "What I find really obsolete is authoritarianism, personality cults and the rule of oligarchs" – a toothless assertion of empty principles which avoids the roots of the crisis. Liberal optimists desperately cling to good signs here and there (the strong Leftist turn of the US younger generation; the fact that Trump got 3 million less votes than Clinton and that his victory was more the result of the manipulations with electoral districts; re-emergence of European liberal Left in countries like Slovakia...), but they are not strong to affect the basic global trend.

The only interesting feature of Putin's interview, the point at which one can feel how he really speaks from his heart, occurs when he solemnly declares his zero tolerance for spies who betrayed their country: "Treason is the gravest crime possible and traitors must be punished. I am not saying that the Salisbury incident is the way to do it /.../ but traitors must be punished." It is clear from this outburst that Putin has no personal sympathy for Snowden or Assange: he just helps them to annoy his enemies, and one can only imagine the fate of an eventual Russian Snowden or Assange. One can only wonder at some Western Leftists who continue to claim that, in spite of his socially-conservative stance, Putin still nonetheless poses an obstacle to the US world domination and should for this reason be viewed with sympathy

² Available online at: <https://www.ft.com/content/670039ec-98f3-11e9-9573-ee5cbb98ed36>.

Every authentic Leftist should ferociously oppose the claim that treason (the betrayal of one's own nation-state) is the gravest crime possible: no, there are circumstances when such treason is the greatest act of ethical fidelity. Today, such treason is personified by names like Assange, Manning, and Snowden. The reason is today's global predicament with its three main apocalyptic threats (ecology, digital control, migrations). The moment we fully accept the fact that we live on a Spaceship Earth, the task that urgently imposes itself is that of civilizing civilizations themselves, of imposing universal solidarity and cooperation among all human communities, a task rendered all the more difficult by the ongoing rise of sectarian religious and ethnic "heroic" violence and readiness to sacrifice oneself (and the world) for one's specific Cause. Reason thus compels us to commit treason here: to betray our Cause, to refuse to participate in the ongoing war games. If we really care for the fate of the people who compose our nation, our motto should be: America last, China last, Russia last... If by "pathology" we mean an unhealthy deviation which threatens our lives, the "X first" policy is the only true pathology today.

And this brings us back to the European emancipatory legacy which is incompatible with the "X first" policy and which bothers Trump as well as the European populists. It is the Europe of transnational unity, the Europe vaguely aware that, in order to cope with the challenges of our moment, we should move beyond the constraints of nation-states; the Europe which also desperately strives to somehow remain faithful to the old Enlightenment motto of solidarity with victims, the Europe aware of the fact that humanity is today One, that we are all on the same boat (or, as we say, on the same Spaceship Earth), so that other's misery is also our problem. We should mention here Peter Sloterdijk who noted that the struggle today is how to secure the survival of modern Europe's greatest economico-political achievement, the Social Democratic Welfare State. According to Sloterdijk, our reality is - in Europe, at least - "objective Social Democracy" as opposed to the "subjective" Social Democracy: one should distinguish between Social Democracy as the panoply of political parties and Social Democracy as the "formula of a system" which "precisely describes the political-economic order of things, which is defined by the modern state as the state of taxes, as infrastructure-state, as the state of the rule of law and, not last, as the social state and the therapy state": "We encounter everywhere a phenomenal and a structural Social Democracy, a manifest and a latent one, one which appears as a party and another one which is more or less irreversibly built into in the very definitions, functions, and procedures of the modern statehood as such."³

This Idea that underlies united Europe got corrupted, half-forgotten, and it is only in a moment of danger that we are compelled to return to

³ Sloterdijk 2009.

this essential dimension of Europe, to its hidden potential. Europe lies in the great pincers between America on the one side and Russia on the other who both want to dismember it: both Trump and Putin support Brexit, they support euro-sceptics in every corner, from Poland to Italy. What is bothering them about Europe when we all know the misery of the EU which fails again and again at every test: from its inability to enact a consistent politics about immigrants to its miserable reaction to Trump's tariff war? It is obviously not this actually-existing Europe but the idea of Europe that kindles against all odds and becomes palpable in the moments of danger. The problem of Europe is to remain faithful to its emancipatory legacy threatened by the conservative-populist onslaught. In his Notes Towards a Definition of Culture, the great conservative T.S.Eliot remarked that there are moments when the only choice is the one between heresy and non-belief, when the only way to keep a religion alive is to perform a sectarian split from its main corpse. This is what has to be done today: the only way to really defeat populists and to redeem what is worth saving in liberal democracy is to perform a sectarian split from liberal democracy's main corpse. Sometimes, the only way to resolve a conflict is not to search for a compromise but to radicalize one's position.

Back to the letter of the 30 liberal luminaries: what they refuse to admit is that the Europe whose disappearance they deplore is already irretrievably lost. The threat does not come from populism: populism is merely a reaction to the failure of the Europe's liberal establishment to remain faithful to Europe's emancipatory potentials, offering a false way out of ordinary people's troubles. So the only way to really defeat populism is to submit the liberal establishment itself, its actual politics, to a ruthless critique... However, a strong part of today's European Left offers its own version of this ruthless critique: Left populism. Will this work?

What makes today's racist populism so dangerous is not only its claim to represent ordinary people's real worries, but its democratic legitimization. This is how "Fascism which smells like democracy" operates today: it IS in some sense genuinely democratic, it stands for a new mode of functioning of democracy – to criticize it, one should criticize dangerous potentials that are inherent to democracy itself. So should the Left copy it to achieve the same success? The latest trend in the vagaries of Leftist politics is effectively a weird version of MeToo: the Left should learn from the rise of the Rightist populism, WeToo can play the populist game... We are repeatedly told that Left populism is de facto winning and it works – but where and how does it work? Everywhere where it became a serious force, from Latin America to Spain's Podemos, it stumbled upon a fatal limit.

According to Left populists, the main reason for the defeat of the Left is the non-combative stance of rational argumentation and lifeless universalism in theory epitomized by the names of Giddens, Beck, and Habermas. This post-political Third Way cannot combat in an efficient way the agonistic logic of Us against Them successfully mobilized by

anti-immigrant Rightist populists. Consequently, the way to combat this Rightist populism is to have a recourse to Left populism which, while retaining the basic populist coordinates (agonistic logic of Us against Them, of the "people" against a corrupted elite), fills them in with a Leftist content: Them are not poor refugees or immigrants but financial capital, technocratic state bureaucracy, etc. This populism moves beyond the old working class anti-capitalism, it tries to bring together a multiplicity of struggles from ecology to feminism, from the right to employment to free education and healthcare, etc., as Podemos is doing in Spain...

With regard to pragmatic dispassionate politics of rational compromise, one should first note that the ideology of neoliberalism (also in its liberal-Left version) is anything but "rational": it is EXTREMELY confrontational, it brutally excludes those who do not accept it as dangerous anti-democratic utopians, its expert knowledge is ideology at its purest, etc. The problems with the Third Way Left (which endorsed neoliberal economics) was not that it was too pragmatic-rational, but that it was precisely not truly rational – it was permeated by unprincipled pragmatism which in advance endorses the opponent's premises. Leftist politics today does not need (just) confrontational passion, it needs much more true cold rationality. Cold analysis and passionate struggle not only do not exclude each other, they need each other.

The formula of agonistic politicization, of passionate confrontation, directed against lifeless universalism, is precisely all too formal – it ignores the big question that lurks in the background: why did the Left abandon the agonistic logic of Us against Them decades ago? Was it not because of the deep structural changes in capitalism, changes which cannot be confronted by means of simple populist mobilization? The Left abandoned antagonistic confrontation because it failed in its struggle with capitalism, because it accepted the global triumph of capitalism. As Peter Mandelson said, in economy, we are all Thatcherites, so all that remains to the Left is the multiplicity of particular struggles: human rights, feminism, anti-racism, and specially multiculturalism. (It is interesting to note that Ernesto Laclau, the theoretical father of Left populism, first enthusiastically greeted Blair's Third Way politics - as a liberation from class essentialism, etc. -, and only later targeted it as the mode of non-antagonistic politics.

Podemos undoubtedly stands for populism at its best: against the arrogant Politically Correct intellectual elites which despise the "narrowness" of the ordinary people considered "stupid" for "voting against their interests," its organizing principle is to listen to and organize those "from below" against those "from above," beyond all traditional Left and Right models. The idea is that the starting point of emancipatory politics should be the concrete experience of the suffering and injustices of ordinary people in their local life-world (home quarter, workplace, etc.), not abstract visions of a future Communist

or whatsoever society. (Although the new digital media seem to open up the space for new communities, the difference between these new communities and the old life-world communities is crucial: these old communities are not chosen, I am born into them, they form the very space of my socialization, while the new (digital) communities include me into a specific domain defined by my interests and thus depending on my choice. Far from making the old “spontaneous” communities deficient, the fact that they do not rely on my free choice makes them superior with regard to the new digital communities since they compel me to find my way into a pre-existing not-chosen life-world in which I encounter (and have to learn to deal with) real differences, while the new digital communities depending on my choice sustain the ideological myth of the individual who somehow pre-exists a communal life and is free to choose it.) While this approach undoubtedly contains a (very big) grain of truth, its problem is that, to put it bluntly, not only, as Laclau liked to emphasize, society doesn’t exist, but “people” also doesn’t exist.

This thesis is not to be taken as an abstract theoretical statement about the inconsistency that traverse the social body: it refers to a quite concrete, even experiential, fact. “People” is a false name for the social totality – in our global capitalism, totality is “abstract,” invisible, there is no way to ground it in concrete life-worlds. In other words, in today global capitalist universe, a “concrete experience” of being a member of a particular life-world with its customs, living links, forms of solidarity, etc., is already something “abstract” in the strict sense of a particular experience which obliterates the thick network of financial, social, etc., processes which rule and regulate this concrete particular world. Here Podemos will encounter problems if it will at some point take power: what specific economic measures (beyond the standard Keynesian bag of tricks) will it enact to limit the power of the capital?

Both traps are to be avoided here: the false radicalism (“what really matters is the abolition of liberal-parliamentary capitalism, all other fights are secondary”), as well as the false gradualism (“now we fight against military dictatorship and for simple democracy, forget your Socialist dreams, this comes later – maybe...”). When we have to deal with a specific struggle, the key question is: how will our engagement in it or disengagement from it affect other struggles? The general rule is that, when a revolt begins against an oppressive half-democratic regime, as was the case in the Middle East in 2011, it is easy to mobilize large crowds with slogans which one cannot but characterize as crowd pleasers – for democracy, against corruption, etc. But then we gradually approach more difficult choices: when our revolt succeeds in its direct goal, we come to realize that what really bothered us (our un-freedom, humiliation, social corruption, lack of prospect of a decent life) goes on in a new guise. In Egypt, protesters succeeded to get rid of the oppressive Mubarak regime, but corruption remained, and the prospect of a decent life moved even further away. After the overthrow of an

authoritarian regime, the last vestiges of patriarchal care for the poor can fall away, so that the newly gained freedom is de facto reduced to the freedom to choose the preferred form of one’s misery – the majority not only remains poor, but, to add insult to injury, it is being told that, since they are now free, poverty is their own responsibility. In such a predicament, we have to admit that there was a flaw in our goal itself, that this goal was not specific enough – say, that standard political democracy can also serve as the very form of un-freedom: political freedom can easily provide the legal frame for economic slavery, with the underprivileged “freely” selling themselves into servitude. We are thus brought to demand more than just political democracy: we have to admit that what we first took as the failure to fully realize a noble principle (of democratic freedom) is a failure inherent to this principle itself – understanding this is the big step of political pedagogy.

This brings us back to the fateful limit of populism. Laclau insisted on the necessity to construct some figure of Enemy as immanent to populism – it is not its weakness, but the resource of its strength. Left populism should construct a different figure of the Enemy, not the threatening racial Other (immigrant, Jew, Muslim...) but the financial elites, fundamentalists, and other “usual suspects” of the progressives. This urge to construct the Enemy is another fatal limitation of populism: today, the ultimate “enemy” is not a concrete social agent but in some sense the system itself, a certain functioning of the system which cannot be easily located into agents. Years ago, Alain Badiou wrote that one doesn’t fight capitalism but its concrete agents – but therein resides the problem since the true target IS capitalism. Today, it seems easy to say that the Enemy is neo-Fascist anti-immigrant nationalism or, in the US, Trump. But the fact remains that the rise of Trump is ultimately the effect of the failure of liberal-democratic consensus, so although one should, of course, not exclude new forms of “anti-Fascist” alliances with the latter, this consensus remains THE thing to be changed. So was I wrong when, in two interviews before the US presidential elections, I preferred Trump to Clinton? No, events which followed proved me right: the victory of Trump threw the establishment into a crisis and opened up the way for the rise of the Left wing of the Democratic Party. If the Trumpian excesses will not mobilize the US Left, then the battle is really lost.

It is because of their focus on concrete enemies that Left populists seem to privilege national sovereignty, the strong nation state, as a defense against global capital (even Auferstehen in Germany basically follows this path). In this way, most of them not only (by definition) endorse populism but even nationalism, presenting their struggle as a defense against international financial capital. Some Left populists in the US already used the term “national socialism”⁴; while, of course,

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4 It happened at the conference of the Union for Radical Economics at Amherst, Massachusetts, in September 2018.

it would be stupid and unfair to claim that they are closet Nazis, one should nonetheless insist that internationalism is a key component of any project of radical emancipation. Whatever critical remarks one sustains against Varoufakis's DIEM, DIEM at least sees clearly that resistance against global capital has to be itself global, a new form of universalism. There definitely are enemies and the topic of conspiracies is not to be simply dismissed. Years ago, Fred Jameson perspicuously noted that in today's global capitalism, things happen which cannot be explained by a reference to some anonymous "logic of the capital" – for example, now we know that the financial meltdown of 2008 was the result of a well-planned "conspiracy" of some financial circles. However, the true task of social analysis still remains to explain how contemporary capitalism opened up the space for such "conspiratorial" interventions. This is also why reference to "greed" and the appeal to capitalists to show social solidarity and responsibility are misplaced: "greed" (search for profit) IS what motivates capitalist expansion, the wager of capitalism IS that acting out of individual greed will contribute to the common good. So, again, instead of focusing on individual greed and approach the problem of growing inequality in moralist terms, the task is to change the system so that it will no longer allow or even solicit "greedy" acting.

The problem we are facing here is best exemplified by what took place a couple of years ago in Croatia. Two public protest gatherings were announced: trade unions called for a protest against the exploding unemployment and poverty (felt very much by ordinary people); Rightist nationalist announced a gathering in order to protest the re-introduction of the official status of Cyrillic writing in Vukovar (because of the Serb minority there). To the first gathering, a couple of hundred people came, and to the second gathering, over one hundred of thousand people came. Poverty was experienced as a daily life problems much more than the Cyrillic threat by ordinary people, and the rhetoric of trade unions didn't lack passion and confrontational spirit, but... One has to accept that some kind of extra-strong economy of jouissance is at work in the identification with one's own "way of life," some core of the Real which is very difficult to rearticulate symbolically. Recall Lenin's shock at the patriotic reaction of Social-Democrats to the outburst of the WWI – people are ready to suffer for their way of life, up to today's refugees who are not ready to "integrate." In short, there are two Reals (the real of capital, the real of ethnic identification) which cannot be dissolved into fluid elements of symbolic hegemony.

How are we to mobilize "our" people to fight for the rights of the refugees and immigrants? In principle, the answer is easy: we should strive to articulate a new ideological space in which the struggle for refugees will be combined with the feminist struggle, ecological struggle, etc. However, such an easy way out is purely rhetorical and runs against the (ideologically determined, of course) "experience" which is very difficult to undo. More profoundly, the catch is that today's

constellation doesn't allow for a direct link between program and the direct experience of "real people." The basic premise of classic Marxism is that, with the central role of the proletariat, humanity found itself in a unique situation in which the deepest theoretical insight found an echo in the most concrete experience of exploitation and alienation – it is, however, deeply questionable if, in today's complex situation, a similar strategy is feasible. Left populists would, of course, insist that this is precisely why we should abandon the Marxist reliance of proletariat as the privileged emancipatory subject and engage in a long and difficult work of constructing new hegemonic "chains of equivalences" without any guarantee of success (there is no assurance that feminist struggle, struggle for freedom, and struggle for the rights immigrants will coalesce in one big Struggle). My point is, however, that even this solution is too abstract and formal. Left populists remind me of a doctor who, when asked by the worried patient what to do, tells him: "Go and see a doctor!" The true problem is not one of formal procedure – a pragmatic search for unity versus antagonist confrontation – but a substantial one: how to strike back at global capital? Do we have an alternative to the global capitalist system? Can we even imagine today an authentic Communist power? What we get is disaster (Venezuela), capitulation (Greece), or a controlled full return to capitalism (China, Vietnam).

So what happens with populist passion here? It disappears, and it has to disappear. When populism takes power, the choice is, to designate it with names, Maduro (passage from genuine populism into its authoritarian version with social decay) or Deng Hsiao-Ping (authoritarian-capitalist normalization, ideological return to Confucius). Populism thrives in a state of emergency, it by definition cannot last. It needs the figure of an external enemy - let us take Laclau's own precise analysis of why one should count Chartism as populism:

Its dominant leitmotiv is to situate the evils of society not in something that is inherent in the economic system, but quite the opposite: in the abuse of power by parasitic and speculative groups which have control of political power – 'old corruption,' in Cobbett's words. /.../ It was for this reason that the feature most strongly picked out in the ruling class was its idleness and parasitism.⁵

In other words, for a populist, the cause of the troubles is ultimately never the system as such, but the intruder who corrupted it (financial manipulators, not capitalists as such, etc.); not a fatal flaw inscribed into the structure as such, but an element that doesn't play its role within the structure properly. For a Marxist, on the contrary (like for a Freudian), the pathological (deviating misbehavior of some elements) is the symptom

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5 Laclau 2005, p.90

of the normal, an indicator of what is wrong in the very structure that is threatened with “pathological” outbursts: for Marx, economic crises are the key to understanding the “normal” functioning of capitalism; for Freud, pathological phenomena like hysterical outbursts provide the key to the constitution (and hidden antagonisms that sustain the functioning) of a “normal” subject. That’s why populism tends to be nationalist, it calls for people’ unity against the (external) enemy, while Marxism focuses on the inner split that cuts across each community and calls for, international solidarity because we all traversed by this split.

The hard fact to accept is that “ordinary people” do NOT “know,” they possess no authentic insight or experience, they are no less confused and disoriented as all others are. I remember, in the debate after a talk of mine, a brief exchange with a supporter of Podemos who reacted to my claim that the demands of Podemos (getting rid of corrupted power structures, authentic democracy which is rooted in people’s actual interests and worries) without any precise ideas of how to reorganize society - he replied: “But this is not a reproach since Podemos wants just this: not another system but a democratic system that would actually be what it claims to be!” In short, Podemos wanted the existing system without its symptoms, to which one should retort that it’s OK to begin with this, but then sooner or later comes the moment when we are forced to realize that symptoms (corruption, failure, etc.) are part of the system, so that in order to get rid of the symptoms we have to change the system itself.

One of the versions of radical politics today is waiting for a catastrophe: many of my radical friends are telling me privately that only a big ecological catastrophe, economic meltdown, or war can mobilize the people to work for radical change. But is this very stance of waiting for a catastrophe not already is a catastrophe, an admission of utter defeat? In order to find a proper orientation in this conundrum, one should become aware of the fateful limitation of the politics of interests. Parties like die Linke in Germany effectively represent the interests of their working class constituency – better healthcare and retirement conditions, higher wages, etc.; this puts them automatically within the confines of the existing system, and is therefore not enough for authentic emancipation. Interests are not to be just followed, they have to be redefined with regard to ideas which cannot be reduced to interests.

This is why we witness again and again the paradox of how the Rightist populists, when they get in power, sometimes impose measures which are effectively in workers’ interests, as is the case in Poland where PiS (Law and Justice, the ruling Rightist-populist party) has managed to enact the largest social transfers in Poland’s contemporary history. PiS did what Marine le Pen also promises to do in France: a combination of anti-austerity measures (social transfers no Leftist party dares to consider) plus the promise of order and security that asserts national identity and deals with the immigrant threat – who can beat this

combination which directly addresses the two big worries of ordinary people? We can discern at the horizon a weirdly perverted situation in which the official “Left” is enforcing the austerity politics (while advocating multicultural etc. rights) while the populist Right is pursuing anti-austerity measures to help the poor (while pursuing the xenophobic nationalist agenda) – the latest figure of what Hegel described as die verkehrte Welt, the topsy-turvy world... The obvious (not only) populist reaction to this is: should we not reestablish the “normal” state, i.e., should the Left not enact the anti-austerity measures that the populist Right is enacting, just without the accompanying racist-nationalist baggage? “Logical” as it may sound, this, precisely, is what cannot be done: the Right can do it precisely **BECAUSE** its anti-austerity measures are accompanied by racist-nationalist ideology, this ideological coating is what makes anti-austerity acceptable.

Populism ultimately **NEVER** works. In its Rightist version, it cheats by definition: it constructs a false figure of the enemy – false in the sense that it obfuscates the basic social antagonism (“Jew” instead of “capital,” etc.) and, in this way, its populist rhetoric serves the very financial elites it pretends to oppose. In its Left version, it’s false in a more complex Kantian sense. In a vague but pertinent homology, we can say that the construction of the Enemy in an antagonistic relation plays the role of Kant’s schematism: it allows us to translate theoretical insight (awareness of abstract social contradictions) into practico-political engagement. This is how we should read Badiou’s already-mentioned statement that “one cannot fight capitalism”: one should “schematize” our fight into activity against concrete actors who work like the exposed agents of capitalism. However, the basic wager of Marxism is precisely that such a personalization into an actual enemy is wrong – if it is necessary, it is a kind of necessary structural illusion. So does this mean that Marxist politics should permanently manipulate its followers (and itself), acting in a way it knows it is misleading? Marxist engagement is condemned to this immanent tension which cannot be resolved by claiming that now we fight the Enemy and later we will move to the more fundamental overhaul of the system itself. Left populism stumbles upon the limit of fighting the Enemy the moment it takes power.

In a situation like today’s, Left populism’s fatal flaw is clearly visible: its weakness is precisely what appears to its partisans as its strength, namely the construction of the figure of Enemy and the focus on the struggle against it. What is needed today are above all positive visions of how to confront our problems – the threat of ecological catastrophes, the destabilizing implications of global capitalism, the traps of the digitalization of our minds... In other words, what is needed is not just to fight big financial institutions but to envisage new modes of financial politics, to provide feasible answers to the question: OK, so how would you organize finances if you gain power? It’s not just to fight against walls and for open borders but to envisage new social and economic

models which would no longer generate refugees. Today, more than ever, our system is approaching such a deep crisis that we can no longer just bombard it with our demands, expecting that it will somehow manage to meet them while continuing to smoothly function.

Instead of just focusing on antagonism, it is therefore crucial for a Leftist government today to define a role for the private sector, to offer the private sector precise conditions under which it can operate. As long as (at least a good part of) the private sector is needed for the smooth functioning of our societies, one should not just antagonize it but also propose a positive vision of its role. Social Democracy at its best was doing exactly this.

The obvious Left-populist counter-argument is here, of course: but is not the fact that Left populism does not provide a detailed vision of the alternative society precisely its advantage? Such an openness is what characterizes a radical-democratic struggle: there are no prescriptions decided in advanced, re-arrangements are going on all the time with short-term goals shifting... Again, this smooth reply is all too easy, it obfuscates the fact that the “openness” of the Left-populist struggle is based on a retreat, on avoiding the key problem of capitalism.

We should therefore give the populist protests (like those of the Yellow Vests in France) a conditional YES – conditional since it is clear that Left populism does not provide a feasible alternative to the system. That is to say, let's imagine that the protesters somehow win, take power and act within the coordinates of the existing system (like Syriza did in Greece) – what would have happened then? Probably some kind of economic catastrophe. This doesn't mean that we simply need a different socio-economic system, a system which would be able to meet the protesters' demands: the process of radical transformation would also give rise to different demands and expectations. Say, with regard to fuel costs, what is really needed is not just cheap fuel, the true goal is to diminish our dependency on oil for ecological reasons, to change not only our transportation but our entire way of life. The same holds for lower taxes plus better healthcare and education: the whole paradigm will have to change.

The same holds for our big ethico-political problem: how to deal with the flow of refugees? The solution is not to just open the borders to all who want to come in, and to ground this openness in our generalized guilt (“our colonization is our greatest crime which we will have to repay forever”). If we remain at this level, we serve perfectly the interests of those in power who foment the conflict between immigrants and the local working class (which feels threatened by them) and retain their superior moral stance. (The moment one begins to think in this direction, the Politically Correct Left instantly cries Fascism – see the ferocious attacks on Angela Nagle for her outstanding essay “The Left Case

against Open Borders”⁶.) The “contradiction” between advocates of open borders and populist anti-immigrants is a false “secondary contradiction” whose ultimate function is to obfuscate the need to change the system itself: the entire international economic system which, in its present form, gives rise to refugees.⁷

The stance of generalized guilt provides a clinically perfect example of the superego paradox confirmed by how the fundamentalist immigrants react to left-liberal guilt feeling: the more European Left liberals admit responsibility for the situation which creates refugees, and the more they demand that we should abolish all walls and open our gates to immigrants, the more they are despised by fundamentalist immigrants. There is no gratitude in it – the more we give, the more we are reproached that we did not give enough. It is significant that the countries that are most attacked are not those with an open anti-immigrant stance (Hungary, Poland...) but precisely those which are the most open one. Sweden is reproached that it doesn't really want to integrate immigrants, and every detail is seized upon as a proof of its hypocrisy (“You see, they still serve pork at meals in the schools! They still allow their girls to dress provocatively! They still don't want to integrate elements of sharia in their legal system!”), while every demand for symmetry (but where are new Christian churches in Muslim countries with a Christian minority?) is flatly rejected as European cultural imperialism. Crusades are mentioned all the time, while the Muslim occupation of large parts of Europe is treated as normal. The underlying premise is that a kind of radical sin (of colonization) is inscribed into the very existence of Europe, a sin incomparable with others, so that our debt to others cannot ever be repaid. However, beneath this premise it is easy to discern its opposite, the stance of scorn - they loath us for our guilt and responsibility, they perceive it as a sign of our weakness, of our lack of self-respect and trust in ourselves. The ultimate irony is that some Europeans then perceive such an aggressive stance as the Muslim “vitality” and contrast it to Europe's “exhaustion” – again turning this into the argument that we need the influx of foreign blood to regain our vitality... We in Europe will only regain the respect of others by learning to impose limits, to fully help others not from a position of guilt and weakness but from a position of strength.

Paradoxically, the basic problem with today's European Left is thus not that it remains too “Eurocentrist” but that it is not “Eurocentrist” enough.

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6 See <https://americanaffairsjournal.org/2018/11/the-left-case-against-open-borders/>

7 Incidentally, the weirdest argument for open borders is: “Europe needs immigrant workers for its economy to continue to expand... ” - WHICH Europe? Capitalist Europe, capitalism needs them for its expanded reproduction.

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Interview with Albin Kurti: The problem of Europe Today is Its small ambitions

Agon Hamza & Frank Ruda

1. The one thing that many, if not most people, agree upon today is that the European Union is in crisis. But it seems it has been a crisis since its very conception – being ultimately nothing but a neo-liberal project that *inter alia* sought to generate some internal and cohesive political force through the implementation of a common currency. But now with phenomena like Brexit – and all the other dooming potential exits – and with popular anti-EU mobilizations, this crisis seems to have generated a new thrust, or did it not? Could you tell us what is your understanding of this: is the EU in a crisis right now? What are or would be potential legal, political and economic implications of it?

In my understanding, the European Union did not begin as a neoliberal project. If we look back into the history, it began with three initial pillars, as a foundation of this idea or project. First, it was the premise of peace through the anti-Fascist struggle. This coincided with the 5th anniversary of the victory against Nazi-Fascism (in 1950) which as such, in a not-so-surprising manner, privileges Schuman's declaration, against that of Chamberlain's proposal in his "peace for our times" speech. So, the difference is crucial: contrary to peace *with fascism*, it changed the course into a new stance, which can be formulated like peace as the *struggle against* fascism. This is very important.

The second pillar is that of the welfare state. It was no longer possible to even imagine economic growth and development without social justice, which above and before everything, at the level of the state, consisted on social security and progressive taxation. The third one concerns the common defense project. Based on these, I would not argue that the European Union is, in its beginning, a neoliberal construction or project. On the contrary, my claim is that the idea of European Union, albeit not being the ideal leftist project in itself, was hijacked by the neoliberal idea, decades after it was initially created. And, this hijacking is something we should think and analyse. What I have in mind here is rather a simple idea: what were the conditions, within the EU itself, which allowed for the project to be turned into a neoliberal vessel, rather than take a further leftist turn? I think that the idea of some leftists who see the solution in exiting the EU (and, we have all kinds of ideas of exits today: from Brexit, to Grexit, Frexit, and so forth), is too much of an easy solution. Yes, they want to abandon the EU, but where are they heading to? To the nation-state form? I do not see this as a viable solution and an emancipatory position or idea. Rather we can learn a bitter lesson from neoliberalism: we *can* indeed re-appropriate a project, which in its essence, is not neoliberal. Appearing radical today is the easiest political position; what is a very difficult task is to engage in the most difficult job of changing the actuality of our

present, in which, the EU is of essential importance. The crisis of EU and the crisis of the left today are not two different things. The crisis of EU, in a large part, is a crisis of the left itself. If I am to use a rather obscene term, the “reformation” of the EU is in fact the reformation or reinvention of the left in Europe, which cannot be carried out and accomplished by using old methods because it is not only about ‘reforming’ the ruling ideas. In my view, this is the most difficult task today: reinventing a (new) theory of organisation for and of the contemporary left.

2. Does this have implications for how we (should) conceive of the “idea of Europe” after all – or how to distinguish between Europe and the EU?

The European Union will become *Europe* and will reach its decisive congruence with itself when the Western Balkans will be fully joining or included into the EU. This has certain implications. First, it means that the EU should change, both in its structure and its aims, that is, in its ruling ideas. Second, and at the same time, the implications weigh directly onto the Western Balkans countries, where the majority of the people want to be part of the EU. Both the EU and the Western Balkans are very important for one another. If we would agree that there is a distinction between Europe and the European Union, then this difference has a name: it's called Western Balkans. To formulate this in different way, through flirting with Hegel, I would say that Europe reaches its notion when the Western Balkans will fully join the European Union.

3. Do you think there is anything one might identify as emancipatory in the EU as it exists or as “promise”, if one may use this term, it came with? Can this idea be appropriated by the or a Left, we are here thinking for example of the initiative DiEM25, one of whose chairman is Yanis Varoufakis or would you suggest a different path is needed?

I think that the pan-European form of organisation is crucial today. Think about the major problems we are confronted with in our epoch, or of the way of the functioning of capitalism as such. Nation-states are structurally incapable of confronting and dealing with them. I want to take the obvious example of the (ongoing) refugee “crisis”. This was the most obvious example of how nation-states cannot confront such problems. Or, climate change: no matter what measures a particular state might be able to take, they have little impact, if they are not at least organised at the continental level. This is a crucial problem and task, which we have

to think about, and in my view, this has to be done rather fast. I fear we are losing our momentum.

We have to think how democracy will function and be applied here, all the forms of decision-making, and so forth. For this reason, we need as many pan-European movements as possible, be them from the centre left and left, social-democratic, and the greens. So we need initiatives which unify different organisations in Europe, because we cannot allow, once again, for the right-wing forces to hijack this structure. Paradoxically, they are already the most successful pan-European alliance today. They are very coordinated, they help each other, they are growing on a continental scale, within the European institutions, by undermining the EU itself. Of course, we have to bear in mind that it is especially the Russian Federation and China considerably who are arguably the main adversaries of the European project. So, since it looks like they have been very successful in appropriating notions of *freedom* and *equality* (of course, with a clear nationalist and xenophobic spin), we cannot allow them to do the same with that of *solidarity*.

4. To follow up on this, some have argued that it is precisely through its very failure that the EU generated a vision, a potential of or a potential perspective on something else, on another European Union. Do you find such a reading convincing?

I will simply follow what I said above. The crisis of the EU is not so much a socio-economic crisis, as much as it is a (serious) crisis of ideas, visions, and commitment. We must not accept the thesis which says that the EU is poor or impoverished, I think the opposite is rather true. Rather than having a crisis of material and social conditions, knowing that welfare in the EU is neither low, nor bad, and that not only compared to the other countries of the globe, we should argue that the crisis of the European Union consists at the level of idea of welfare itself. What do we mean today by the welfare state? Welfare is certainly not reducible to the fight against poverty, but above all, it is the struggle against inequality, which today is reaching rather worrying heights. I mean, there is a simple empirical fact which proves that the EU is not impoverished: the majority of refugees today see Europe as the place to go, precisely because of the quality of life provided in most of the EU countries. Of course, I am well aware that this is a result of a long process of accumulation of capital, and so forth. Welfare policy should not be only a domestic one, but it should be also part of the foreign economic policy of the EU. That approach will make the EU stronger and provide more overall benefit to the world. What I mean here is that Europe should not become neither a “fortress” nor an “inn”. Europe should become not only a responsible, but also a determining actor in the

contemporary epoch, not only as a mediator or an entity to balance in between economic and military superpowers, but also in bringing its vision in the world.

5. Many have written on the relationship between the European Union and Europe. One of the puzzling aspects of this relationship is rendered by the dilemma of whether the Europe (its spirit, etc) can survive within the “suffocating” confines of the (legalistic, highly bureaucratic) EU. What is your take on this? Is there a clear-cut distinction between the two (and can or must there even be one)?

I believe that true, democratic changes come from below. All the existing legal and bureaucratic “restraints”, all the administrative and procedural difficulties, are there to confirm the need for a movement from below and toughen it for the struggles to come. I do not see legal restraints and restrictions as problematic, of course they do exist, they are the norms of that which exists, of the real. The struggle for change is also the struggle for changing these restrictions and confines, or differently put, the struggle for change is the struggle for changing the status of the actuality.

6. Slavoj Žižek is among the rare contemporary Marxists who openly makes a “leftist plea for “Eurocentrism.” This is obviously a very dangerous move, to say the least. He means by it that what the European heritage stands for, what is universal in it, is something that exceeds the confines of Europe, because it truly is universal (and for example rather than also becomes manifest in the Haitian revolution, the anti-colonial struggle of India, etc). What is your view on the “European legacy”? The point being that even in the struggle against European colonization, this very struggle had to be conceptualised according to principles that were articulated, even constitutionally as part of the Enlightenment project (equality, justice, freedom, etc.). And does one have to be a Euro “centrist” to defend such universal “values” or is there another way to do this? And if so, are there any contemporary strategies, techniques, maybe even ideological options at hand to revivify and stand to this legacy (or is this too much to ask right now)?

I also believe that in Europe there is a lot of history and tradition for the upcoming challenges. Those who accept this notion of the poverty of Europe, have to be very cautious or wary, because it might merely be the poverty of their knowledge and studies of the history of Europe, and not the poverty of Europe itself, *à propos* the challenges of the 21st century. At the same time, I think that the world is impatient to learn what is happening with and in Europe,

more so than it is ready to admit. Politicians and intellectuals alike from all around, keep an eye on Europe, to see what is happening here. But, all this ‘attention’ should not make us very happy. Rather, it should make us aware of the responsibility that we have, that is to say, that even in the 21st century, the fate of Europe, determines the fate of the world, much more than the Europeans and others appear to be ready to know or accept.

Here I want to endorse Žižek’s idea and thesis. I do not belong to those who see Europe only as the cause of colonialism, imperialism, Holocaust, and so on. There is another side to Europe, which, sadly, the contemporary left in general refuses to see. Here I am thinking of the birth of the modern subjectivity through the Cartesian *cogito*, the notions of equality, democracy, the birth of feminism, the French Revolution, and so on. I mean, even if we look into the anti-colonial and anti-imperialist struggles, the demands for freedom and self-determination were articulated in the discourse or spirit and the vocabulary of the Europe as such. This is exemplary in the work of Franz Fanon, which, in my view, definitely deserves a thorough re-reading. Or, another case is the Haitian Revolution of 1791-1804 for independence, which happened shortly after the French Revolution. The demands of Haitians were not for an “alter civilisation,” or return to what was authentic before colonisation. In a rather strange way of formulating it, the Haitians embodied the values of French Revolution more profoundly than the developments in France in the aftermath of the Revolution. In a sense, the ideas of French Revolution were best materialised in Haiti.

7. The past of Europe seemed to have been determined by the past of the particular and individual European nation states. Some of them had an intense common history (of enmity but also of interaction and non-monetary exchanges, for example, France and Germany). Could relying on these common histories provide a different orientation for the future of Europe (and maybe even of the EU)?

In the previous centuries, the problem of Europe has been excessive ambitions of the individual states. This was expressed both in the excessive ambitions of particular states within the continent, as well as with the ambitions directed and carried out in the other continents. However, the problem of Europe in the 21st century seems to be completely different. Today, the shift or the change is reductionist, that is to say, the problem of Europe are the small ambitions of its joint enterprise, which is called the European Union. And, to avoid any possible misunderstanding or misreading: I am far from celebrating or pleading for the return of

that period into the present historical epoch.

We, here in the Western Balkan want to join the EU, but at the same time, this means that the EU should have more self-confidence, and simultaneously, it has to raise the ambitions for itself. This means that in the past, there were individual authoritarianisms of particular states, which wanted to exercise their hegemony and domination, and in this sense, while doing so, they unified Europe in a tragic way. But these authoritarianisms (and I am using this term very cautiously) have had the neurosis of the others around them, they were confronted with them, so to speak. But today, authoritarian regimes in the Balkans should not be tolerated, while having the neurosis of Brussels in front of them. In this way, by the way of raising the ambitions for themselves, the European Union will manage and succeed in incorporating the Western Balkans within itself, as well as succeed in the struggle against growing authoritarian tendencies.

8. One peculiar phenomenon one was able to witness more or less recently is what one may call a “nationalist international” - that is right-wing nationalist movements (like the Front National, the AfD, Wilders, as well as in some of the Balkan countries), especially in Europe and inside the EU found together to create an alliance mutually protecting their respective particular national interests. This also seemed part of Steve Bannon’s declared strategy for the European continent. Such a nationalist internationalism or internationalism of nationalists appears to have hijacked the concept of internationalism in times in which otherwise there is nothing international but the movement of capital (in its diverse forms). How do you see this development?

I am inclined to understand the success of the far-right parties and groups, and the far-right ideology in general, only in the light of the failure of the left. The rise of the far-right is not a recent phenomenon – historically, it rose when the left failed. And, I think Walter Benjamin’s overly quoted thesis holds true: the rise of far right is strictly conditioned by the failure to seize the moment for emancipation. If we look at the responses to the financial crisis of 2008, the left, generally, couldn’t offer a viable vision or an idea on how to move forward. The gap created here, was successfully filled in by the right. Even if we look at the majority of the leftist positions, I am almost ready to argue that a good part of the contemporary left is holding conservative positions, by the way of clinging to concepts and ideas which did not generically belong to them.

And there is no other path in our situation, as a way out from this conundrum, except of the rebirth of the leftist project. And, by the rebirth of the leftist (or, even of social-democracy) project I do

not mean the one represented, say, by Gerhard Schröder, but let’s say, by Ferdinand Lassalle. So, when I say we need to return to the history and the tradition of Europe, this in-itself implies the tradition of the left. This is a very rich tradition, which can be very useful today for us.

Here I think we are faced with another problem, with regard to the far-right or even (neo)fascists (if we accept this term, although I have my doubts about its accuracy. I am not fully convinced we can use this notion to the contemporary far-right). They should be criticised and fought and opposed. The mistake we make is that we all too often only complain about the situation in which we are. We cannot allow nor afford, at any cost, to degrade the critique and opposition, to complaints and lamentation. Politics is not just presentation, representation and mediation. Politics is a struggle.

9. Alain Badiou has decidedly argued that today more than ever political emancipation must be international, and therefore declared Marx to have been almost a science fiction writer who anticipated this important dimension of contemporary politics. What criteria, coordinates, aspects of a contemporary internationalism can we identify - especially in difference to its previously mentioned nationalist appropriation?

I strongly believe in international cooperation and solidarity between the leftist parties, movements and organisations. But I think that this doesn’t mean abandoning local and national struggles and challenges. I believe that it is possible to confront problems and challenges in the countries and/or municipalities where we live or work, but at the same time, we can and must express international solidarity for each other’s struggles. This is very important, I think. Solidarity is not an abstract act, so to speak. It has clear material conditions and consequences. To be empirical, I would say that it is measured by active engagement in the struggle of the other, kilometres travelled, money spent, et cetera. Just like politics, it is also a matter of pragmatic organisation, and not only at the level of discursive war. In this way, international solidarity, in my understanding, has to do with material, logistical and effective transcultural exchanges. Real and genuine solidarity is very costly. Political opinions about other countries or about the struggles in other countries are not political *per se*, unless there is a material causal link to be established, say between my position, and the foreign element. I think this is a very important thing to bear in mind.

10. To return to one of the elements of the European legacy (and its inner dialectic): the Age of Enlightenment. Do you see a contemporary significance of the Enlightenment heritage,

especially for a renewed understanding of Europe and maybe even of the EU? We are not thinking about the clichéd representation of some regions of the world as back-ward, say Islamism as anti-Enlightenment and Europe (and Western Religion) as representing the Enlightenment tradition. We are rather thinking of the Enlightenment as being specifically and problematically European, liberating but strangely deemed to enchain those who endorse it most. So, in different terms, what is there to be learnt from the dialectic of Enlightenment for contemporary European politics, if anything?

I think it is not correct to argue only that the geographical Europe should become a political EU, but the political EU should become a historical Europe. In this sense, the heritage of Enlightenment is very valuable and important. Enlightenment is hope. It is the return of ideals in politics and politics-making or upholding the general interest above the individual one. It is very important for maintaining ethics in politics, something which, very sadly, is being abandoned in today's world.

I do not think it is sufficient to say that different countries are different. Different countries *are* the same world, same planet, but they are or exist in different time. So yes, there are backward societies, countries and economies. We are not different countries, reducible to different cultural essences, but we are the same world, with countries that exists in different times. Here I think the idea of solidarity is of crucial importance: those who are in need, should be helped out, and if I may say, in a fast-forward procedure.

11. Brexit seems a strange kind of symptom for things happening on a national but also international level in Europe today. Strange, because it does not seem disconnected from the harsh financial restrictions the EU under the aegis of Germany and under the label of austerity imposed on Greece. It is clearly difficult to argue that Great Britain is in a similar situation than Greece was. But it is interesting that the Brexit contenders often sounded as if they perceive the situation of Great Britain to be one in which the British people are exploited and suppressed in an almost worse than Greek people were (maybe because in many official representations the Greeks were at the same time depicted as being lazy). Do you see any links between these two phenomena or are they two unrelated, equally unsettling symptoms of things going wrong?

When the now former President of the European Commission, Jean-Claude Juncker, said that in his mandate, there won't be enlargement of the European Union, of course, the result was

Brexit. Although, I must add, in saying this, he didn't think of Great Britain at all. He thought of us, the Western Balkans. But whoever tries to place him/herself above the project of EU, as an author who tells who and where it will be enlarged, or will not be enlarged, will end up with a "Brexit." I think this is a violent imposition. We are in a moment or in a situation in which we do not make the European Union, but it should make us, if we are serious about it. If you do not enlarge, you shrink. When you do not want to incorporate Western Balkans, you lose Great Britain. This is incomprehension of the seriousness of the European Union by its leaders, because the EU cannot have authors, like they would like to think. The European Union is such serious enterprise that if it is not to move forward, it will definitely move backwards. The European Union is way too important to be capable to handle or be in patience with the status quo.

12. Apart from Brexit, some regions, like Catalonia, or countries that are part of a larger governmental zone, like Scotland, flirted not with the idea of leaving the EU but exiting their respective existing governmental integration - attempts that strangely seem in the case of Catalonia seemed to have brought back the idea of national liberation, even though in a quite toned-down manner, or the idea of administrative and political autonomy, especially with regard to problematic political decisions of Great Britain (i.e. Brexit) in the case of Scotland. And some argued that this might ultimately create new political agents within the European political territory that - if they were recognized as such - might actually pose less of a nationalist threat than a surprisingly emerging chance to transform the EU from within (under the condition, obviously, that Scotland and Catalonia would be recognized as autonomous states and as members of the EU with voting rights). What is your view on this? Where does Kosova enter into this, if at all?

The European left made a big mistake that it didn't get involved in the matters of the self-determination of the people and nations, and in the national questions in general, because they are not outdated problems. I even think that the left cannot understand itself if it considers that the national questions or problems will be solved by not mentioning or neglecting them. So, regarding the questions of Catalonia or Scotland, I have the impression that the left did not engage in thinking the correct answers to these problems. I believe that many deviations and deformations that we have experienced come from this very vacuum that was filled in by someone else. For me, the self-determination as a concept and a right is completely legitimate when it comes from below, wants liberation, and aims at equality. I think that the left has a good possibility in appropriating

the notion and the concept of the “nation” from the right; perhaps in the same manner as we should do with the state. They are both too important to be abandoned by the left.

It seems to me that the left has almost lost the battle with regard to the actuality of the nation-state. As I said earlier, I am very well aware of its material and structural limits, but we need to think why its form is “returning”, as the European Union is going through a serious crisis. Probably in the future, there won’t be nation-states at all, perhaps not even states nor nations, but this is not our actuality. Yet, in history, not every repetition is the same. If one lives in the future, s/he loses the present, and then that future, too.

Several times during history Europe was unified under the umbrella of a single nation-state. That unification was occupation. Now it should not fail by uniting all states together. This unification should become liberation.

I think the left has to carry the struggles on both levels, because one cannot compensate neither substitute the other. The left has to win at the level of nation-states and at the level of the EU as well. Sometimes I fear that the left uses the idea of pan-Europeanism, in order to avoid the harsh reality and hard work of winning at the state level. We need to rethink and recuperate the idea of the state, and with that, the nation-state.

13. In 1986, the Portuguese novelist José Saramago wrote a novel called “The Stone Raft” in which the Iberian Peninsula breaks off from the European continent and this creates all kinds of problems, not only political, administrative, or economic ones but also problems that pertain the very idea of being or becoming a European subject. At least with parts of this story, one might be reminded of the old concept of the exodus - well, here this would be one version of the exodus that at first appears as if it were a natural disaster and of which it is unclear if there will and can ever be a return, but which nonetheless might change things for the better. Might there be a politics of exodus conceivable for the contemporary European context? A politics of exodus different from the strange politics, if it is one, of exiting the EU (not implying, if you excuse the obscenity, that the creation of terminological monsters like Brexodus would immediately be any better than the Brexit)?

Emigration, or exodus, represented an interesting adventure, full of unexpected events, when it happened in the United States, in *terra nullius*. A big melting pot happened then. But today, wherever you go, you go *somewhere*. You don’t go *nowhere*. You go to a consolidated or existing state. There are no longer *terra nullius* in this planet. What happened in the US centuries ago, now is possible

only on another planet. Maybe we can escape to other planets, but you can no longer go somewhere, and begin from the beginning, in a “new land”, be it promised or not, marvel in it because you escaped from the miserable old, and you embraced the new in which only the imagination can be the limit. We do no longer have this situation, or this “luxury”. There is no possibility to go nowhere!

14. Let us touch on a rather “sensitive” topic. Today, academia is almost obsessed with the topic of anti/de-colonialism. Žižek has, we believe, rightfully criticised this approach, claiming it to be liberal, or not radical enough (as all things liberal). The catch here is, and we are very well aware of the sensitivity of this topic, especially since, Kosova has been waging an anti-colonial struggle. In the tradition of Frantz Fanon, how do you see this? (to clarify, Žižek is not only sympathetic, but also fully embraces Fanon’s legacy). And, in Kosova, during the first decade of the 2000, the question of colonialism has been one of the pillars of the intellectual life in the country. And, do you see any similarities between the case of Kosova and those of Latin America or Africa?

Anyone who struggles against oppression and exploitation, that comes from anyone, can learn and benefit a lot from the anti-colonial tradition. It is just that this tradition, both the theoretical texts and practical struggle, have to be studied very closely, on the one hand, and to analyse your situation concretely, on the other hand. And, from these two “sources”, positions and activities that you will commence can be shaped and take form. We, in Kosova, have benefited and learned a lot from this “synthesis”, where on the one hand, we studied the works of Fanon to Albert Memmi, and on the other hand, we’ve had the United Nations, whose mission in Kosova we were confronting, in the name of its nominal values. Just as we opposed the EU mission in the name of the values of the EU itself. So, we took the value principle to oppose the deviant actualisation in the country. In a way, through struggling the EU mission for law (EULEX), we have strengthened the EU, by the way of imposing (even if this was at a very minimal level) the return to their basic principles and foundational values. No matter how paradoxical this might appear.

Here I want to add just one remark. Talking about decolonisation is a very tricky thing, not because one is opposed to it, but because of what do we understand today by it. Decolonisation, in my understanding, is not cultural, nor the celebration or recognition of different identities, or even as a pretext for the return to pre-modern or ancient forms of social organisation. Unfortunately, I see this tendency, which is inherently a-political, to be more and more present. Decolonisation should

be thought and conceived in modernist terms or spirit. It has to do with history (of oppression and exploitation) and socio-economy (of people's lives and relations) rather than culture (as a play of identity and difference).

15. You won the snap parliamentary elections in Kosova and you are set to form the next government. That will be a challenging task, given how profound and systemic problems in that country are rooted, from economy, unemployment, public debt, negotiations with Serbia, et. It is quite a challenging task to say the least. To put it in somehow naive manner: is this a situation you and the Movement can administer and change?

It is true that sometimes we feel like we have ascended on top of a hill, but only to discover that there is a much bigger mountain ahead of us than the hill on the top of which we stand. But, what can one do in a situation like this? One can smile briefly, look at the mountain and do what he does best: one aims to reach the mountain, continue marching forward. So, when the challenge is about fighting crime and corruption, inequality and economic backwardness and underdevelopment, we have our program which requires a lot of will and courage. It also requires a people, which after it has voted, stands on its feet. More than ever we need to be close and stand with the people. And, unlike the past, where the people approached the government which was corrupt, now we will have a government without corruption which will approach or head toward the people. But this government needs a people who will stand on its feet. We need a new culture of governing (and I am well aware of its 'culturalist' connotations), the will for change and the proper program for change, to be tied in an inseparable way. Maybe here, very briefly, I can present the main pillars of our governing program.

The first pillar is that of Developmental State. That implies the abolishment or dismantling of the Privatisation Agency of Kosova. Following this, we will create a Sovereign Fund, which will manage public and state-owned enterprises and properties. Part of this pillar will be the creation of the Developmental Bank, which will have low interest rates, and long greys periods, to support small and middle enterprises, which constitute about 98% of the entire industries in the country. We will link professional education with labour market to bridge skills gap, and, of course, a progressive tax will be introduced.

The second pillar is the Rule (state) of Justice. Above all, this means the ruthless struggle against crime and corruption. This should and will be done through the adoption of an anti-mafia law, the confiscation of illegally obtained properties and wealth, etc.

One of the biggest challenges here will be the struggle against the oligarchs, which have suffocated the potential for the economic growth and development.

The third pillar is the Social State. Some of the measures and policies that will be taken here are: guaranteed employment for the young, in a period of one year. Scholarships for students, building more kindergartens, elementary and high school infrastructure, benefits for students and pensioners, etc.

16. And, the very last question: is there a hope for the EU in the Balkans?

Whenever there is courage, there is hope. There is courage in the Balkans amongst its people, there should be a bit more courage in the EU and we should become what we are: the same continent.

*Translated by: Agon Hamza
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Riccardo Bellofiore is professor of Political Economy at the University of Bergamo (Italy). His research interests include capitalist contemporary economy, endogenous monetary approaches, Marxian theory and the philosophy of economics. His last books are *The Great Recession and the Contradictions of Contemporary Capitalism* (co-edited with Giovanna Vertova for Edward Elgar, 2014); *Towards a New Understanding of Piero Sraffa. Insights from Archival Research* (co-edited with Scott Carter for Palgrave Macmillan, 2014); *Le avventure della socializzazione. Dalla teoria monetaria del valore alla teoria macro-monetaria della produzione capitalistica* (Mimesis, 2018), *Marx inattuale* (co-edited with Carla Maria Fabiani for Efestò, 2019). With Francesco Garibaldo and Mariana Mortagua he has published *Euro al capolinea? La vera natura della crisi europea* (Rosenberg & Sellier, 2019).

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Albin Kurti joined the presidency of the Students Independent Union of the University of Prishtina in August 1997, which organized peaceful, non-violent protests for the release of the university buildings and premises which were occupied by the authorities of the Serbian regime. When war began in Kosova, in August 1998, Kurti began working as the Secretary of the Office of the General Political Representative of the Kosova Liberation Army (KLA), in Prishtina. He served over 2 years and seven months in a prison in Serbia (1999-2001), and afterwards almost a year and a half in Kosova, arrested by the authorities of UNMIK, EULEX and the Republic of Kosova. In June 2005, with other political activists, he co-founded "Lëvizja VETËVENDOSJE" (Movement for SELF-DETERMINATION!). He was the President of

LVV until March 2015, and reelected in 2018. Kurti served three terms in office as a member of the Assembly of the Republic of Kosova. He has also served as the Chair of the Committee on Foreign Affairs at the Assembly. Kurti is the most voted leader in the last elections in Kosova and has the mandate to form the government.

Frédéric Lordon is a director of research at the CNRS. For now twenty years he has been developing a resarch program aiming at a "spinozian social science". He has recently published *Willing Slaves of the Capital* (Verso) and *Imperium, Structures and affects of the political bodies* (Verso, forthcoming).

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