

The new passion.
— Why do we
fear and hate a
possible rever
sion to barba
rism? Because it
would make people
unhappier than
they are? Oh no!

The Barbarians ^{2/2013}

Anarcho-Tourist Review

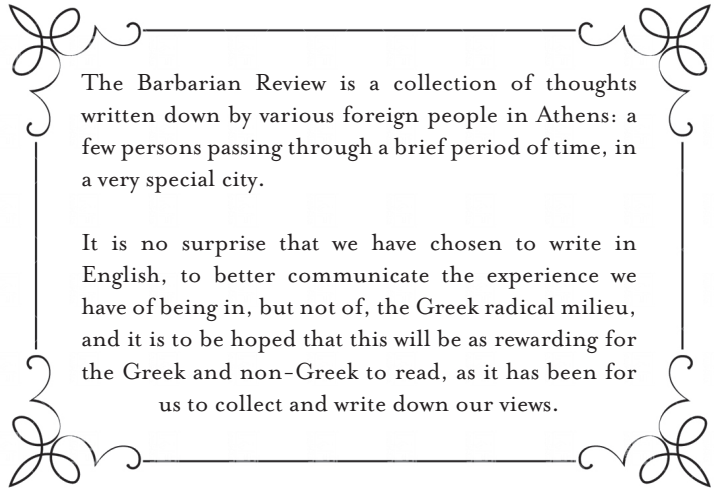
of every age were
happier: let us not
deceive ourselves!

The Barbarian 2/2013

*καὶ ταῦτα ἔπραξα βάρβαρος ὢν καὶ ἀπαιδευτος
παιδείας τῆς Ἑλληνικῆς*

*And I did this, though I am a Barbarian and
uneducated in Greek culture*

- Lucian of Samosata



Cover: Friedrich Nietzsche, *Daybreak*, Book V, Aphorism # 429

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FOREWORD

What confirmed our previous analysis was nothing more than the development of world-history itself. So last issue we wrote that new revolts are taking shape for a variety of reasons. Foremost, that the world is becoming philosophical, and philosophically, deaths spark riots, because the fundamental issue at hand is the demand that life and death be restored to meaning, against this system that can only propagate its own nothingness. And that the environment, equally ignored by Marxism and Liberalism, is becoming a new terrain of struggle (and here we can avoid putting our transcendental interpretation on an event, as Occupy Gezi doesn't cease to concern the trees in the park, which has enough meaning unto itself, in this world of concrete). Also that the economic interpretation of the world, not merely the reigning Liberalism, but also the faded oppositional version contained in Marxism, was happily trashed by the favela youths of Brazil. All these recent riots saw the same uncategorisable social elements uniting in their desire for revolt, so here the famous analysis of Bakunin is once again confirmed. And as for the growing despotism of this dying world, it too is only all the more confirmed by events in Greece and in the growing European far-right. Marxism, because of its economism, misses the importance of liberty, and so the important developments of wikileaks, and recently of Snowden's revelations about tyrannical US behavior, can only be rescued from today's aging reformism through Anarchy and its unaltered commitment to basic human dignity; just as a new uprising can be the only practical force working for

a revolution that simultaneously attacks both fascism and the logic of the neoliberal-parliamentary system with which it is inevitably intertwined.

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Nothing made us more pleased than the warm reaction our work received in the Greek movement, with the physical copies all being taken from the various squats around Athens (and around the world). But rather than making us complacent, this has only encouraged us further onwards, to ever more barbarism. In that vein, in this issue we have many more contributors, and yet the initial energy has in no way stopped or been diverted, but simply augmented.

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Last issue was written in the heat after the Villa Amalias eviction; this one in the fall when Fyssas was murdered. Barbarism is most certainly arriving, an epoch of history begins to decay: the question is, in what sense? Shall we have a *positive barbarism*, which we endeavor to elaborate here, a leap upward over the abyss into revolution; or rather, a relapse into a very imaginable barbarism, in the pejorative sense of the term? Our whole bet is staked upon the former, if only because the latter seems so close at hand.

- *The Barbarians*



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NEO-NAZI FREQUENCIES

The far right is a hot topic right now and Chrissi Avgi\Golden Dawn (GD) are increasingly making headlines all over Europe, as this recently small neo-Nazi group suddenly stumbles onto the political stage; rabid and unclean compared to many of its European cousins, punching and threatening and speaking of civil war whilst for a long time no one does anything even though migrants and other undesirables are beaten and killed, and the cops are participating actively or at least not preventing it as the government tries its best to do even better in its own bureaucratic way. The murder of the antifascist Pavlos Fyssas by a GD member has created a sharp u-turn that recently saw surprised members of GD marching on their own as cops busted in on them and the state went antifascist. I have chosen the term 'far-right' to act as a massive umbrella term under which fascists, Nazis, xenophobic populists and nationalists can be categorised. I know that this is a simplification, but simplification is necessary if one is to talk about a new political climate which is spreading over Europe, a climate which is created by many groups with differing backgrounds and ideologies but which most significantly is characterised by racism and cultural protectionism. When analysing Golden Dawn it is relevant to look at Greek history as well as the ideologies of fascism and national socialism, but the international context is also important. If we look at international connections between GD and other far right groups, we can narrow our definitions, because we find the solidarity coming from a very specific political grouping: the neo-Nazis.

InterNational Solidarity

Neo-Nazis are more complex than one might at first think. Though they do exist in the shape of political parties, these parties are a part or product of a larger movement. I would suggest that part of the ideological and perhaps practical content of GD consists of an ideology which is connected to this movement. The European neo-Nazi scene has its roots in the 1970s but matured in the 1980s and 90s. For many years it has been possible to read about GD on Swedish neo-Nazi websites as they have had contact and even visited GD for a number of years. GD members have in return visited Sweden, and many other European countries such as Germany, to form links with neo-Nazi groups. In fact, much detailed information about the current situation is available on the website of the militant national socialist group (not a political party), the 'Swedish Resistance Movement' (SRM), who are in regular phone contact with their 'comrades' in Greece. They organised coordinated Scandinavian manifestations against Greek embassies in solidarity with GD, together with their sister organisations in Finland, Denmark and Norway when the GD leadership was arrested. Similarly, the Swedes Party (SP) (formerly National Socialist Front) carried out a solidarity manifestation at the Greek embassy and have eagerly followed the political rise of GD as they have steadily gained popularity and parliamentary success. This is an unlikely path for SP but one that they nevertheless dream of as the most openly national socialist party in Sweden. This party has even hosted members of GD on at least one occasion and receives regular updates.

On the recent 70th anniversary of the Crystal Night, SRM demonstrated through the streets of Stockholm to the Greek Embassy in solidarity with GD and against the assassination of GD members Giorgos Fountoulis and Manolis Kapelonis. The demonstration gathered 93 participants (they counted) and was carried out pretty successfully even though it was met with a sizeable resistance and was protected by police the whole time. Even so, the Nazis did manage to break out of the police lines and carry out some coordinated attacks against counter demonstrators. Considering the lull in neo-Nazi activity in

Scandinavia in recent years- since the peak of the annual Salem demonstrations¹ close to Stockholm in the early 2000s that drew neo-Nazis from all over Europe and for some years led to the biggest Nazi demonstrations outside of Germany- it is not surprising to see the current enthusiastic excitement amongst these groups. The Scandinavian Nazis are excited both about what is happening in Greece and the possibility to come out in the streets again where they have not been able to have much presence in recent years due to anti-fascism, state repression and perhaps the fact that other populist right wing groups are currently better at attracting xenophobes. The fact that Nazis in the north of Europe have in the past attacked Greek migrants seems to be a comfortably forgotten memory.

On the same historical day that the Nazis were on the streets in Sweden, a manifestation took place in London as some of the relatively few british neo-Nazis gathered at the Greek embassy and started a new group imaginatively named 'New Dawn'. The protest was advertised on the neo-Nazi website Stormfront and though some participants were confronted at another location by anti-fascists the manifestation went by peacefully and gathered little attention. Similarly, solidarity protests have been reported from France, Colombia, Argentina, Serbia, Italy, Spain, Russia, Hungary, Germany and the Czech Republic. Those carrying out these protests are neo-Nazis, not some other right wing factions. In fact in France Marine Le Pen has recently complained about her party 'Front National' being labelled 'extreme right' as that is a term that refers to groups such as GD with whom she does not want to be associated. This takes us to a point of terminology in relation to the far right.

Three Shades of Brown

For the sake of simplification I would categorise the far right in Europe into 3 camps. Firstly, the neo-Nazis, many of whom who are connected to the Blood and Honour, Combat

¹ Salem is a small city close to Stockholm. In the end of 2000 a young skinhead was killed there by a gang of kids, some of which had foreign backgrounds, which sparked yearly Nazi demonstrations against 'violence towards ethnic swedes'.

18, white power music and subculture scene of the 1980s and developments thereof. Though this category contains the stereotypical skinhead Nazi that many people are aware of, ideological developments have created more complex neo-Nazis who organise as parliamentary parties, resistance movements and international networks. Common factors include antisemitism, sexism, homophobia as well as a belief in a connection between blood and land as a geographical cultural identity of a people, and hierarchical divisions between different kinds of people. The original ideology still exists in these groups and some ideas that were around in the early days of national socialism, such as the anti-capitalist and socialist wing known as Strasserism, have played a part in a more complex theoretical foundation. This also creates different characteristics as some reject the legacy of Hitler and others are split between christianity and paganism as religions of choice. Though mostly a subcultural movement with ideological continuations of national socialism, new ideas and a romanticism of the past, national socialism is increasingly sneaking onto the political stage. Whilst in northern Europe this movement is largely young male dominated and subcultural, recent parliamentary success in Hungary and Slovakia suggest a broader appeal.

The neo-Nazi category differs from the second category which is a more reformed version and more likely to win votes as the anti-semitism and Nazi references are swept away and the boots and shaved heads are replaced with suits, since Nazi discourse proved to be a hindrance in many countries. The white power concerts, drunkenness and violent street confrontations that were central to the neo-Nazi movement from the late 1970s to the early 1990s were not only not attracting normal people, increasingly they were being met by strong antifascist resistance and repression from the state. Inspired by political parties like Front National in France, these Nazis put on suits to gain credibility and try to follow the parliamentary path to power. In this transition it has been common for anti-semitism to be replaced by islamophobia and whilst national socialism is, at least officially, abandoned and new members are attracted by a more moderate xenophobia, the old neo-Nazis often criticise

the new political party for being too liberal and forgetting their roots (which is exactly what this second category is hoping that everyone else will do). One such political party are the Swedish Democrats who polled as the 4th biggest party in August 2012. In the early nineties they wore Nazi uniforms at meetings, planned attacks and used Nazi symbols; now they wear suits in parliament.

The third category is one which has no apparent historical connection to national socialism and fascism. Born as out of some immaculate conception, there is no parental lineage to speak of and the modern xenophobic populist party neither has to defend their belief in national socialism nor reject any connection to it. Modern populist parties have appeared across Europe with great success in the last 10-15 years and whilst the result of their politics are very similar to the two other categories, they are free from Nazi accusations and can enjoy formulating a kind of innocent unhindered racism. The Dutch politician Pim Fortuyn is perhaps the most obvious character who showed the possibility of a new xenophobic approach. An openly homosexual former marxist, he considered islam as a backward culture and his xenophobia was based on the negative effect that he believed that it and other foreign cultures had on the liberal Dutch society. Though against immigration, he distanced himself from far right parties in Europe and on most matters could not be considered conservative. Though he was assassinated just before the general elections in 2002, he changed Dutch politics and paved the way for the populist right wing "Party for Freedom" headed by the islamophobe Geert Wilders who wants to limit muslim immigration as part of a defence of liberal western culture. The discourse surrounding this defence against islam is directly connected to the ideas that were behind Anders Breivik's terrorist attacks in Norway which left 77 people dead just over two years ago. More recently, the populist right wing party, 'The Progress Party' (a party which Breivik left some years before his attacks because he considered it too liberal), entered parliament as part of a coalition government, led by a female party leader who has proposed that women have some responsibility when it comes to rape. The

party are against migration and for traditional hetero-normative family structures, and now hold several important ministerial posts in government. Though groups within this category are without links to fascist or national socialist movements, they nevertheless tend to attract people from these milieus.

The Hydra That Won't Die

"What is needed in Greece right now is a military junta, which would not need public approval and could use tanks against strikers and demonstrators."

— True Finns MP Jussi Halla-aho.

Along come the 'Finns Party' (previously called the 'True Finns') and challenge my simple categorisation. They have 38 out of 200 seats in parliament and are currently the biggest opposition party. Their xenophobia even extends to the crisis-ridden south of Europe, as Finland has had to participate in the Greek bailout packages. As a recently formed party they should belong in the third category though they lack the sophistication of many of their counterparts and amongst their incredibly crude homophobic and racist remarks one can also find many that question the extent of the holocaust and appear sympathetic towards Nazi Germany. Even though they have no direct organisational link to neo-Nazis, they certainly do not self-censor themselves in a way to exclude Nazi ideas. Maybe this shows that the days of careful political positioning where a closeness to national socialism and fascism seemed incompatible with parliamentary success are over.

There seems to be some attempts of Golden Dawn to take a leap from the first of these categories to the second, as the appreciation of Nazism has some problematic elements for a populist party who might just have progressed a little too quickly to work on its facade. There is no doubt that GD have roots and inspiration from recent Greek history, but if we look at the sources of current solidarity these come from the neo-Nazi groups and parties of Europe and beyond. A source of inspiration, GD give hope to Nazis who have not yet watered down their politics as a tactic for parliamentary rewards, while years of contacts between GD and foreign neo-Nazi groups also places

GD in a larger neo-Nazi context. Even though the broad appeal of open national socialist ideas in Greece is problematic historically, maybe the time for the Nazi is here once again, as the political centre is increasingly pulled to the far right. GD will either have to reinvent themselves slightly to become more presentable, or perhaps convincing people that the Greek is the real übermensch will be enough.

A new political Europe is taking shape as political parties of different backgrounds and ideologies, but similar in their nationalist and xenophobic stances, are winning parliamentary victories that would have seemed impossible not long ago. There are hardly any countries in Europe that currently do not have successful anti-immigration parties. Some of these parties are neo-Nazi, some have neo-Nazi roots and some seem free of such a past whilst whipping up strong nationalist feelings as an opposition towards the perceived cultural threat of immigration. It is easy to say that people are drawn to these parties due to a lack of confidence in the mainstream parties, but the inherent racism and hatred towards 'undesirables' that goes along with this is harder to explain. Looking at the far right tendencies around Europe might however be an important tool in understanding the appeal of these parties and groups, and discovering effective ways of developing anti-fascist tactics. Even though they are not all friends many are connected and they are growing and making alliances by looking beyond their borders. Antifascism must keep up with these developments in order to confront the fascists in all their forms and wherever they pop up, our internationalism is a weapon.

"The one thing with writing stories about the rise of fascism is that if you wait long enough, you'll almost certainly be proved right. Fascism is like a hydra- you can cut off its head in the Germany of the '30s and '40s, but it'll still turn up on your back doorstep in a slightly altered guise."

- Alan Moore

— *Coraline*



CONTRIBUTIONS TOWARD THE FORMATION OF THE LATIN EMPIRE

The principal thesis of the lectures on the 'Philosophy of History' is that a socio-political upheaval of the sort that resulted in the French Revolution was only possible and necessary in countries where the Reformation had failed to carry the day. Hegel states this proposition quite unequivocally. His starting-point is the fact that the French Revolution triggered off a movement in the Latin countries where Catholicism was the prevailing religion. This movement was not brought to a halt and waves of reaction and further revolution followed in relatively quick succession. The source of all this unrest lay, according to Hegel, in the fact that these nations had remained Catholic.

-Lukacs, *The Young Hegel*

Revolution is a vast project motivated by sweeping ideas. Thus, the reader will no doubt pardon some grand historical ideas being elaborated in this piece, as this is largely unavoidable in revolutionizing reality and in revolutionizing thought. For example, since this is an anarchist study, we can return to our own history, where we see that the division between Marx and Bakunin fell on many lines: personal, political and various other differences. However, very few make the observation that the split between, not the two individuals themselves, but the followers of Marx and Bakunin, largely ran along the lines of Northern and

Southern Europe. This divide is effectively that of the Latin, Catholic, Mediterranean world, against that of the Germanic, Protestant, Baltic North. If we think to ourselves today, what are the countries that suffer from austerity, imposed by this Northern world, we find they are largely the same countries of the South, colloquially called the PIGS: Portugal, Italy, Greece, Spain, and occasionally, Ireland, another Catholic country, is thrown in as well. Equally, these Southern nations are those that have the most social unrest, and in recent European history have had the most social turbulence. Thus, the issue certainly merits some attention, and among intellectuals freed from the stultifying school of Marxism, Agamben has recently called for a 'Latin Empire' to form against austerity, following the lead of the famous Hegelian, Alexandre Kojève.

What did Agamben mean by this call, which was quickly seized on by everyone as a dangerous heresy? Basically, nothing other than the common-sense observation that Mediterranean nations have more in common with one another than with Nordic countries, and so have a more real affinity with one another than with the Protestant North. Even the Mediterranean lifestyle, with its long nights outside, the famous talking in the Stoas or walking around which gave us the name Stoics and Peripatetics, is impossible in the North, with its wind, rain and snow. Any observer who has visited, either lengthily or at least honestly, countries in both South and North can remark on the clearly visible cultural differences in a casual way. Similarly, simple everyday differences manifest themselves politically: for an illuminating example in line with our opening citation, if we think of the Americas, we find a largely peaceful Protestant North and a revolutionary Catholic South. The only countries with histories of repeated social revolutions and turbulence in this Hemisphere are all in the South. Or for our English readers let us reflect that the only part of the (former) U.K. that has had any serious revolutionism was in Catholic Ireland and this souvenir remains in the still-Catholic parts of Northern Ireland, and more examples could be adduced along these lines.

So starting with these self-evident and uncontroversial observations, I would like to have an anarchist investigation of

what all this means for revolutionaries today. This must happen because quite unfortunately anarchists often defer to a Marxism which, because of its materialism, has no capacity to explain these very real spiritual divisions in Europe. The watchword for this investigation will be that of Bakunin, who correctly saw the link between possibilities for making a revolution, and its enemies, namely, *God and the State* (and not some mythical economy). Bakunin's basic ideas which he took from his formation in the school of Young Hegelianism, where they were quite common, was to regard the religion and the political life of a nation as intertwined. He did this from the perspective of making revolution. So, famously, in his notes on Germandom compared to the Slavic world, Bakunin found the Slavic world had a deformed and weak state, related to its Orthodox Christianity, compared to the Germanic one. This is why Bakunin thought there was more potential for revolution in Eastern Europe. Now there is a lot of outdated rhetoric in Bakunin's Pan-Slavism, however bizzarely anarchists often disregard the wealth of insight of one of the founders of their school of thought. Because of his insight into a basic facet of reality and revolutionizing this reality, Bakunin famously predicted the Slavic world and Spain would have great revolutions, as against Marx, who predicated his scheme on England and Germany. And, in the 20th century, the entire Slavic world, because of its weak state formation, was revolutionized. But in an irony of history, it was Marxism that made this Pan-Slavic revolution a reality, not the Anarchism of Bakunin and Makhno, for example. To add even more irony, one could say what really was the ideal of Marxism was most fully realized in the Scandinavian Protestant social model, not in the East. All these twists and turns of history in no way detract from the merit of Bakunin.

To continue the observation, why did Bakunin think there was less chance for revolution in the Protestant Germanic North? What is special about Protestantism as opposed to the other forms of Christianity? First, Protestantism internalizes what previously was external. As the saying goes, Luther got rid of monks and priests to make everyone a monk and a priest. This internalization includes the relation to the state, which

previously was regarded as of little importance, since Heaven was believed to be more important than Earth. This is why, as Hegel and Bakunin noted, it is Protestantism that makes for a really strong and durable state, since Protestantism has most clearly divinized the State. This was also why Stirner made a connection between the secret police of the State, and the conscience of the individual believer; the police that tries to know every crime, and the God that knows every sin. This is aptly shown in the history of modern Prussia, most famously: this first Protestant country (in this way divinized) united the rest of Germany around itself in a repressive way, defeated the German Catholic powers of Austria and Bavaria, and then fought with England, another Protestant land, over the issue of world dominance, before coming to its well-known end. For Bakunin to focus on Prussia as objectively counter-revolutionary, the global leader of reaction as first witnessed in 1871, and later at Brest-Litovsk and after 1933, seems to us less anti-Prussian than clear-sighted. Because he had grasped an essential feature of the world, Bakunin's warnings against Prussian reaction became even more true after his era. It is not the economy that determines everything, as in the inept view shared by English Liberalism and Marxism, but rather the spiritual beliefs that manifest themselves in the world that have a large role to play.

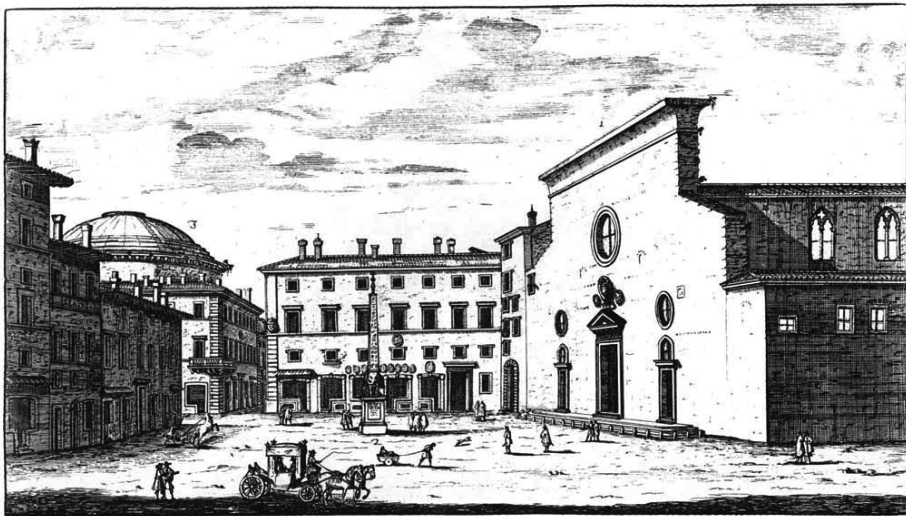
For example, the modern conception of the economy, which we call capitalism, comes from Protestantism, as pointed out quite some time ago by Max Weber, and accepted, in a greater or lesser fashion, by everyone except purist Marxists and neo-classical economists. It has not been so noticed, but Bakunin also says the same thing in an offhand way, as this was a quite obvious connection for prior generations. So in *God and the State*, he notes, "[Protestantism] is the bourgeois religion *par excellence*. It accords just as much liberty as is necessary to the bourgeois, and finds a way of reconciling celestial aspirations with the respect which terrestrial conditions demand. Consequently, it is especially in Protestant countries that commerce and industry have been developed." This being said, I would opt here for the lesser fashion of taking this connection, because my point is to introduce a greater refinement and variety of factors in

evaluating the world, in opposition to outdated 19th century economic crudity, and also there are many fine distinctions which are beyond my capacity to touch on: for example Weber noted that Calvinism defended the cause of the Reformation in wars with comparatively much more zeal than Lutheranism, just as the Calvinist states of Holland and partially the U.K. became the centres of capitalism; equally should we lend more focus to spiritual relations, material finance or technological industrialization as defining capitalism, etc. With this in mind, I admit that there is little of interest in the positive and purely academic definition of the exact recipe for the making of capitalism out of Protestantism. As I stated previously I am more interested in the negative definition of what structures produce a brittle state, and for focusing on the political, not the economic realm. Along these lines, where politics has blurred into enforcing economics, it is not very surprising that the countries today who are enforcing austerity, not with 'market forces' but with state repression, are the Protestant U.S.-U.K. and Germany. They have made the game, so naturally they enforce their self-made rules. But because of this belief in the economy, itself a secularized Protestantism, the Protestant lands have in no way escaped typical Christian conceptions and behaviour. Just as was remarked by the Young Hegelians, the secularized state with a still-devout populace is in one sense the perfect completion of Protestantism (notably in the USA). Elsewhere, the guiding hand of God became the invisible hand of economics, which is fitting as Smith was, quite literally, a Protestant moralist before the creation of his Protestant moralistic economic theory.

In this way I claim that the North Protestant lands *are more religiously Christian* than the South. They *appear* to have less acknowledged Christian believers, numerous Catholics or Muslims, and the Protestant believers are more divided into sects. But this only comes from an incorrect way of seeing the essence of the religion. Christianity in no way concerned something formal, but rather was concerned almost exclusively with essence. This was emphasized most significantly in Protestantism, in its emphasis on faith, as the inner core,

not the outer shell of devotion. Protestantism got rid of the millenia of practices and history associated with Christianity, but the bitter essence remained. Yet this focus on the inner is in fact the essential essence of Christianity, which is essence, not form. After all, Christianity simply stole the Pagan holidays, so we find Jesus' birthday, which is nowhere mentioned in the Bible, comes to be the day of the Pagan celebration of the winter solstice and the rebirth of the sun, and there is the same astrological connection with his supposed Passion. This becomes even more marked in the minor days of various saints, etc. We have another good example of this inattention to form in various architectural examples, such as the famous Roman temple to Minerva that became *Maria-sopra-Minerva*, or the *Maison Carrée* in Nîmes. These were all Classical buildings converted to Christian worship, as there is little attention to form, but the essence put inside the form.

In the South we have all the faded forms of Christianity which no one takes so seriously, and which *can be hit* as they are externalized (e.g. unused Church land or concessions will be taken away- or Mt. Athos will have its designation reversed,



ALTRA VEDUTA DELLA PIAZZA DI S-MARIA DELLA MINERVA.

1 Chiesa di S. Maria della Minerva.

2 Obelisco innalzato da N-S-PP-ALESSANDRO VII.

3 Tempio della Rotonda.

Gio. Batt. Falda del. et fecit.

Per Gio. Giacomo Reffii in Roma alla pace col privo del S. Font.

6

renamed as a quarantine zone for the spiritually diseased, which is how it effectively functions). With the Church in the South there is the clear correlate that this Church functions in the modern world as basically a business enterprise. There is a clearer genealogy from the Church to the modern business world, since the Church now functions as a curiously antiquated corporation. But if it functions this way, then clearly this makes it more mundane and less believable as a spiritual expression, and moreover it is more materialized as being a significant force on the side of the reaction. So the enemy is quite visibly God and the State. But the Church alliance with State and economic life means that if things begin to happen to the State and economic life is disrupted, the Church will be taken in by the general wreck. For revolutionaries this would be a positive outcome. While in the North there is not even one formal Church, but the essence of Christianity, this joylessness, this unhappiness, as Nietzsche says, this great "No" to life, is in fact everywhere, and worst of all, is *hidden away* in the entire tissue of the society. It is even in many radicals, where you find in the North a strong vegan or straightedge scene unlike the South, and I would hope not to have to belabor the connection of these practices with puritanism.

It is much the same with non-violent civil disobedience, a Christian concept stemming from negation of an always-violent life. Moreover with the expansive, typically Protestant way of thinking which is concerned with a unity in thought overriding the real world (as otherworldly ideas of purity override actual life), radicals from Protestant lands with non-existent or feebly-existing radical movements occasionally critique the radical reality in the South on the basis of their abstract concepts that have no correspondence to the real world, the 'heaven' of their ideas against the sinful 'earth' of an actual movement, with its shortcomings and setbacks.

So there are many things one could, with justice, abstractly critique in Greek Anarchy, or even abstractly critique the entirety of the movement itself, but the point to note is the abstraction, since there is not elsewhere in Europe

any comparable Anarchist movement, except in Spain, which is also in the South. In our world things change slowly in an historical sense, and changes are always based, not on abandoning a real movement for a contentless abstraction, but in a certain sense in taking the movement more seriously, and wrestling with the implicit spiritual content of our ideals. In this vein although we are for equality regardless of nations, this is rooted in the problematic pointed out by Aristotle, where we are all equal in potential, but not in actuality, or where the one is a negative criteria, the other must be a positive criteria. Potentially, every country should have a powerful and dynamic Anarchist movement, however, actually, in contemporary reality; only a few do. That they do, is only to be comprehended by thought dealing with reality, not, for example, thought negating reality, saying there should be no national oppression, as a normative claim, and going from here in one bound to the unsupported empirical claim that different nations don't exist today, because we are all Protestants, workers, or humans. As an example of this type of thinking, famously the Comintern failed in all its attempts to transpose 1917, with a notable case being China in 1927, where they insisted on repeating the Russian model of seizing cities to spread revolution. This was a disaster, and Mao prevailed upon the remaining cadres to take account of Chinese conditions (which in practice, again, meant dishonestly using Bakunin's program of peasant uprisings and pretending the ideas were Marxist). Rosa Luxemburg, in the midst of the turbulence following the 1918 November Revolution, also wrote an article shortly before her murder, claiming 'How German is this revolution!' This is quite strange because it reveals problems with one of the intellectually sharpest of the Marxists, as evidently a revolution in Germany would be forced to have some German characteristics, unless we had the strange *a priori* notion that all nations must make the same characterless revolution. At any rate, real thought would say that actual differences *do* exist, and, in order to destroy states, one has to take into account various very real cultural differences, which was the method of Bakunin and hence can be said to belong to anarchism.

Incidentally, I would like to continue a bit along with the idea that Protestantism relates more to thought than other forms of Christianity, and so these countries privilege abstract thought, just as these lands generally produced the big-picture thinkers we deal with today: Hegel, Stirner, Bakunin (at least he was a student in Berlin), Nietzsche, Heidegger, and for the Marxists, Marx, Engels, Lukacs and the Frankfurt School, etc. So, on the other hand, why are there Thatcher and Merkel, multiculturalism, meritocratic ideals of the bureaucracy, and government-sponsored recycling in the North? Because the point is not the more classic one of who, specifically, holds power, but that *the idea* of power is itself being realized, just as this state tries to encompass everything inside its divinized reality: the refugee from Somalia, the post-industrial worker and internet capitalist, the leftist on welfare, the problems of global warming. . . “we are all in this together”, etc. I *don't say* that these countries really succeed with these claims in reality, because hypocrisy is a well-known trait of Christians attested to from Antiquity. But that's not the point — the point is to know that these are the ideas these countries have about themselves. They have idealistic ideas about how their world should work, which comes from their formation in extremely idealistic Christianity. For Northern radicals this leads to the bewildering profusion of, and importance given to, so-called critical theory, nowadays predominantly French or Anglo-American sub-Marxism, which one does not find so much in the South, which has more of a taste for the older classics, so to speak. I would also say here that this is a good thing for the South, since the majority of what is produced today as theory is effectively only a more confused version of things already said long ago. If the perspective of today lies in realizing thought, then perhaps separated thought has reached its zero-point for now, and hence the intellectual productions (e.g. Žižek and Harvey criticizing, or Badiou ignoring, the riots in Athens) are basically of zero value, a proposition I strongly believe many have secretly arrived at, but have been too afraid to say, since Anarchism is supposed to be intellectually inferior to Marxism and its latter-day epigones. But most today would no doubt suspect that this Marxist theory of production that “produced” mainly the

disasters which were openly predicted by Stirner and Bakunin, would in truth be the less intellectually valuable of the two sides.

Anyway, to return to our guiding thread, basically we seem to have liberal, rationalized, secular, multicultural, progressive, 'green', Northern Europe (with its female Chancellor) confronting backwards, barbaric, traditional Southern Europe. Even reading the newspapers from Protestant countries, and the establishment ones from the South like *Kathemerini*, this is largely how the Greeks and other Southern peoples are portrayed, in half-colonial terms, as lazy and work-shy, irrational, irresponsible, and so on. Whereas in truth we have a radicalized Christianity in the North being opposed by the memory of past revolutionary struggles, and a chance and the desire to break out of Christianity in the South, because here, Christianity is stuck in its little box, where it slowly fades away into basically irreligious traditional folk festivals, especially when combined with the overtly anti-Christian revolutionism of the past few centuries. Regarding Christian holidays, as noted before, none are really authentically Christian, but random local celebrations or pagan astrological remembrances preserved in the strange and moving forgetful memory of the masses, so they are not really so bad if imbued with a spirit of happiness, since this is the true anti-Christianity. Furthermore the South has already rejected the prior Northern attempt of enforcing joyless, secularized Protestantism in its significant Resistance movements. And in passing, I would like to note that the Resistance famously retreated to the rural regions for guerrilla war, something against Marxist orthodoxy, which focuses on urban workers. The German party, famously, took this urban dictum the most seriously, and never could resist fascism. Whereas the more rural parties from the more rural regions were capable of resisting the technological onslaught that came from the North. Equally, Christianity was largely an urban religion, whereas the rural regions remained true to their traditional faith, well after the advent of the Christian empire. This is where the term comes from, pagan, by association rural dwellers, which eventually became a term of contempt. In going back to its roots Protestantism again established itself most strongly in cities, in Geneva, Amsterdam and London. So austerity

today can profitably be conceived of, in large terms, as the 'city' of the North lamenting the backwardness of the 'countryside' of the South and East. But I think we, as previously with Bakunin, have to question whether this apparently retrograde countryside might not become a great force if linked with revolution?

At any rate, revolution has already proved itself to be, as Hegel saw, a sort of substitute Reformation for the world of external Christian religion. Northern Europe could not make, because it did not need, another of these upheavals, and very quickly, most famously in Scandinavia, Marxism became another sort of Protestant reformism, just as the U.S.-U.K. did not even need Marxism as a real force to make their reforms. The state could be reformed peacefully in Northern Europe, because the Reform obviously established the principle of reform in its political bodies. This is not to say there was no violence in the history of these nations; famously the U.S. was shamefully violent against its labour movement, which is why we celebrate May 1st. Yet it is also true that in Protestant lands, Protestantism established the priority of self-control, and of abstract thought in the religious life. So, the workers and bourgeoisie control themselves to limit excesses, and both sides are capable of thinking about their respective positions, and of reaching this prosaic compromise we call the welfare-state, in a gradual and yet real way: the reality of this reformism was in the 'labour aristocracy' of England, for example. The North had violence but few social revolutions, and the few revolutions there were, were all quite confused and relatively feeble, most famously in Germany's 1918. I would also mention England's half-revolution of 1640 and 1688, which is the paradigmatic half-way Protestant revolution, provoked only by an unreasoning authority and ending in the compromise of the newly-forged Liberalism. In a loose metaphoric sense, the Protestant state could be thought of as a willow, supple and able to bend in the wind, whereas the external Christian state is more like a rotten oak that perhaps takes too much wind in a storm, and so can break. But as I said before, it is not an abstract and meaningless question of preference in the positive sense, as in which tree does one like, but rather, the negative sense, as one plans to axe a certain type of tree as a destructive wood-cutter.

So the point is that revolution can also go farther, and become not merely a substitute Reformation that has to secularize the state and modernize economic life (the task accomplished by the Marxist bourgeoisie in their countries, basically), but as a movement that finally leaves the terrain of this horrific religion altogether. We are at the period of reversing the Wars of Religion, in a sense. This would make real the call of Agamben for a Mediterranean cultural unit, and it would show that an analysis rooted in thought could comprehend the actual terrain of struggle today, as opposed to an analysis rooted in self-denying, thoughtless thought, Liberalism-Marxism. Then, in the 16th century, it was the poor, underdeveloped North that fought against Charles V and his world monarchy, that had some kind of new and real faith confronting a decadent world. Now it is the Protestant world that is afflicted with an all-too visible decadence, as in the American Way of Life.

So it is the South that can throw down the gauntlet to the current masters of the world, the Northern Protestants, and represent a new spiritual movement developing out of its past revolutions. Only anarchism can provide this impetus for a new struggle, and in the South, as an addition, revolutions have never been exclusively Marxist: 1789, 1848, and 1871, for instance, as well as Spain's heroic Anarchist tradition. Camus, unobserved, at the end of *The Rebel* called for the decentralizing, Mediterranean tradition of the Commune of 1871, for Anarchy, just as did Breton as he aged. Similarly, Bakunin's last attempts at insurrection were in Lyon and Bologna. From this, and numerous other examples, it follows that there is a real tradition, and a real chance, for Anarchy in the South to form a spiritual response to austerity, and to completely leave behind the Christian era. If we return to the beginning of the article, and think of a union of the southern European regions, some claim that Agamben is always reluctant to elaborate practical applications of his ideas, which presumably comes from his formation under the detached older Heidegger. However, Agamben recently said in the closing remarks of his lecture here in Athens, we must *begin to think real anarchy*. Clearly, the idea of a cultural unit can really only fit as an anarchist, non-

state alliance of revolutionary regions, or else it is doomed to be another boring bureaucratic reshuffling of red tape. And finally revolution cannot really be content with being a few tiny states in the South: rather, revolution here would be the most universal of revolutions, belonging to everyone, to humanity, since it would defeat the hitherto most universal civilization, which we have taken to calling 'capitalism'.

In a practical sense, what can this focus bring us today? In Europe we find three regions: Protestant, Catholic, and Orthodox. The Protestant lands are all industrialized, serious economies, and supposedly secular, liberalized welfare states. The Catholic and Orthodox lands are less developed, more overtly religious, and their states are more mired in corruption and malfunctioning. As the economists have said, Greece and Portugal, for example, are simply too rural to support modernity. Geographically we think of them as being at the far ends of Europe. This is the South. While, sadly, the East has had the idea of revolution so tarnished by the Marxist debacle that we find a very bleak picture there: Poland and Hungary recently have had deeply conservative governments, harking back nostalgically to the fascist era. In the Protestant North there is too much non-violent pacifism, political reformism, and too much easy wealth to have serious revolutionism. Only in the South do we find the history of revolution still alive in the people, coupled with this externality of government and economy. This is why one can hope for a Southern alliance of Anarchist revolution, an heroic axis of liberty, of the Mediterranean as opposed to the American way of life.

In brief, the only options for the future are *barbarism* or barbarism. The first is the so-called barbarism of the South, the inattention to debts, money, work, and petty regulations, the laughter and singing of the village celebration, the love of liberty and memory of popular revolutions, the *Ψυχή βαθιά* (deep soul) of ever-renewed rebellion, this great heart of the proletariat. This is one sense in which we are for barbarism. The second, perhaps a passive or more real barbarism, is the dull Protestantism of the rainy, all-too regulated North,

this pettiness, the unhappiness engraved on every face you see passing on the street, the surveillance cameras, the silent cafes with everyone plugged into their own little computerized world. And furthermore, I don't doubt that the North will condemn revolutionists as criminal barbarians, anarchists, etc. But not so very long ago the South had the culture of the Renaissance, of Velasquez and Cervantes, while these now very respectable Protestant states, Germany, Holland, England, U.S.A, were quite well-known as the lands of fanaticism, piracy, plunder, and criminality. Perhaps this is what these governments still have remained, and it would be better to think of austerity in this regard. If we are forced to choose between these competing spiritual values, then the advantage clearly lies with the South. Even the great figures from the North knew this, in some way. Byron came to fight for Greece, Orwell fought and made his *Homage to Catalonia*, Anacharsis Cloots and Georg Forster joined 1789, while the admiration of Hegel, Hölderlin, Goethe, Nietzsche and many others for Antiquity and the French Revolution is well known. This, we from Protestant lands can proudly call our own revolutionary-touristic heritage, which remains with us at *The Barbarian* today in Greece.

In closing, this article is really just an argument for a better analysis that can leave the completely failed model of economics explaining everything, which, as everyone knows, comes only from English economists and later Marxists; anarchism already possesses richer intellectual models in the work of Stirner and Bakunin. As Agamben said very reasonably in a later interview concerning his article on the *Latin Empire*, "For more than two hundred years, human energies have been focused on economics. Many things indicate that the moment has perhaps arrived for *homo sapiens* to organize human action afresh, beyond this single dimension." Certainly, we are arriving at this moment. Of course, a minor danger would be to say economic factors don't exist at all, which is simply the other side of the mistake made by Smith and Marx, saying economics is the only real thing. Plato and Aristotle, and even Hegel, treat of economic issues, but in their proper place, as rather

low on the scale of intellectual and spiritual importance. Thus the point would not be so much the economics of austerity, facts and figures, from which one can prove austerity has been counterproductive and inefficient from an economic view (incidentally proving that the question of neo-liberalism is in no way one of scientific reason classically considered, but of something like religious belief); more importance lies in the spiritual values and political forms of the North imposing themselves on the South. Then the disconnect between North and South would reveal a gap in which something might happen. We can treat the real totality of life, instead of a minor part of life spuriously called the totality, as with the economy. With this method, one can go from greater degrees of abstraction to lesser to situate ourselves in reality. So, with Greece we find we are in Europe, in an Orthodox country but in the Mediterranean South, in a maritime state, broken up into islands and regions and historically never able to unify itself, and this same modern state was deformed by its cobbled-together character with its various imperial patrons (England, France, Bavaria, Russia, later the U.S.A. etc.), and we have a society that just left Fascist dictatorship in the prior generation, a trait it shares in Europe only with Portugal and Spain. I also think it deserves mention, how curious that supposed materialists never pay attention to real material conditions, since before Marx, with Montesquieu for example, it was quite common to speak of the climate and the geographical surroundings as bearing an influence on societies, just as De Tocqueville ironically remarked that the people needed good weather in order to fight. Surely such conditions, influencing the formation of societies, have an influence on the possibilities of changing societies. After all, it was almost entirely the Kronstadt sailors who decided the revolution in St. Petersburg that began the revolution in Russia, and sailors later mutinied in Germany at the port of Kiel to end WWI. For revolution, that Athens is at heart a maritime city, along with Barcelona, has a not insignificant meaning, related to the emancipating character of the sea that flattens all distinctions. These material conditions, while also not being economic, do have some real role to play in analysing a situation.

Essentially, we should not look for hope from an unreflective economic analysis, where we say that revolution must come from the poorest, or it must come from the richest, which is a contradiction in Marxist thought that reveals some of its numerous intellectual defects (e.g. Marx claimed revolution must come from England, the richest country, but it will be the increasing poverty of English workers that will make the revolution—neither of which happened). Rather we should, with Bakunin, look for contradictions and deformities in the State, informed by religious life, against which we see the political chances, formed by political history. From a quick view, we see that Greece is riddled with these contradictions, and this helps us to explain, not only why Greece has the radical movement that it does, but why it has had the turbulent prior history that contributed to forming today’s movement. In other words: when we begin to follow Agamben’s call, and *really think Anarchy*, we see that only Anarchism has the intellectual capacity to explain its own presence in the South, just as Anarchism is the only political actor that has the potential force to accomplish an historically unprecedented revolution in the South.



North, Protestant

- Social anarchy in a society already post-social.
- The movement tries to be more inclusive and joyful than a frozen society.
- Cultivation of anormality. Trying to be outside of an all-inclusive system.
- Internationalistic movement, since there is little movement inside the countries.
 - Highly theoretical but with little chance for practice.
 - Never the 'right moment', but 'revolution is coming'.
 - Radicals are state-funded, with welfare and academia.
 - Not so family-oriented.
- No collective social traditions to recall.
- More environmental and 'green'.
- Still having problems with the lamentable Christian concept of non-violence.
 - Not so serious, or else comically over-serious.
 - Better modern music.



Greece

- Individualism in an anarchic society that still remains social.
- Are less inclusive and joyful than most of the society.
- Seem quite normal. Effectively trapped inside a closing system.
- Greek movement, since we are in Greece. Dozens of political prisoners.
- Insurrectionalism, for example, is a practice.
- Always the 'right moment', but 'revolution is never coming'.
- Radicals try to fund themselves or get family help.
 - More of a family focus.
- Recollection of recent revolutions.
 - Not so 'green'.
- Violent, as life is violent.
- Serious, believing.
- A distinguished tradition of music, but often very average modern music.





WELCOME TO CALL CENTRE ATHENS

The old work ethic has disappeared along with the massive obsolete structures of capital which required a permanent army of producers, yet work still has far more implications than mere survival. Millions of people still compete for the privilege of turning up day after day, year after year, to surrender body and soul in exchange for a wage.

- Jean Wier's Introduction to 'Let's destroy Work, let's destroy the Economy' by Alfredo Bonanno.

- Where are you from?
- What are you doing here?
- You move to Greece now?

These were the continuous questions that I met when moving to Athens a few years ago. At the kiosk, in the post office, in the taxi. Why would anyone be foolish enough to move to Greece of all places and during these times? People talked about the impossibility of survival as if we all want a full time job and a straight normal life of work, consumption, death. Eventually I found myself blessed with the most unusual opportunity, employment in Greece, in crisis, now.

Many people have found their way to this call centre which is located in Kallithea and handles the customer services for many big national and international corporations. The conditions are considered very good and after stumbling through some tests and

an interview I found myself in a 3 week paid training programme. Every week ended with an exam which was necessary to pass in order to progress to the next weeks' training. Only one person failed and had to leave, as the test could be taken with notes and access to the internet and training materials and retaken on the Monday of the following week if not passed initially. Towards the end of the training we were taking calls under the supervision of other employees and then we were released into customer support for one of the biggest computer companies in the world.

Even though I have no fondness towards the corporate office environment I must admit that the beginning was not as bad as I had expected. A regular salary is something that I had not had for 10 years and we weren't treated badly. What is interesting is how conditions that would seem obvious in relation to regular corporate work had already eroded in Greece. Some of the excellent conditions of my new job, in comparison with the general reality were; salary paid on time, salary paid in full, and overtime paid. On top of that were the added bonuses based on performance and general bonuses, paid in untaxed supermarket and restaurant vouchers. My new managers and coworkers were a mix of Greeks and internationals, often overeducated but with a wide range of previous experience, and current realities. Some were young, some old, some were students and some had families, loans and huge financial burdens. Whilst initially many were grateful to have a job, increasingly continuous discussions about our conditions and hatred towards this job were formulated during lunch breaks and the few moments that allowed us to talk to each other.

The way that the call centre workplace is organised creates little space for anything other than work. The employee is hooked up to a computer and ideally functions as a human addition to a computerised network. At the exact time your shift starts you should already have checked your emails and be logged on as available. The calls then start arriving and you answer with a friendly voice and start logging the information about the customer and their issue as you receive the information. When you are done, you have one minute to finish your notes, log the case in the system, send any relevant emails to the customer and be available again. A few

seconds pass and you are on your next call. If you work full time you get a short 15 minute break and a longer 30 minute lunch break. In both instances you change your status on the computer. If you wish to go to the bathroom or anything like that you also have to change your status to 'break' so you're already then using up your 45 minutes. Half an hour is officially set aside for training but only if there isn't a long line of calls waiting to be received. Sometimes a supervisor will ask you to change your status as they have negative or positive feedback to provide. To extend these discussions for as long as possible is one of the only possibilities for minimising the time you spend on calls. The only other break from work happens if there are more calls answered than there are calls coming in but you are still sitting with your headphones on waiting for that sound that indicates a call coming in. Officially you are not allowed to play games or surf the internet during this time and sometimes there were crackdowns on this from time to time and people would be sent home for the remainder of the day without pay like naughty schoolchildren.

The good conditions came packaged with precarious ones. Contracts were short, ranging from 1 to 5 months with a total of 10 holiday days a year and zero public holidays. The 10 holiday days were in relation to your contract so if you have a 2 month contract you still have the right to less than 2 paid holiday days during that time. Unpaid leave was possible but not guaranteed so there is almost no freedom from work and on top of that, schedules were released on a weekly basis and you would not get next week's schedule before the Thursday of the preceding week. The schedules consisted of 8 hour shifts for the full-time staff but the shifts could start anytime from 10:00 to 14:00 resulting in no possibility to schedule in any kind of regularity in one's normal life as you never know when you are going to work in one or two weeks' time. We also worked on Saturdays, with Sundays as the only guaranteed free day of the week. The whole time that I worked there I had no paid sick days as IKA (state health insurance) currently takes forever to come into effect even though a nice sum is taken from the monthly pay-check. On top of this, people would suddenly disappear very suddenly, people were fired on the spot without warning and a whisper would go around pointing out the empty desk as a technician would come

to take the computer away and wipe it clean for the next human interface to be attached to it.

The customers range from old people with simple issues and perhaps a need to talk to someone, to the rich assholes who are angry because they can't use their computer or just want to vent their life's frustrations by putting someone down. Racist and other oppressive behaviour does not have to be tolerated but someone calling you stupid and incompetent is ok. It takes a lot of patience and kindness and at the end of the day one does not have much left of that for normal life when leaving work which leads to a miserable feeling during free time. All customers receive a survey after the call so they can evaluate you. One needs to have something like 90% positive feedback on these surveys. On top of that, the system measures your 'average handling time' which should ideally be about 13 minutes, your 'after work time' which should be no more than 1 minute, your percentage of calls forwarded to the senior department, your sales and a whole bunch of other things that are hard to keep up with. Also, your calls are randomly listened to by a Quality Analysis Department who check your notes and the call and send you a review where you pass or fail. On a regular basis your supervisor or manager will go through these numbers with you because they are never all the way they should be because it is impossible to meet all the criteria so you are always struggling on some detail of your work.

All these aspects combine to create a feeling of never being good enough, never knowing what the outcome of any part of your day will be like, no possibility to plan your free time and the double feeling of hating your job and fearing losing it at any moment. In a time of economic and political crisis, this feeling of uncertainty becomes amplified for the worker whilst the precarious nature demanded by the call centres meets less resistance and critique. It is no wonder that many call centres now are based in the PIIGS (Portugal, Ireland, Italy, Greece and Spain) countries and as the workforce that they can choose from is bigger and more qualified than ever and more desperate and more willing to put up with low salaries and unfavourable work conditions as well. However, the call centre has long been a work place with similar conditions to those mentioned so far.

“Call Centres were and are an attack on the refusal of many office workers to accept a deterioration of their conditions (in banks, insurances, the post office, telecom and other offices). For many workers call centres mean longer working hours, forced shift work, constant control and intensification of work.” [Hotlines no.1, October 2000] ¹

There are a lot of writings about call centres and at some point several of us started reading online versions of these between calls, most notably the German “Hotlines- call centre | inquiry | communism” by Kolinko (a German libertarian communist group), and found that though call centres might thrive in the current conditions in Greece our conditions were not new but rather central to the way that call centres are organised globally. Kolinko’s study of call centres shows that the conditions that characterise call centre work here in Greece were common practice across Europe and beyond even in the late 1990s and early 2000s. Common aspects include the managerial structures where supervisors and managers who used to be employees look over the production floor whilst the bigger bosses pressure them to provide high results in relation to customer satisfaction and all the other measurements of effective call handling. Short term contracts, high turnover of staff, uncertainty, performance targets and evaluations, ever changing schedules and constantly changing procedures that combine to induce a stressful work environment and also have negative impacts beyond that resulting in both psychological and physical complaints were well documented by several interviewees as well as the authors who found employment in call centres as part of their study.

Call centres, as they are now, boomed in the 1990s and Kolinko reported that even though the business recorded growth in the early 2000s, there were also a lot of closures and outsourcings. Many call centres are now located in India and some other Asian countries but when looking at the closures back then it can be assumed that call centres also moved or were outsourced south within Europe and that those call centres received more clients. The inquiry found that the workers at call centres could be generalised as young, well

¹ Quoted in “Hotlines: call centre-inquiry-communism” which along with related material can be found here: http://www.nadir.org/nadir/initiativ/kolinko/engl/e_index.htm

educated, carrying out unskilled work- hence low salaries, majority female, “relatively high [salaries] when compared to other jobs in the ‘service sector’”, stressed, not union organised and high turnover of staff is common.

An interesting development is the increased use of computers for both work efficiency and control of workers. In fact the introduction of the computerised control of everything that the worker does is documented as being followed by the implementation of bonus schemes based on several aspects of worker’s behaviours including their break times. So the computerised aspect of the job not only increases efficiency but also controls the worker to an even greater extent by providing comparative data that can be both rewarded and punished. As stated in 2001 by a German worker:

“At first we didn’t give a shit about the ACD [computerised Automatic Call Distribution] data. We can control our break times on the phone but we didn’t take it that seriously. But then the call centre management came up with a bonus scheme...So once a month we get a letter saying if we got the bonus or if we didn’t. Our data must be below a certain average. They also list the different items: how long you were logged on, how many calls you had, how many entries you made into the program, how long your average time was, how much time you took for post-processing, and of course the breaks...At first this really changed the mood, suddenly everyone paid attention not to be late, how long their breaks were, and always making entries into the program. Everyone started comparing their data.” [Medion, Muelheim, 2001]

The introduction of advanced computer systems works to squeeze as much work as possible out of every worker whilst contributing to a competitive work environment which leads to increased pressure and possible lack of solidarity between workers. Workers’ struggles in call centres are virtually impossible, as the whole concept is very much built with this in mind. The possibility for some kind of union or workers’ organisation of any kind quickly seemed impossible here in Athens. In fact, one of the questions during the interview was about that and I managed to play stupid and not really answer it. During times of general strikes in Athens, the company even organised several private bus lines that picked

up workers from all over Athens while security guards were on high alert at the company doors. Some kind of big scale sabotage quickly seemed to be the only possibility of resistance, but how to do so was beyond us and anyway it would only provide a temporary relief. Learning how to mess with the status on the computer system so as to be able to have a few extra minutes of freedom each day made little difference. Going over the prescribed break time was possible and safe for a while and with the added bonus that a supervisor would have a pep talk with you about being a team and you could stretch that out as it's better than taking calls. The only little act of sabotage that was easily practiced was to create free support by claiming that the phone line was bad and calling customers back which meant that the calls would not be listened to, then providing free support that the customer is not entitled to whilst robbing the company of that potential income, writing in the notes that the customer figured it out themselves and then you get a good customer survey also. Little tricks like this seem like nothing, but whilst the company is made sterile and hostile towards anything else, little tricks and acts of vengeance are all you have to feel any power at all. Getting drunk with coworkers, sharing tricks and bitching about everything also creates a feeling of solidarity and works as good therapy.

It must be said that even though many of the conditions that we find in the Kolinko study were similar to our experiences we also came across drastically worse scenarios such as "a place like Atesia in Italy, where the workers are formally 'self-employed' and have to 'hire' their work-equipment and the 'wage' barely provides them with a living, to Quelle (warehouse company) in Germany, where the workers on the phone have to receive orders literally without any breaks." Other scenarios included single day contracts in Berlin (where you sign your contract for the day at the beginning of the day), unpaid internships, 100% commission based salaries, shift-based work where workers might finish one shift at 22:00 and start their next one at 07:00 the next day, forced overtime, unpaid trial work, forced scripts for answering the phone, strict dress codes. In more recent reports one can read about workers who might all have shifts one week but not necessarily the next, whilst continually being available for work

(what now has been called 'zero hour' contracts in the United Kingdom)². When coming across these kinds of examples, many of us were shocked and surprised at the fact that before the current economic crisis had hit properly, several rich countries in Europe had worse call centre conditions than those that we were under at the present time. This goes to show that the call centre already prefers exactly the kind of environment that the economic crisis delivers; a workforce that is precarious, desperate for work, well qualified and likely to shut up and work instead of organising and resisting.

More than 10 years ago the conditions of the call centre work environment stood out as surprisingly precarious and seemingly abusive towards the workforce. In relation, the working conditions in this specific call centre in Athens are not only better than many of the examples brought forth by such projects as Kolinko, but also much better than the conditions that meet those lucky few who do still find employment in Greece in these times of crisis including doctors and civil engineers. If the call centre was the nightmare scenario of the neoliberal onslaught of the 1990s, the crisis is the time when all those neoliberal desires get to run wild and unhindered capitalism triumphs as people in their desperation have to shut up and work their asses off for nothing, knowing that they are easily replaceable. In crisis all work starts to resemble the call centre, the new factory of our times, precarious in nature and fed by an eager workforce who still have much to lose and have no other choice than to compete for the privilege of wasting their time making money for others. There's an uncomfortable contradiction between the supposed luck of landing a nice office job and the reality of being plugged into a machine in a cubicle like some kind of factory-farmed livestock.

Let us not be blinded by either work ethic or financial desperation, we all know that work is shit and must be abandoned along with the excessive consumerism that goes along with it. No one is lucky to do a shit job where they sell their time, their kindness, their patience, whilst the free time out of work is ripped apart by anxiety

² See "A "zero-hours" contract... for thousands and thousands of hours" at <http://libcom.org/library/%E2%80%9Czero-hours%E2%80%9D-contract%E2%80%A6-thousands-thousands-hours>

In fact LibCom has an extensive section about call centres which is worth checking out for anyone who is interested in the subject.

and frustrations and littered with tasks like cleaning and paying bills. Whilst the destruction of work is an obvious desire, the road there is not clear as we are unfortunately stuck in this capitalist machine, but we can still carry this desire with us in everything we do and try to steal as many moments of freedom as possible. We should not be fooled by capitalist promises of future prosperity somewhere down the line but enjoy leisure, joy and solidarity as we try to break free and live our lives in the present.

I finish this text with these wise words from a Hollywood film:

“We don’t have a lot of time on this earth! We weren’t meant to spend it this way. Human beings were not meant to sit in little cubicles staring at computer screens all day, filling out useless forms and listening to eight different bosses drone on about about mission statements.”

— *Office Space*, 1999

— *Coraline*



THE GOLDEN THUMB

So when I left Germany that beginning of February full of Romantic ideas about a life on the wild European highways with just my thumb and my guitar (and a bankcard for safety) the first lift which took me out of the Berlin periphery was at the same time I think the longest (measured in pure highway kilometres) and also the most interesting. So I stood only 20 minutes at this roadstop called whatever-dorf which was a great feeling because it made my goal seem so much closer, which was to hitch-hike across the Alps and go down to stay at a farm in central Italy somewhere near Monte Cassino (and actually never come back to Germany and live from then on as a hairy farm hopping outlaw without material needs).

Then stopped a big (even for German habits) shiny, silver limousine with a very old man in his 70's at the steering wheel. Of course I asked him if he could take me and he agreed and was very nice. He even bought me food and drink in a restaurant, then later took me all the way down to the Austrian border. It took us eight hours or so. Only him and I in probably the fanciest car ever to come and stop at this silly clone-roadhouse. He was a manager, he told me, working in an executive floor of one of the biggest German industrial companies (this really happened, by the way); which one he wouldn't say, so we can only guess, but probably he was a man of not the most popular trade in these times. He said he earned so much and had so much money that he will never ever be able to spend it all due to the bare quantity but also because of lack of imagination, he let me know sadly.

— Young man...I worked all my life since I went to school and I was always running behind my bosses; it was not a job, the company owned and still owns my life. And all the money, all the money, my wife and I ...well we only tried to keep it, save it, to quantify it. If we were spending it, it was only on big dinners or rendezvous with people of use to us. The only time in my life, and oh how well I remember that week, was in Italy 34 years ago. We had a job to do down there, with some assistants and some of the department. We were having conversations with partner companies and something in the organization went a little wrong. So it happened we had actually nothing to do for this one week in Italy and we were placed in this hotel on the beachside where we...lay in the sun and...went to the sea...and... yes, that's what we did and then the week was over and it was such a beautiful time for me. The first time in my life without pressure, enjoying something...really enjoying something. Well now that I'm retiring, my wife and I decided to make our life more simple because there is nothing about these marble covered villas and cars like this if you lack the most important thing which is imagination, will...being a person with dreams and challenges and goals, and that's why I like what you are doing, and yes I regret I never did something like that, that's why I took you. Well but one burning passion I have, one interest I came to recently, *I converted to the Jehovah's Witnesses*. I read the bible young man, in fact, many, many different bibles.

By this point of the conversation, we had not already got down to Bavaria, no, to tell this to me it took him maybe 25 minutes and we had just left the Berlin ring road and I knew there were about 8 hours more to go.

— You might not be so interested in this but it's actually very wise what is written in there...

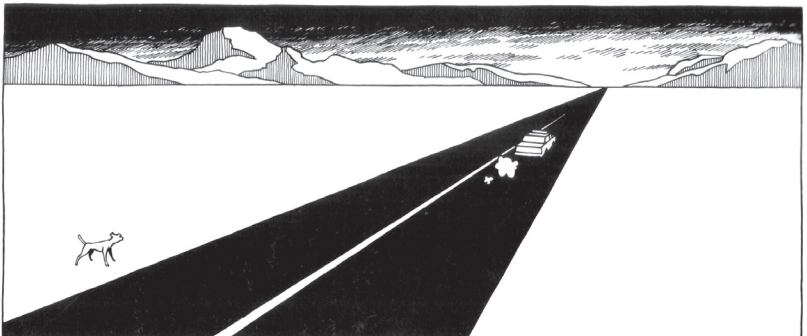
...and so on. Well about his stunning bible knowledge I don't remember so much any more, this story happened a long time ago, something like before the biblical religions there were only very cruel religions like one very "popular" one where they believed in a god called "Baal" who loved bloody human

sacrifices, so that was before Christianity. Of course I was a little terrified having this experience with “witnesses” and their rage-like lust for conversion but I have to say he didn’t really try to convert me so much and I don’t know how but in my memory it was by far not the most awkward or boring ride I had, as I said before actually from a certain view it was one of the most interesting and I liked the old man and felt sad for him. There are people with more existential problems but isn’t his fate one of the most terrible? I would maybe prefer life to end under a bridge than this insane 70 years of emptiness which just appears to me like total hell. Rather than that I would prefer to have myself sacrificed for this “Baal”. Anyway it was dark when he dropped me off close to the Austrian border and when I turned away to the newly arriving cars he was wishing me good luck and told me

– And if on your trip you should happen to find a bible somewhere, take a look inside, it’s worth it, believe me!

Only now do I think that I actually could have given to him as a final completion of his bible collection my very own Kerouac “bible” which my brother gave to me, and perhaps could have helped him. However, we parted ways without exchanging books, as the bible has unfortunately a very joyless image and so till now....no bible for me, sorry.

– R



ECONOMY OF CRISIS

Economy as an ideology

Doing things, or creating, distributing and consuming objects, services, or ideas does not belong to the sphere of economy *per se*; they become such only after being subordinated to a certain kind of *discipline of economy*. In other words, all activities, social relations and their results have to be *economized* before becoming economic. Economy is an *achievement of economization* rather than a starting point or a pre-existing reality that can simply be revealed and acted upon¹.

During certain processes — that I shall roughly summarize later — economization has become the biggest ideological and political project of the last two centuries and economy probably the most protected epistemological discipline ever in existence; containing not only the conventional economy; production, distribution, consumption and their practices and institutions, but nature, culture and the subject as well. This more holistic understanding of economy should be taken under special consideration when we are talking about economic crisis, and ask, what exactly is in crisis and what is the role of economy in relation to this?

1 Koray Çalışkan and Michel Callon, "Economization, part I: shifting attention from the economy towards processes of economization", 2009, *Economy and Society* 38(3): 369 – 398

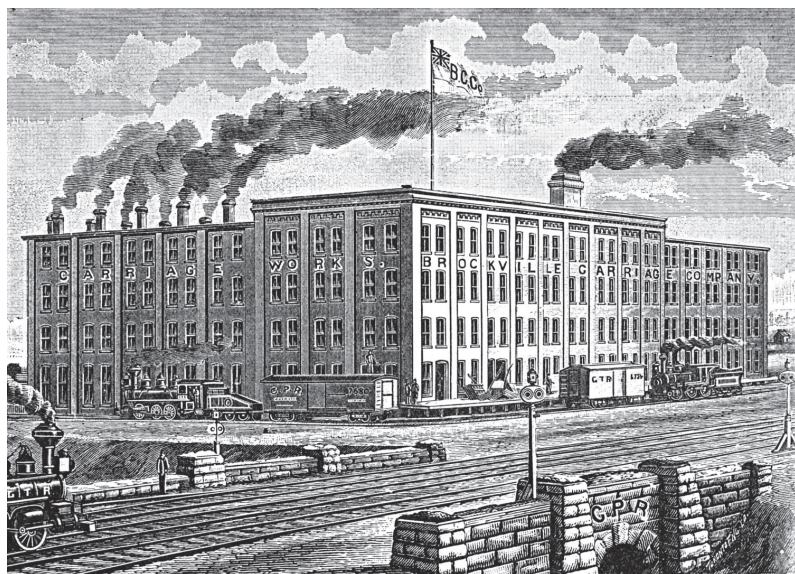
When we are talking about economy we are never talking only about business as usual. This is just the surface of a more deep-rooted and fundamental philosophical idea. Economy is basically a combination of some abstract ideas like *utility, value, exchange and markets*, applied to everyday life. By understanding most human actions and social relations within the fields of utility, value, exchange and markets the discipline of economy makes it possible to interpret activities as work (value), things as products (utility), distribution as trade (exchange), cooperation as competition (markets) and so on. Here utility is the fundamental motivation for doing things; value is the measurement of people and things, which are related to each other throughout different transactions and this happens in the sphere of freed or limited — but still — markets. These same abstractions can be found in all modern economic ideas as such or as simple negations, just as they belong to all mainstream political ideologies from left to right.

By reading history one can notice that the idea of economy, as we understand it now, is a relatively new concept. So-called *uncivilized* cultures did not have anything comparable to our economic conception at all, even though they were definitely doing things we could call, or better economize, as production or work. For ancient Athenians *οικονομία* (oikonomia) was the custom of household maintenance, and had nothing to do with utility, value, exchange, or markets either. Aristotle stated contrary to the contemporary economic belief that value and exchange — if they are necessary — were not formed by nature nor automatically but by law or custom, “and it is in our power to change [them] and make [them] useless”².

Utility, value, exchange and markets were widely included in economic thinking and the European world-view as late as the 17th–18th century soon after the discoveries of new sources of wealth — fossil fuels³ (black coal and oil) and colonialism. According to historians of political economy, this inclusion came about on account of a relatively small minority of people who wished to establish a new foundation of power, against

2 Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*

3 Philosophers of the Future, *The Barbarian* 1/2013, pp. 4-15



Crown and Church. In practice, this occurred in the realization of large scale land privatizations at home or in recently occupied colonies abroad, bringing about new social structures, means of production, and capitalizing their appropriated wealth. Economy and its philosophical basis did indeed voice some optimism about general prosperity but it was mainly used as a theoretical foundation to legitimate the law and order required for these processes of exploitation. The term *political economy* was introduced in the 18th century. Very soon after that most of the European states were more or less based upon the theories of economists and similar economic theories were adapted by the critics as well.

It is important to point out that all previously mentioned economic developments happened as a part and continuation of the scientific revolution and followed the tide of a scientific world-view. And indeed in the end of the 19th century the term *economics* replaced the term *political economy* and finally became "the recognized name of a science"⁴. If post-Newtonian science was all about the creation of harmonious rational systems (like classical mechanics for physics, Kant for ethics or Hegelianism

4 W. Stanley Jevons, *The Theory of Political Economy!*, 1871, pp. xiv-xv

for political history which Marx later economized) based on laws and striving for the truth, so was economics. However, the early modern scientific world-view had some severe problems with handling individuality or exceptions.

At the dawn of the 20th century a few turning-points happened that gave rise to the wider economization of knowledge. First of all, some thinkers started to doubt the unity and harmony of “*the reality*” early modern science was providing. Sigmund Freud and his psychoanalytic school came up with the theory of the unconscious, formed by each individual’s personal history, as a source of knowledge. Philosophers, sociologists and other humanistic schools also started to shake the unity of scientific world-views and focus upon the particular (the unit, the atom, the subject). This new paradigm divided previously unified knowledge in two: micro and macro. A bunch of new general universal (macro) preconditions were needed to be able to define something that is particular (micro). These theories generated structuralism, that was finally vulgarized into popular post-modernism.

A good and illustrative example of this division of knowledge is macroeconomics which divided the economy in two different spheres. The economy itself was understood as a universal self-sufficient macro phenomenon that functions independently beyond any mortal control, but was constructed from countless micro-economic events of everyday production and consumption. However, these two levels were not connected theoretically. A similar division occurred in the natural sciences as well. Quantum mechanics was able to offer a theory of a general structure of the Universe, but was not combinable with classical natural science.

The philosophy of knowledge (e.g. epistemology) reacted to these developments by concluding that knowledge is formulated in a certain discourse, for example socially. What is revealing here (in the discourse of economization) is that some of the epistemologists proposed that a *truth value* of scientific theory is evaluated by the success of the theory — in other words how well it succeeds *in the markets of knowledge*.

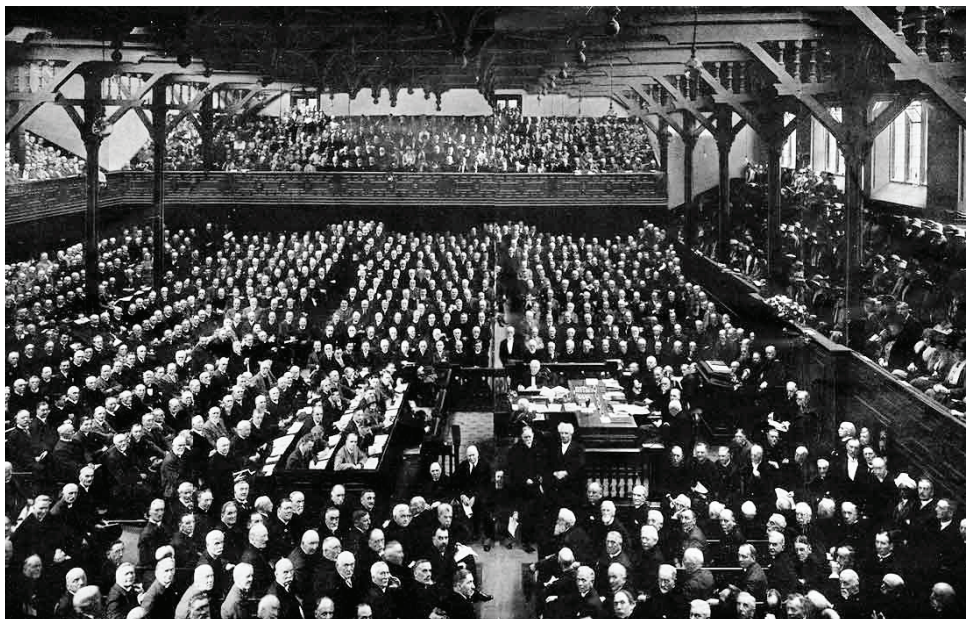
I hope this hasty overview contributes to an understanding of how knowledge was liberated (in terms of *Liberalism*) from a solidified and homogenous classical paradigm, but was paradoxically *not* freed from a similarly homogenous idea of the new universality: the markets of knowledge. This means that knowledge has become dominated by one epistemological trend — not physics nor philosophy — but economy. One could call this the great economizing process of knowledge. Most notably this has happened in the humanistic sciences and to something we call a ‘human being’, the subject or *the self*.

Economization of the self

As I argued in the last section, the process of economization proceeds together with an emancipative liberation process where old meanings are re-evaluated and new ones constructed. This kind of liberation process of the western subject has happened on two levels. First, a promise of liberty has been classically granted throughout financial success and consumption — *arbeit macht frei*. Second, it has happened on the level of identity which the Euro-American intelligentsia has been actively recording since the early 20th century. Paradoxically, the latter has often been theorized by the same thinkers that criticize the former one. In the end these two ideas have very little difference.

Criticism of financial liberty can be summarized as concealing an idea of capitalistic exploitation — like marxists should say; it does not really liberate anyone. But this discussion is overdone and not so important here. What I am more interested in is the liberation process of the human being or the subject, that has been a big project of left and right liberals since the 19th century, which was addressed against all reactionary forces and conservative normativeness. This process has been very important in many senses, but still fundamentally a dramatic failure in terms of constituting the macro-economic idea of humanity that the liberation of science did for knowledge.

By declaring everybody’s equality, the liberation of the subject ended up by assuming universal human worth as a basic value and the idea of equality as a fundamental starting point



for normativeness and comparison. This general valorization of the human has separated each subject from all subjective qualities and transformed the idea of the human into something that is comparable to currency. Even every human will wear and erode with time but retain the same value, just like a ten euro bill. To study what the basic unit of human worth is one just need take a brief look at the most bare and unveiled persons of the society, those who have no signification or status other than their species. Combining this notion with an observation that the liberation project developed inside an economizing world, using economic terms and discourses, we can see how good-hearted liberalism created a subject that has to be invested in the market to succeed and gain more value in order to be something. The problem lies in the very idea of liberty itself that is more an *operational environment* than quality of the self. Even clever thinkers like Michel Foucault could not really avoid this kind of economism, when he said that the modern subject should become *un objet d'art*⁵. Art is definitely a commodity that exists in markets. Also,

5 Michel Foucault, "Conversation avec Werner Schroeter", 1982, Werner Schroeter, Paris, Goethe Institute, pp. 39-47

some early radical nihilists, as Sergej Netjajev, were trapped in the same conception. For Netjajev, a revolutionary should be seen as revolutionary capital that “should, of course, be spent as economically as possible in order to derive from it the greatest possible profit”⁶, as he did himself, by telling his comrades to kill Tsar Alexander II of Russia instead of spending their time on trying to free him from prison.

One could ask what is wrong with the liberty of free markets and answer with the criticism that an equal basis for subjects and free markets has never existed. These ideas bring the topic closer to the analysis of the true meaning of the crisis that I will present in the next section.

First of all, it is important to notice that there are some differences between left and right liberalism, but even more important to recognize is that there is also a lot in common. A quarrel about communalizing or freeing the markets is less important, since both of them are trying to establish a freed but economic subject, aiming at universality and productivism. Second, one should not confuse liberal theories with liberalism as a political project. The former is an incompetent salvation doctrine among many others and basically used to legitimate the latter. Practically, the latter does not correspond with liberal theory as it has been historically established through dictatorship (i.e. Pinochet’s Chile and the Soviet Union), a strong bureaucratic state (social democrat Scandinavia) or global authorities like WTO, World Bank, NATO and so on (the governments of Reagan and Thatcher). These political projects have not been free nor liberal, but were certainly economic.

Despite all the great efforts of left wing liberalism, the idea of economy itself has become almost identical to right wing liberalism, as the economic epistemology that the idea implied supports mainly right wing values. This is why strong polarized political divisions in mainstream politics do not really exist anywhere in Europe. The New Left can somehow make

6 Sergei Netjajev, “The Revolutionaty Catechism”, 1969, <http://www.marx-ists.org/subject/anarchism/nechayev/catechism.htm>

it out after a big step towards the liberal right by accepting the same economic discourse. But, in the end, the problem of economization stays more or less the same and seems to work for the right liberals or, alternatively, for neo-fascist ideologies as its defective negation. In spite of the anti-liberal agenda of fascism (that seriously contradicts the liberal theory), fascism seems to benefit pragmatic political liberalism which needs some sort of social Darwinism and totalitarianism to maintain the free market ideology. This explains the close relations of the liberal right and neo-fascists.

Like reactionary ideologies, economization is based on an inadequate interpretation of the real world and the subjects, and suggests artificial universalism or naturalism, and needs strong and repressive power mechanisms to exist. This is not only the case with market liberalism but the liberal idea of the self as well — both just use different tactics of power. As Aristotle already noted, markets — even free markets — are based on law and do not function without the classical legislative and repressive powers: state, justice, police, army, and different technologies of control. Consequently, the liberal subject controls itself by self control. To be able to succeed in the market of identities, one has to adapt certain successful presentations and trends of the self — like sexuality, gender, style, diet, ideology, religion, nation, class, and so on, that we better know as identity politics. Liberty surely opens a theoretical path to creativity and real variation, but practically, competition and unavoidable privileges that the system requires to be maintained, seem to restrain the diversity and liberty of each person. Together these two spheres of power — external and internal — constitute something comparable to the Deleuzean concept of control that is all inclusive. This is a fairly good representation of how economic hegemony works, even though I don't agree with the totality of the idea of Deleuze.

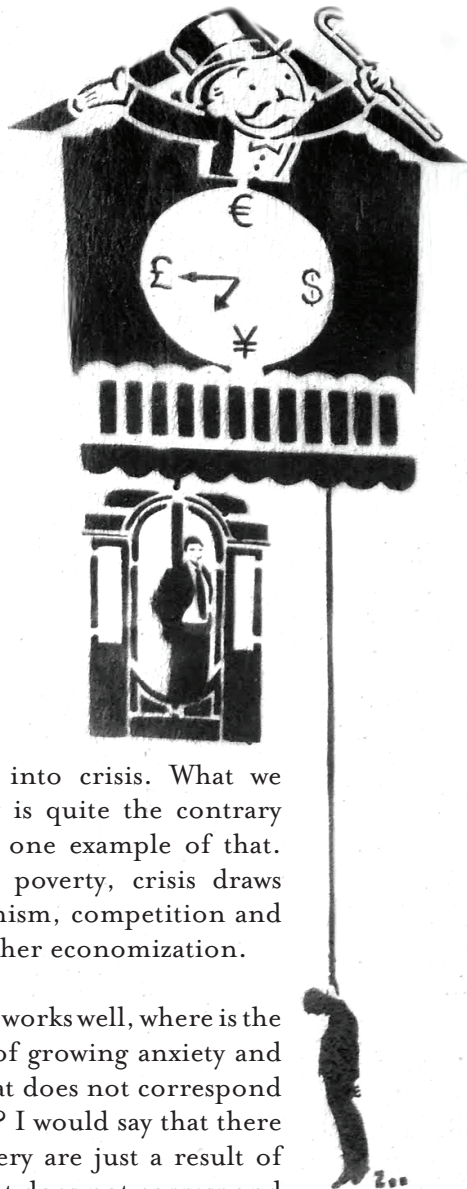
Economy of crises

Now I have defined economy as a comprehensive epistemological system, including not merely business as usual but a great deal of knowledge and the subject as well. I have explained how

the project of liberalism has incorporated the whole economic discourse into right-wing ideology and how the economy operates on two different levels of repression: external and internal. From this position we can, finally, make some observations about so-called economic crisis.

The first and most prominent note is that economy as an interpretation of reality is not in crisis nor is the process of economization. Economic crisis would literally mean that everyday reality would correspond less and less to economic thinking and this indifference would derail the idea of economy into crisis. What we have seen in the last century is quite the contrary and the current crisis is just one example of that. By intimidating people with poverty, crisis draws them even closer to utilitarianism, competition and markets in favour of even harsher economization.

So, if the economy still works well, where is the error and what is the source of growing anxiety and suffering? What is the idea that does not correspond anymore with everyday reality? I would say that there is no error. Anxiety and misery are just a result of bad economic success and what does not correspond with reality is the optimistic economic idealism that has become the dominant ideology during the period of economic growth. Financial success created a misconception that surplus and economy are synonyms even though the success is just one side



of the coin. Economy as a doctrine of salvation bears fruit only in circumstances of economic growth. This deduction is surely cynical and sad, but it strictly follows the logic of economy. However, it opens an interesting philosophical view that partly explains why the hegemony of economy is so strong and all-inclusive that even the collapse of idealism does not destroy it.

In the crisis, the discipline of economy is able to combine spiritual and material spheres that some philosophies have classically divided. This happens through internal and external power. But, before I go into details the theory needs some preparation.

It seems that there is something specific about the current crisis. It is happening at an historical moment, when the business economy has *already consumed* a big part of its own material bases — mainly oil and phosphor — and created noteworthy environmental problems that cannot be ignored much longer. There is plenty of discussion about the material imbalance between the demand and supply of fossil fuel and the critical state of climate, soil and water resources as one of the causes of the current global crisis. This was surely to be expected as the essence of economy is unlimited competition and success. Even early economists, as Thomas Malthus, predicted this already at the end of the 18th century. However, this reality gives a special character to this ongoing crisis in comparison to other historical crises. If I'm wrong here and some new resources are found, it does not really matter since the dynamics and direction of economy will explode and consume them anyway. By saying this, I do not mean that we have an economic *and* environmental imperative to act upon. No, just that these are only the conditions of the economy.

What this means in practice is that some sort of optimistic expansion of wealth has stopped and the invisible hand that was supposed to self-regulate the markets in order to benefit the whole society has become paralyzed — if it ever existed. From now on, surplus is a privilege for fewer and fewer people simply because of material reasons. However, what the

crisis is proving against common optimism is that *surplus is necessary for creativity and imagination*. Day-to-day hunger and the struggle for survival in this economic condition does not leave much space for daydreaming, and creativity has surely become more worldly, purposeful, and economic than ever in modern times. Unemployment does not just mean more free time, like it meant during the times of the wealthy social welfare state.

It is important to make clear that poverty and suffering are not based on real shortages of food, houses and other wealth. It is the economy which establishes the order and controls material resources, human activities and the distribution of things. Under other circumstances there would not be this kind of scarcity.

But let's go back to the current crisis. What is happening now is that lack of surplus pushes the whole project of economy in a more material direction. This movement — from ideal and theoretical into material and practical — is important here. In other words, during the crisis previously metaphysical economic ideas are clearly becoming *hard reality* and the situation is forcing people to be truly economic subjects: utilitarian, competitive, calculative and selfish. It does not matter if these qualities describe *true human nature* or whether economic theory is well argued or not. Economic hegemony does not provide any other choices. This is guaranteed by bureaucrats, tax officers, cops and judges and the little economist inside our heads who commands us to calculate and prioritize. And this is how spiritual and material become one. The tools are repression and violence and the result, the totality of "one truth".

As we have seen during the crisis, the materialization of the imaginary or of metaphysics enforces economic order and rearranges power relations. The period of financial surplus that started around the 18th century established metaphysical — ethical, idealistic and imaginative — power structures. It surely takes a lot of imagination and idealism to unify a diversity of people into a nation, nation-state or proletariat, and all these

entities had a significant share in political power. However, austerity policy shows how old divisions of power (nation-state, voters, labor movements and unions) are losing their share of power to global free market organizations, corporations and supranational powers like WTO, IMF, NATO and EU. The state that used to be sovereign is mainly a tool of governing for the desires of the new sovereignty. Here we should remember the classical anarchist criticism of the nation-state, parliamentarianism, democracy, class division and all other structures and declare that while *the new normality* is bad the previous was not good either. Despite the materialization of economized “reality” all kinds of philosophy and idealism are still possible, but the important thing is that they have less and less effectivity.

Unfortunately, to establish new epistemologies or even destroy the existing one needs some non-utilitarian creativity, imagination and daydreaming. The alternatives that we now and then hear of are more or less different reproductions of existing economic hegemony. In brief, an economic solution — Marxism, national socialism, Keynesianism, Third Way, Degrowth, Transition Movement, techno utopias or even collectivism, syndicalism or federalism — might rehabilitate the doctrine of salvation for a period but cannot deal with the fundamental question that is not technical *but epistemological*. It is all about how we understand humanity and the world.

So, let us summarize the previous. The crisis is one convention of economization, a new form of economic control and the new normality. That is why the term ‘economic crisis’ is misleading. *Economy of crisis* describes the situation best. What happens in the crisis is that the idealistic economy will be violently transformed into pragmatic economy violently through poverty and repression. By doing so economic metaphysics and imagination will become the material, hard reality. This creates a degenerative closed circuit that — as we can see everywhere — wears away knowledge, ethics and environment; in other words, the foundations of all alternatives or change. However, a closed circuit does not provide vitality for life. It needs metaphysics

and imagination in order to do so. Any kind of economic reform cannot solve the situation, only reproduce it in other forms. This all sounds very pessimistic, and it seems that we are doomed to ultimate decadence and a dead end. But this is just my use of an old technical trick to build an interesting narrative for a political essay.

Political Nihilism

History has shown that historical knowledge cannot be easily done away with, and personally I do not see any reason for doing so. But what the future can do is to reinterpret old meanings and create new ones. Two recent projects that are active in this field and have challenged economic epistemology are surely radical anarchism and *the new nihilism*. I do not want to make too strict a conceptual division between them so I will just use the word nihilism, because it sounds more fresh. Also, I do not use the term nihilism as a title. There are rather some things that resemble something we could call nihilism.

However, nihilism could be understood as an unsystematic plurality and self-determinate individuality without any universal, social or atomistic definition of the individual. For example, for a nihilist, a social reality does not need any specific epistemology to exist. Nihilistic thinking cannot claim sociability to be a natural quality of every subject; — but a true anomaly cannot be one either. For nihilism there is no theory, *every one is theory — if needed* — without artificial causality or interpreted relations imposed from the outside. From this point of view, nihilism has already overstepped universal economic abstractions, like value in a material, spiritual and ethical sense but also the idea of nihil as one undivided nothingness. The nihilist project is not against knowledge itself nor qualities of each individual but authoritarian forms of those.

What I'm going to present next might be a misinterpretation, but as I have come so far with my analysis let me be excused if I'm wrong. The development of new nihilism can be connected to this historical moment we are living now with

two points. First, one could even say that nihilism has been finalizing liberal thought by liberating it from liberalism. This could be seen as a Nietzschean antagonistic position against postmodern constructionism (that interprets reality throughout micro and macro divisions), denying it as a false concept. Second, some recent nihilist practices could be seen as opposing the general materialization of economic ideas, with the potential to breathe new life into metaphysics and imagination. However, this hypothesis needs a bit more flesh on the bone.

As I argued in the last section, economic hegemony and especially the imperative of crisis suppress imagination. The power of pragmatic economy (scarcity and cops) has severed all alternative, non-economic world-views and philosophic ideas from everyday reality, condemning them to isolation. Only one philosophy can access reality and that is non-discussable and materialized, vicious, economic metaphysics: utility, value, exchange and markets. If the moment is impossible for theoretical philosophy and life has been materialized, the political conclusion should be that new philosophical arguments have to be presented in pragmatic form as well.

Recent political activities undertaken by nihilists appear to follow this interpretation. Arsons, robberies and other forms of direct action can be seen as *pragmatic philosophical arguments*. If we read nihilist responsibility claims and other texts, we can find out that there is no reproduction of economic epistemology, nor do they provide new economic systems, any general social theory, universalities or other single-minded "truths". This distinguishes nihilists from all other political projects. However, nihilist insurrection and destructive actions are surely communicating philosophical meanings and proposing practical approaches to metaphysical questions — *what is ultimately there and what it is like* — by placing individual ethics above all and opening a sphere of organic social relations and unceasing variation.

We believe that each person makes up, for themselves, an entire universe. From this lens, everything is subjective. Our very life is our personal narrative, through our own eyes. This is why we do not believe in objective conditions that assimilate and accept a single and exclusive objective and revolutionary truth. There is not one reality, but countless realities. We do not accept mass production of revolutionary consciousness, subversive experiences, or liberating gestures.⁷

Thomas Hobbes was partially right by arguing that a “state of men without civil society is nothing else but a mere war of all against all; and in that war all men have equal right unto all things”⁸. But, one thing he did not get is that ‘war on society’ does not “mean mass death, but the death of social norms”⁹. This state of divine violence — that does not constitute power, only dissolves it — is the death of the homogenous universal subject, “*the All*”, and all other *allnesses* which try to dominate how brutal or tender we are, where, when and why.

— *Anonymous*

7 Short interview by Contra Info translation counter-information network with Conspiracy of Cells of Fire members, ten comrades currently incarcerated in Greece, April 2013, http://en.contrainfo.espiv.net/files/2013/08/interview_en.pdf

8 Thomas Hobbes, “The Elements of Law, Natural and Politic: Part I, Human nature and De Corpore Politico”, pp. xvii

9 Short interview by Contra Info translation counter-information network with Conspiracy of Cells of Fire members, ten comrades currently incarcerated in Greece, April 2013, http://en.contrainfo.espiv.net/files/2013/08/interview_en.pdf

Radical Erotica

(Dedicated to the Lovers of Riot Porn)

The demonstration approaches its desired end. Now the true face of the opposition is revealed, and the throng must come to grips with the brutal force of the law. Metal bars, pistols, shields, emblazoned armour; the sado-masochism of power. But the body of demonstrators vibrates to its own rhythm, writhing and arching with the flexible elegance of a cat, seduced by the will to stand beside their fellow man and love for the beauty of the streets.

The first stone is thrown. Rigid with the craving for resistance, the stone curves through the evening air, heavy with the yearning impulses of a thousand frustrated youths. The stone pounds the earth, raising a soft billow of dust. Heavy boots shudder and evade it only to be concealed by a quick blast of flames. The shattered bottle lies spent as flames lick and tease the softened plastic shield. Gasps echo and are consumed.

A canister rises and covers the space between force and violence; pausing erect in the air it plunges too early, just missing the gathered, swarming mass. Swathed in the veils of Salome, she takes the pulsing canister in hand, hot and hard it bruises her eager palm. She lifts it from below, avoiding the tender spitting head and thrusts it forward. It describes a thin arc of acrid opacity and explodes as it breaks into the ranks.

Another canister penetrates the dark mass, and as pulses of white steam surge it fills the gap. The dense masses surround it and close in upon the fertile throbbing clouds. Deep inside the hooded mass, the last tears trickle and are wasted upon the broken marble. Coursing in their infatuation, the crowd becomes one and absorbs the spectre of inflated capital which sinks below the crest of wave after wave, the damp shards cutting into the fibrous stakes of its neck. The perversive gas is forgotten amid the turbulent rapids which swell and rise, flowing through carved passages and changing course with the ease of a discharged pearl, loose upon the ocean's floor.

Filled by the pleasure of its own movement the body of demonstrators perforates into a multitude of different sensations, overflowing with the teeming abundance that spreads from core to extremity; finally to dilate and reform into a single entity whose scalding determination challenges the very heat of the stars and can do nothing but press forward... Athens burns.

— *Thea (under the influence of Judith)*



FRAGMENTS ON FASCISM

Fascism is the merger of state and corporate power.

-Mussolini

Fascism is the power of finance capital itself.

-Communist International, 1935

In the 1970's Foucault was asked to sign a petition against the recrudescence of West German "fascism", and the wording of the phrase clearly concerned him. This encouraged him to research, most tellingly, not historical fascism, the beginning of which at that time was only a few decades ago in Europe, but historical Liberalism, which had a much longer history. Famously at around the same time, the neo-liberalism of the Chicago school of Milton Friedman met unrepentant fascism in the coup of Pinochet, and soon, all over dictatorships in Latin America. In a bizarre way the two governing models seemed linked, and also notably, linked with the USA, the primary world power. In our own time, this seems even more the case, since the growing picture in Greece is one of both official neo-liberalism supported by the state and the international community, the refusal of this doctrine by the population, and increasingly authoritarian measures from the state and the growth of the neo-Nazi party.

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Fascism has been much discussed within Greece, and presumably within Europe, with the murder of Fyssas. One thing all the discussions so far have missed, and a perspective which was contained in the Greek movement in the past texts of the group Flesh Machine, was the state application of counter-insurrection doctrines in the role of creating Golden Dawn. This is not the spontaneous nationalist movement of ex-soldiers, ruined petit-bourgeois and fringe politicians that was classical fascism in Italy and elsewhere, but rather the propagation of these views in the society by a fraction of the State (designated by the movement with the term para-state). So to counterpoise the too-strong radicalism after December, a spuriously independent extreme right was created by granting media support and territorial protection to Golden Dawn at Agios Panteleimonas, both to reinforce a tottering state with shows of fervent "citizen" obedience, and with the later goal in mind to better present the image of the State as a neutral mediator between the "two extremes", about which the government has said so much recently. In another sense the idea still is to use and then discard fascism, as was the original plan of the German military aristocrats with the Nazis. However the interesting development is that this fundamental point of state propaganda and counter-insurrection doctrine, "the two extremes", is basically not believed by most Greeks. Not only because of the all-too obvious collaboration between police and Nazis, ineptly covered up (proving correct the Anarcho-chant "cops, TV, neo-nazis/ all the bastards work together") but also perhaps because the situation has the lack of sectarian grounding that allowed this doctrine to be somewhat successful elsewhere, for NATO at least, in pacifying Northern Ireland and to save face in exiting Iraq (here the two extremes are naturally present as religious divisions). In Italy in the 70's the doctrine only worked as it was supported by the political thoughtlessness of hardline Marxism, both unconsciously on the streets and consciously by the establishment PCI trying to gain parliamentary power. These preconditions are lacking today, to the detriment of the doctrine.

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There are many terms to describe this new state phenomenon with which we are living. So, from the Greek movement we have modern totalitarianism and democratic dictatorship, elsewhere there is Debord's integrated spectacle, Agamben's biopolitical democracy and the state of exception, Negri and Hardt's Empire, and always popular is the idea of neo-fascism, etc. The precise term is not so important (just as historically, Falangists, Fascists, and Nazis were all lumped together) but the development itself is of the utmost importance, and acknowledging it is equally important. For example with the question of armed struggle, it is getting increasingly impossible to see most of these actions as anything other than a new Resistance, and as justified by the circumstances. Those taken to prison for "terrorism" are not enemies of the people and democracy, but very clearly political prisoners of war, taken hostage by a repressive, corrupt, and delegitimised government run by finance capital and multinational corporations. The final import lies not in some intellectual qualification of a thing, but in the new ethical imperative of action that is being forged, and only Anarchy is doing this. It barely deserves mention, but for the clumsiness of their charade that some kind of legality and democracy remains in the current system, for their hopeless good faith in a bankrupt order, Syriza is only proving the final bankruptcy of Marxism in its impotence. So both the ERT occupation and Villa Amalias squat were lost, for the time being. But Anarchy knows how to defend itself, whereas Syriza held a parliamentary confidence vote that they were bound to lose, and about which no one cared. Incidentally we have gone back to the initial division at the end of the 19th century: Anarchists are self-organized and have no qualms about violence, Marxism is organized as a peaceful parliamentary party.

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Today what do we live in Greece? The government is an endless coalition government (European coalition governments are increasingly coming to resemble the Chinese politburo, just as this begins to reform itself). The government is totally dependent on foreign aid to keep functioning, the police are

almost completely Nazified, foreigners are being sent in the tens of thousands to newly constructed concentration camps, radical movements are being repressed with ever-expanding exceptional laws, State austerity measures are reducing the population to want and misery, until very recently the government was openly working with a neo-Nazi gang and considering bringing them into government, etc&c. All these abhorrent things tell us, almost instinctively, that something is afoot, and yet to our eyes there is also the presence of a society still apparently normal, without curfews or Nazi flags on every street, having opposition parliamentary parties, various newspapers, and so on. It is clear that the strange and uneasy feeling of tyranny and oppression is there, while we lack the terms to describe it to our own satisfaction. If this is so, presumably it is because we are entering a new historical era, and the foremost of intellectual tasks, is merely to acknowledge this fact, and to begin the first tentatives of understanding the changes underway. This is certainly required by the times, because what we face is no longer the fascism of the past; if anything, the modern neoliberal state in times of austerity, of which Greece is the foremost example in the world, is an enhanced form of the prior fascism.

BIRTHPLACE OF DEMOCRACY

One of the most common clichés the media uses when talking about Greece is the label ‘birthplace of democracy’. Along with reminders that words like tragedy and crisis are Greek after all, the cliché is repeated without any context. There’s rarely a mention of what this historic label refers to and it can be used to give a hint of historical legitimacy to the current system of government. As we’re all told the ancient Greeks were the smartest, most intelligent group of people which ever existed, so if our political system can trace itself back to those clever folks it must be good, right?

If we take a quick look at the historical events to which the cliché refers it’s hard to see any connection spanning the millennia. The word democracy of course, like so many others, comes from Greek. But the *demokratia* (*δημοκρατία*) of the ancient world had a completely different origin, theory, and practice to what is called democracy today. *Demokratia* as it was lived in the Athens of the 5th and 4th centuries BC has very few similarities with modern parliamentary systems. When speaking of ancient Athens I will retain the word *demokratia* to distinguish it from modern democracy.

“In a *demokratia* the poor should have more power than the rich, being the greater number; for this is one aspect of freedom which all framers of *demokratia* lay down as a criterion of that state; another is, to live as every one likes”¹

1 Aristotle, *Politics*

Ancient Athenian demokratia was born out of a revolution after a long period of social tension. This Athenian model required the active participation of each of its members rather than the passive placing of periodic Xs on a piece of paper. An open hill top where any could speak was the main site of action instead of a fence-ringed and police-garrisoned palace. Whilst I've no intention of praising the society of classical Athens a brief look at its history and idea of democracy would be useful.

Of course I'm not about to say that ancient Athens was some sort of glorious example to emulate. For all that classical Athens had a radical political structure it was an extremely conservative and restrictive society. The demokratia was open only to citizens and to be a citizen you had to be a male pure-born Athenian. Foreigners were excluded and a mass of slaves exploited. For women Athens was one of the most repressive places to live in the ancient world, even oligarchic and fanatically militaristic Sparta was a better place for women. Athens was imperialist and terrorised the Aegean world in order to impose its own interests.

At no point during the centuries of demokratia was private property or the privileges of the rich elite challenged. The rich and aristocratic had their political power curtailed but were left to live a life of luxury. Whilst the aristocrat lounged on couches at lavish dinner parties and discussed love and the good life the poor built their wealth. In many ways ancient Athens is an example which shows that a radical political organisation will not necessarily lead to radical social changes for the poor and oppressed.

In short the Athenian demokratia was an attempt to organise the political life of the territory along direct democratic lines. This experiment functioned successfully from 508/7 BC until the 320s BC. For almost two hundred years the largest territory in the Greek world had no continuous representative leaders and no judicial or bureaucratic class. It was remarkably stable at a time when the rest of the Greek city-states frequently underwent dramatic and bloody social conflicts. Only twice in

its lifetime was the demokratia overthrown. In 411/10 under the pressure of a brutal war and after a huge military disaster an oligarchic coup briefly dissolved the demokratia. The only other break was in 404/3 when after defeat in war a brief foreign backed aristocratic regime was imposed. It was only the rise of the despotic Macedonian monarchy and the superpower politics of the post-Alexander the Great world that finally crushed demokratia in Athens.

The demokratia of Athens was born out of the world of the Greek Polis. What is now the territory of the Greek state was divided into a myriad of city-states. Each city was self-governing and fiercely independent. The 7th and 6th centuries BC were times of great change in these city-states. Social life was growing and so were social tensions. With Greece being a predominately agricultural society land was of paramount importance but with the territory being largely mountainous good land was limited. The tension between those who had land and those who didn't led to conflict within the city-states. One consequence of this was emigration, landless Greeks set up colonies all across the Mediterranean. Another consequence was political strife. Often one man was able to use the discontent of the disadvantaged to set himself up as a tyrant. In other cities the rich ruled as an oligarchy.

Toward the end of the sixth century the family of tyrants which had ruled Athens for two generations was overthrown by a mixture of internal agitation and foreign intervention. Two aristocratic factions rose to prominence in the wake of the tyranny. After a few years of political strife between these aristocratic factions the people of Athens rose up supported by the aristocrat Kleisthenes. They surrounded the partisans of Isagoras and the Spartan troops on the acropolis before forcing them out. At this point the Athenian people set out a new way of governing which would become the demokratia. The 'constitution' which followed is sometimes referred to as Kleisthenic due to the fact that the uprising was in support of Kleisthenes. However this leader of the people quickly disappears from the historical record and very little is known about him.

“The demokratia has made itself master of everything and administers everything by its votes in the assembly and by the law-courts”²

The constitution which the Athenians created and evolved after the revolution in 508/7 BC was based on the idea that the people were sovereign and this sovereignty was expressed through the mass participation of the citizen body in a popular assembly and the law courts.

The assembly (*ekklesia/ἐκκλησία*) was the physical gathering of the citizen body in one place in order to debate and vote. All citizens had the right to attend the assembly which took place on the hill of the Pnyx close to the Athenian acropolis and met roughly every ten days. Payment was introduced to encourage participation in the assembly. In this open space thousands gathered (estimates range from 6-13,000) and all decrees of the state had to be ratified here. In addition to voting on public policy the citizens of the assembly also elected the generals and could act as a law court.

Meetings of the assembly would begin with the question ‘who wishes to speak?’ and anyone in attendance had the right to address the crowd. Debates were held on policies which had been proposed by citizens and after listening to speeches for and against, those assembled would vote. Whilst confident and articulate speakers held an advantage in the assembly no political parties as we have them today were formed. The Athenians voted for policies not parties. For the citizen of the demokratia the possibility existed that their voice and opinion could be heard on a regular basis.

Citizens came together in a mass to form the Athenian court system also. There were no judges or lawyers in these courts. The prosecutor and defendant put their respective cases directly to their fellow citizens gathered as a jury. Juries were made up of a randomly selected group of citizens with numbers varying from a low of 201 to a high of 2,500 depending on

2 Aristotle, The Athenian Constitution

the type and severity of the case. As with the assembly payment for participation on the juries was introduced to support those who participated. These juries listened to both sides and then voted yes or no to a guilty verdict. If the vote was guilty then the defendant and prosecutor came back and each suggested a suitable punishment which the jury then voted on. There was never a detailed law code in Athens and the juries were expected to apply general laws in specific cases in line with the best interests of the Athenian people. To the Athenians “complete articulation of the law was a denial of the collective wisdom of the masses”³. In the law courts we can see again the idea of the people as sovereign.



These two institutions, assembly and courts, were the methods the Athenians used to make group decisions. The day to day administration of Athenian territory was also handled by the citizen body. Councils and committees were formed to handle all the needs of the largest city in Greece. The poorest Athenians were initially barred from some of these positions

3 J.Ober, *Mass and Elite in Democratic Athens* Princeton University Press 1989

but it seems this rule was later ignored and participation was thrown open to all. These committees and councils were manned by a randomly selected group of citizens. A council (Boule/*βουλή*) of 500 randomly chosen citizens oversaw much of the administration and prepared legislation for the assembly to debate. Since citizens were chosen at random and the membership changed every year there was a good chance that most citizens served on this council at some point in their life.

Other committees were created to run the infrastructure of the city. From the council of 500 down to the committees, participation of a maximum number of citizens was ensured by having term limits for office holders and random selection by lot. For only a few posts would there be a direct vote for one particular person, the most important of these posts being the ten generals. As elections favour the rich the Athenians generally avoided them. Since membership of the councils and committees was decided by random lot no professional civil service or bureaucracy developed in Athens. The largest of the ancient Greek cities and the largest city in Europe at the time was essentially run by amateurs.

Demokratia extended beyond the city of Athens to be practised across the whole of Attika. Athenian territory was divided into demes which were essentially small villages. Physical distance from the assembly and law-courts in the city could be compensated for by local demokratia. Indeed "democracy at deme level was an important feature of Athenian life"⁴. Selection for membership of the council took place in the demes and each had its own assembly as well as a political officer chosen by lot. Law courts also existed at local level.

Whilst Athens had no continuous official leaders individuals did rise to prominence. Often these prominent individuals were from the rich elite. With their abundant leisure time and access to education and military experience the wealthy retained a favoured position which they could turn into influence. There has been a tendency to view the history of the demokratia through the histories of these prominent aristocratic

4 J.Thorley, *Athenian Democracy* Routledge 2004

individuals. In part this is a result of the historical record. Even modern histories can read as a succession of (aristocratic) leaders Kleisthenes–Kimon–Perikles–Demosthenes. The historians of ancient Athens, and historians in general, were themselves from the wealthy elite and so they focused their studies around members of their own class and ignored the rest. When a non-aristocratic citizen rose to prominence the historians and philosophers despised them as demagogues who had let the idea of democracy go to their heads and forgotten their proper station in life.

If an aristocrat could train themselves to speak well in the assembly and had a level of military experience they could gain a position of influence. However no individual was able to transform this influence into outright authority as there were no political positions which could give them control of the city. At each turn an individual had to persuade the assembly or law-courts to back their ideas. Even the most influential of these individuals, Perikles, at times found himself unceremoniously ignored when his advice and policies had failed. The *demokratia* also had a built-in safe guard should any individual get too powerful. Every year the Athenians held a vote for ostracism. If any one individual was deemed too dangerous they could be exiled from the city for ten years by popular vote.

“Athens is an example of a direct democracy that achieved genuine, long term, stable methods of decision making by the masses and that was not co-opted by the growth of an internal ruling elite”⁵

The basic practical principal of the *demokratia* was participation. At every level a citizen was expected to participate in the organisation of the city. They made the major decisions collectively in the assembly. Those decisions were interpreted and acted on by the citizens making up the juries in the law courts. Athenians from all walks of life carried out the administration of the city on a day to day basis and many would for a day even have been the titular head of state. At some point in their life, and for many on

5 J.Ober, *Mass and Elite in Democratic Athens* Princeton University Press 1989

a constant basis, an Athenian citizen would have played a direct role in the political life of their community whether by debating in the assembly, sitting in the law courts or involvement in an administrative committee. To the Athenians *demokratia* meant “the regime in which the *demos* [the people] gains a collective capacity to effect change in the public realm”⁶.

This collective and participatory nature is distinctly different from the reality of modern democracy. If the original concept of democracy was that the public has the ability to debate, decide and make things happen⁷ then clearly modern parliamentary systems fall far short of this. For the vast majority of modern populations the only political participation in their life is a simple vote in an election, they are asked only who will do their talking for them not whether they wish to speak themselves. Political parties and professional politicians as well as a professional bureaucracy and judiciary were completely absent from the *demokratia*.

If we look at the foundation myth of modern democracy the difference between ancient and modern becomes clear. The foundation myth of modern democracy took place in an unremarkable spot called Runnymede. Parliamentary democracy, in its English variant at least, traces its historic roots to the signing of the Magna Carta back in 1215. Supposedly this document marked the point when the English rejected the unlimited power of the king and demanded a say in their community. In reality the Magna Carta was a deal exacted out of the king by his rebellious aristocrat nobles desperate to secure their own privileges. The document itself was written in Latin so was doubly distanced from the illiterate English speaking person. As representative democracy started so it continued. Parliaments started and evolved as an act of negotiation and power sharing amongst the elite which gradually broadened out. The people, once fully enfranchised, were to have a say in who governs but were never to govern for themselves.

“Modern democracy did not develop out of admiration for Athenian democracy”⁸

6 J. Ober, *The Original Meaning of Democracy* Stanford University 2007

7 J. Ober, *The Original Meaning of Democracy* Stanford University 2007

8 J. Thorley, *Athenian Democracy* Routledge 2004

As parliaments and representative democracy developed from the 18th century the example of the Athenian *demokratia* was not in the minds of the ruling classes. After the revolution of 508/7BC the Athenians stripped power from individual positions of authority, gave the administration to the citizen body and attempted to include all citizens in the decision making process. Representative democracy vests the majority of power in the hands of a small group with minimal participation of the rest of society. When a small proportion of the citizen body has the power to direct society the ancient Greeks called this oligarchy. Indeed for many of the founders of modern democracies the oligarchic regime of Sparta was a more likely source of inspiration than Athens.

“parliament and representative government are, in democracies, merely executive organs of the bourgeoisie”⁹

The gap between modern and ancient democracy is not just a matter of time. The two systems are different concepts of society. In the modern world democracy means, at best, the people having some limited say in who exercises political power. The levers of power are still retained by an elite and only by working with or joining that elite can a citizen play a role in politics.

In the ancient world democracy meant the people exercising political power through mass participation in the executive, legislative and judicial organisation of the society. The people of Athens took control of their society from the elite through revolution. Whilst an elite still retained its wealth privileges it lost its ability to control the society for its own benefit. Decisions regarding the life of the community and the day to day management of a large city were carried out collectively with the active participation of each citizen. With its mixture of open assemblies and rotating randomly selected councils Athens offers an example of how a large group of people can organise without needing leadership or full-time bureaucracy.

⁹ Organizational platform of the General Union of Anarchists, 'Delo Truda' group 1926.

“a demokratia is a government in the hands of men of no birth,
poor circumstances and mechanical employments”¹⁰

The clichés about Greece as the birthplace of democracy hide the origins of the current system of government dominant in the western world. A look at the historical example behind the cliché has shown that these current governmental systems do not fit with the original meaning of democracy. Democracy should be used to describe a situation in which a person actively takes part in the life of their community. The members of a democracy will each have an equal position in their society and will reach decisions together with the day to day administration and justice managed collectively. When viewed as a whole society (not just the exclusive citizen body) ancient Athens failed to live up to its ideals. That doesn't mean we should ignore their attempt to create something new. For those not happy with the current state of affairs the experiences of past generations may be useful.

— *Kavévas*





Greek Anarchy...

the end result of millenia of negative theology, hovering like a dark, baneful star over the horizon of the West. A void in place of the arch's keystone, uncovered emptiness at the top of the cathedral spire of universal history, only waiting for the flame of consciousness to crumble this cracked and ruined edifice constructed with the sadness of a thousand generations. Our time has its finger on the detonation switch, waiting for the signal to detonate the final implosion at the end of our journey. Nothingness will be revealed as the ground for essential richness.

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The dazzling obscurity of the secret Silence, outshining all brilliance with the intensity of their Darkness, and surcharging our blinded intellects with the utterly impalpable and invisible fairness of glories surpassing all beauty.

-Pseudo-Dionysius

In order to arrive at knowing everything, desire to know Nothing.

- Saint John of the Cross

Only revolution brings nothingness, and that is its excellence, which its vandalism makes good again, or rather, makes complete.

-Edgar Bauer

*The break with the sacred, or rather of the sacred, may become general. A revolution never returns, but mighty, reckless, shameless, conscienceless, proud — **crime**, does it not rumble in distant thunders, and do you not see how the sky grows presciently silent and gloomy?*

- Max Stirner



CRISIS

The concept 'crisis' has indeed become a motto of modern politics, and for a long time it has been part of normality in any segment of social life. The very word expresses two semantic roots: the medical one, referring to the course of an illness, and the theological one of the Last Judgement. Both meanings, however, have undergone a transformation today, taking away their relation to time. 'Crisis' in ancient medicine meant a judgement, when the doctor noted at the decisive moment whether the sick person would survive or die. The present understanding of crisis, on the other hand, refers to an enduring state. So this uncertainty is extended into the future, indefinitely. It is exactly the same with the theological sense; the Last Judgement was inseparable from the end of time... Today crisis has become an instrument of rule. It serves to legitimize political and economic decisions that in fact dispossess citizens and deprive them of any possibility of decision... We must start by restoring the original meaning of the word 'crisis', as a moment of judgement and choice.

-Agamben

I would like to speak more of the theological version of crisis, revolt, and their connection. The original Christian idea tells us that the destruction of the world, and immense unhappiness, are in fact good things, since they lead to a decisive historic change. The resentful Christians are wishing for horrific events to happen, and they have valued this unprecedented suffering as good, since with it Jesus returns a second time to end the world. So they found the sack of Rome, in fact, not so bad, and in this curious way defended the destruction of their world; hence Augustine's position was a strange justification of the sack of Rome in *City of God*. Later in the Reformation it was quite easy for things to get out of control, and for wandering sects or preachers to announce it was the end of the world (once again), and to attack the foundation of their society. Marxism only changed from the unhappy end of the world to its continuance in a heavenly state, from bourgeois crisis to communism, all taking place in a thoroughly desacralized world (here, the world doesn't materially end, nor does God act). This is the revolutionary heritage, such as it has been.

I submit we should take upon ourselves the idea of revolution as a thunderbolt from the heavens of philosophy that punishes a wicked and depraved world, that is to say, the labour of the negative. To the world it destroys, the higher truth and philosophy seems always barbaric and admittedly enters in material form amid much chaos. However the final point to conclude the drama of revolution is that negativity negates itself and makes a new spiritual entity, so that all our violence is only changing the world back to its fundamental permanence of impermanence. Crisis, economic or spiritual, *the concept itself* in its political-theological designation as "good", "imperative", or "historically necessary", *is in crisis*. Our revolt is the last one that can relate to this tradition, as revolution, too, faces revolution inside its own borders (Anarchy is the only viable revolutionary tradition left, and the farthest away possible from Christianity and Marxism). Assuredly, this is a contradiction, but History advances by contradiction; the dialectic exists, not in materialistic social classes, but in ideas. The contradiction in our present moment is that of prior social revolution and its end

as an historical entity. The truth of our moment exists precisely as divided: revolution conditioned by recent social history, and revolution as ending in its epochal significance. Neither side is any more correct than the other, but both express the divided unity of our current truth.

For us the world itself doesn't end, but a shape of a world ends, and otherworldly happiness (which has made the world hellish for almost two millenia) doesn't enter into the world and this does not sadden us as it was never our purpose. Only *bare life*, such as it has always been, mixing happiness and unhappiness, permanence with instability, the one and the many, with Love as the child of Poverty and Resource. This new revolution we hope for would best fulfill the millennial idea that the world after the messianic historical advent is fundamentally changed, and yet, most curiously and beautifully of all, *fundamentally unchanged*, since our world is only a material shell for Ideas of Beauty, Love, and Truth, which themselves are eternal and unchanging, even as they endlessly appear in different phenomenal shapes. And if the realm of undying Ideas has survived Christian disfiguration, then, too, our material world, will also in time redeem itself, not as something changed or improved, but as something that never was truly evil or wrong. This last revolution is the ultimate crisis, revolt against the concept of crisis, and against traditional Marxist and Christian revolution: this is the only possible position today, and is the only possible meaning to give to these terms in the present context.



KANT AND THE HOUSEMATE

Foreign: ORIGIN Middle English foren, forein, from Old French forein, forain, based on Latin foras, foris 'outside,' from fores 'door.' The current spelling arose in the 16th cent., by association with sovereign. Replaced native fremd. Sense of "not in one's own land" is first attested late 14c.

Arriving late one night into my own country I was met at a friend's door by an unknown man, the housemate of my friend. I stood bedrugged, laden down with baggage and exhausted, but not for all that bearing any resemblance to a homicidal maniac. The housemate looked at me suspiciously and then alerted me to the hour. 2:30 am. Yes, international travel makes for odd arrival times. He shut the door.

A light mist began to fall on the porch. Danvir my taxi driver, kindly waiting, and who had already offered his own house for the night, looked up anxiously. I was running out of options, I had already tried two other friends, away or sleeping too soundly to notice the door. So I waited, humiliated and slightly damp.

Shortly, the door opened again, this time my friend's familiar face and arms wide.

In response to an article by Benjamin Constant, Immanuel Kant argued that there is no right to lie. That telling

the truth in every case should grant us immunity in the face of the law, so long as one has done nothing wrong. But also that this is the condition of justice, the state and the law, being as it is the foundation for the social contract: tell the truth and the system will judge what is right. Such that when, and this is his example, the assassins come to one's door in search of someone that is a guest under one's roof, one must, says Kant, tell them the truth. The truth, regardless of consequences, regardless of whether they then enter by force and murder your guest under your very eyes. According to Kant, you have done no wrong. You have allowed the murder of someone under your protection, but the law cannot touch you, you are no accomplice to the crime. You did what was 'right' and told the truth.

If this is the case my friend's housemate also did nothing wrong. Of course, legally, he was well within his right. Confronted by a stranger at the door at an odd hour one has no legal obligation to welcome the stranger, to offer her a cup of tea and a biscuit. Just as customs officers peruse a passport before granting passage, so the housemate refused entry as he sought an identity check. Both he and Kant's 'truth-teller' think the same way. First he thinks about his own legal obligation, what is right for him to do as a subject of law, a just citizen, or a legally bound proprietor – my house, my right, my state – and only then and in the second instance does he think of the effects his actions will have upon the other. He is in fact the ideal citizen, reasonably, rationally looking to his own rights and affects as the model and precedent for later social interaction.

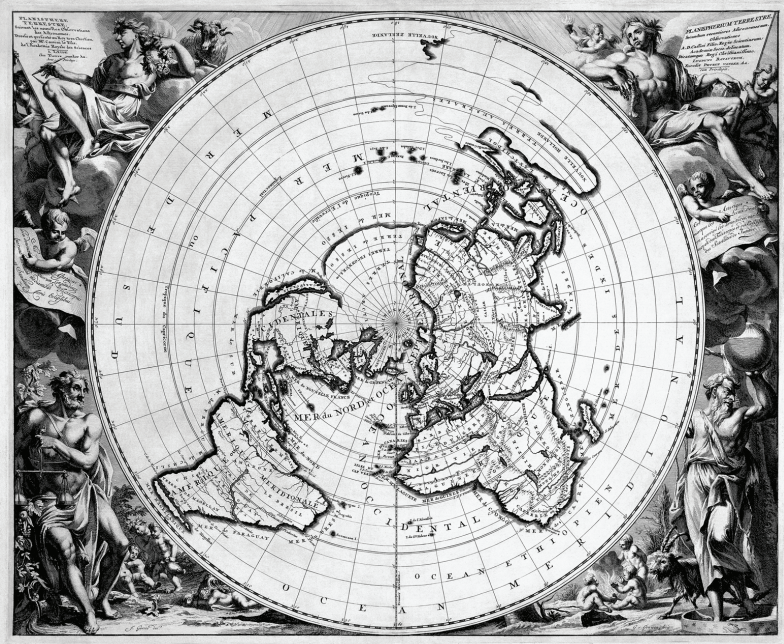
And yet without doubt his action was not right. Just as it is not right that a guest be murdered in one's own home.

If the legality of the event is not at issue, and yet the action persists to strike us as wrong, perhaps we are dealing with a justice that is not only other but at variance with that of the judicial system. A sense of justice that is closer to responsibility than it is to law, and that takes shape in one's relation to the other. Just as every member of a household has the same personal and ethical responsibility to protect the guest and foreigner

living amongst them from murderers and assailants who would do them harm. And when they fail to do so, turning a blind eye to the atrocities conducted under their roof, although they do not cease to be good legal subjects, they do fail to be good persons.

Needless to say, both examples stand as metaphors for the contemporary crisis in relations to foreigners.

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I come from what the authorities term a “successful multicultural society” where, for most, the words ‘fascism’ and ‘Nazi’ allude to their naively idealistic youth, or bring sardonic smiles to peoples’ faces as they think of Rick from *The Young Ones*. A co- editor of this journal recently suggested that when we look at Golden Dawn we’re not really talking about fascism at all, but rather undisguised neo-Nazism. Recent finds of Nazi paraphernalia in police raids upon members’ houses have reinforced this view. Fascism was something, it posed as an alternative to the earlier

imperial regimes even if the associated costs were too high for the people to pay. Governmentally enfranchised neo-Nazism on the other hand offers no alternative to the current statist and economic system, but a backward looking nostalgia that would repeat the past. In the case of Golden Dawn, somebody else's past. It is a project bound to fail, since, at the very least, if the Nazis couldn't pull it off with an entire population behind them and a massive infrastructure, how could the Greeks?

So the question remains, if militant xenophobic brutality does not describe the ugly face of fascism today, what does? Perhaps the answer lies in those complacently sardonic grins.

Let's consider the defining characteristics of fascism. Despite the colloquial ease with which the term is used, it is an intransigent concept which defeats the logic of a single and comprehensive definition. Is this because fascism is essentially predisposed towards acts rather than toward providing a comprehensive ideological platform? Or is it because we interpret fascism by interrogating what we consider to be particular examples of it in the past? No doubt this ability to evade definition should be regarded as one of its stronger characteristics.

Taking Marinetti's 'futurist manifesto' as a starting point, the common understanding of fascism rests upon a glorification of violence. Here violence is aestheticised with little regard for any perceived end. 'We want to glorify war' he states, 'the only cure for the world — militarism, patriotism, the destructive gesture of the anarchists, the beautiful ideas which kill, and contempt for woman.' But such a glorification cannot be limited to the purely aesthetic; acts of atrocity must be committed *upon someone* and *by someone*. In which case, art boils over into the social domain where the assumption is that the actors are pre-eminently the strong, those who already have a claim to being able and in a position to commit such acts, while those who are acted upon are the weak and without recourse. It is this position that allowed German fascists to

latch upon a distorted Neitzcheanism, or a Zarathustrianism, in order to provide a vague theoretical foundation for what is otherwise thoughtless, unpremeditated action. Other fascist theorists such as Carl Schmitt and Giovanni Gentile only wrote after the fact and in truth had little influence on the regimes they served. However, as experience proves, it is obvious that such fascist violence is not necessarily easily distinguished from 'legitimate' violence. Fascist movements commit a lot of their crimes adopting, assuming or simply working within the state's monopoly of violence. In Italy the fascist regime existed alongside state procedures and the judicial machinery remained as it had in the former regime.

Other characteristics of fascism are more apparently related to the economic, such as autarky and corporatism. Though these are by no means exclusive to fascism and certainly go hand in hand with the concept of the nation-state. Corporatism under fascism can be understood as differing with other forms of social grouping, on one account: that these bodies are not supposed to serve the interests of their various individual constituents, but the interest of the mythical whole. It is said that unlike modern liberal democracy which privileges the individual, the corporatist model takes the group as the basic political unit and emphasises co-operation over competition. Nonetheless, both fascism and neoliberal capitalist representative democracy function according to an exclusivist model which disregards all those individuals whose interests are not represented by the body corporate. In this sense both structures are based upon the assumption that the interests of the few represent the interests of the many; insiders are preferred and protected over and against outsiders, and class-structures are supposed to be irrelevant. One commentator on Fascism, Michael Mann (*Fascists*), has argued that fascism unfolded without regard for class structures and struggles. But if this is the case, against whom are the fascist paramilitaries enacting their violence? Marinetti's glorified violence may well be symbolic, but it is also instrumental. Before and throughout Nazi Germany the fascists were on a rampage not just to enact 'random acts of senseless violence', but to wipe any threatening

groups of political opposition off the map. Among others, racial minorities, the radicalised labour unions, communists, anarchists. Therefore Dylan Riley's irony in his article *Enigmas of Fascism* is spot on when he states that the fascists not only viewed class-struggle with distaste, 'they engaged in it with violent enthusiasm'.

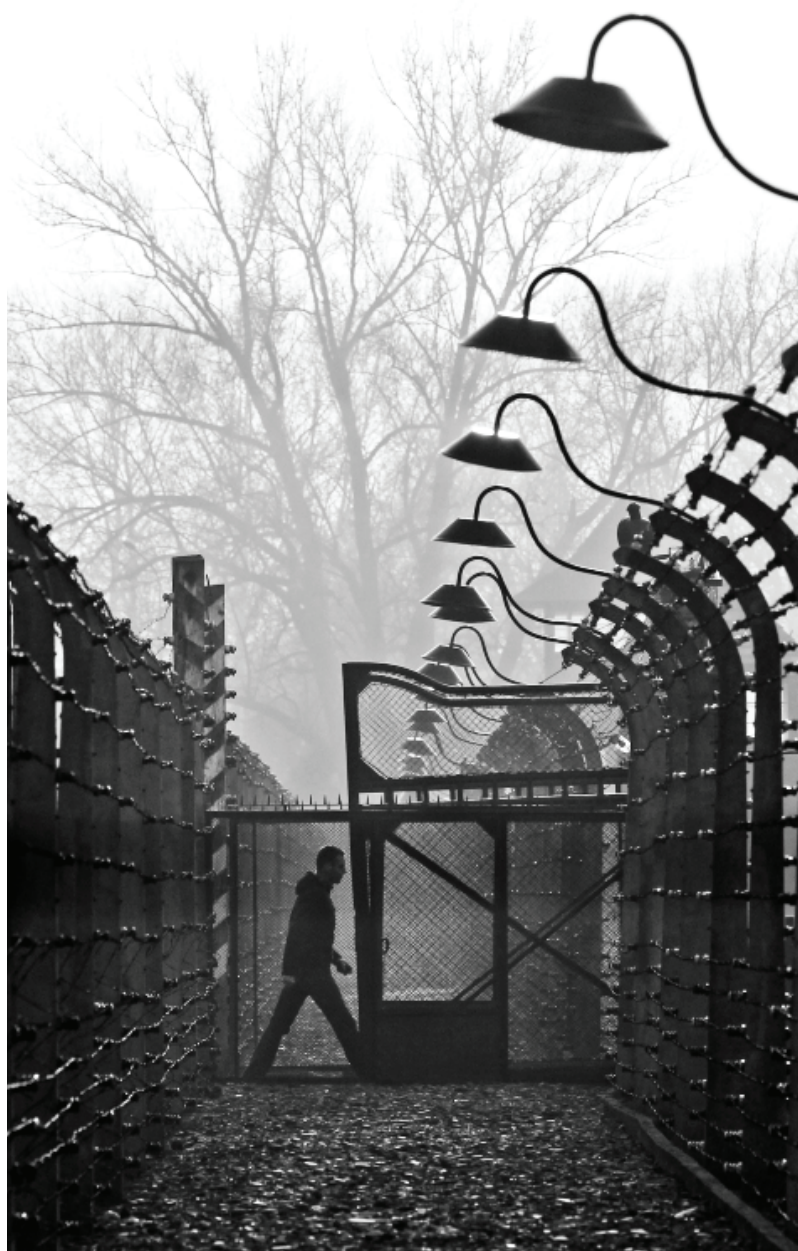
Racism on the other hand may well be a defining characteristic of fascism though fascism has no exclusive claim to it. Racism abounds in the contemporary world, more or less as it probably always has, whether it is expressed definitively or whether it takes more surreptitious forms, such as the ever so common "I'm not racist... but [insert most recent immigrant community] are dirty/lazy/smelly". Of course fascism is supposed to make a policy of racism, but does the current nation-state not? Stand in a queue at an airport terminal, visit a detention centre, look at the names on a list of 'illegal immigrants', and the nation-state can be seen to practise a rabid policy of ethnic discrimination.

The truth is however, that this entire attempt to define 'fascism' is confused because we don't really know what we're talking about. Is fascism a state of mind or a regime? Is it the name of a movement or of a prejudiced individual? As Dylan Riley points out, fascist movements and fascist regimes require a separate historical study. Since fascist movements preceded and coexisted with the Third Reich without being assumed within the regime. A movement remains a movement up until the moment when the traditional power-holders are willing to give them office and incorporate them into the conservative state, at which point they cease to be a movement and become a regime. The point being that there was no *single* fascism, because the two primary historical examples we have to go on, Hitler's Third Reich and Mussolini's Italy, had both graduated from fascist movements to fascist regimes. That is, the fascist ideas espoused by both movements were adopted and subsumed into the conservative state apparatus.

It goes without saying that the above characteristics are equally attributable to the contemporary democratic nation-state maintained by the procedures of globalised capitalism. And indeed, if, as Robert Paxton argued in his study *The Anatomy of Fascism*, fascism never was (and the context is pre-war Germany) a revolutionary force (along the lines of communism and socialism) but was, on the contrary, a counter-revolutionary movement that came to power only by opportunistically making alliance with conservatives; then we can begin to see that it was the rise of fascism that paved the way for neo-liberal democratic capitalism by stamping out the opposition. If this is indeed the case, fascist ideology (in its albeit fragmented form) already structures the present dominant regime. (Which means we can no longer segregate the hegemonic military endeavours of Nazi Germany from the economic policies of present day Germany, in some intrinsic sense the intended outcome is the same — hegemony and the dissolution of the other). We might say that fascist regimes served their purpose, were subverted into a global corporatism and have now become akin with the status quo. Such that neo-Nazi movements claiming their genesis in an earlier period are as outdated and out of touch with the present conditions as they are sadistic.

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The question is then, what is to be learned from the rise of neo-Nazism within an already fascist model of society? And is the current populist and governmentally sanctioned trend in Greece towards anti-fascism, directed primarily against Golden Dawn, a promising sign of an increasing turn against racism and towards tolerance? Or is it a misdirected desire to be in the opposing (anti) camp that will more than likely result in the same complacency in the face of a larger fascist movement seeping through state apparatuses and market-forces? It is bitterly ironic that the current government is now pursuing a policy of the latter (imprisoning GD members, banning GD as a parliamentary party) and yet is composed by at least historical affiliates of the former (see Dalakoglou's article in *Occupied London* #5). As a friend of mine not entirely ironically stated he



is 'anti-anti'; a statement that should remind us how easy it is to adopt the 'anti' position. A nice example of the appropriation of the anti position occurred recently in Scotland where protestors demonstrating in favour of Scottish independence threw insults at Nigel Farage, a representative and supporter of Great Britain. The insults indicated his racism: "fascist scum", "fucking racist shite", "xenophobic". The event is interesting because in response Farage had the nerve to claim that the protestors themselves were "fascist", "racist" and "xenophobic", because their position is "anti-English". It is very easy to become complacent in an ideology of 'anti', of always defining oneself by what one is not. And yet the difficulty of defining oneself and one's position positively only points to the failure of contemporary theorists and actors to provide a clear outline of a philosophy for the future. Indeed, if we knew where we wanted to go it would presumably be a whole lot easier to figure out how we are supposed to get there.

So, we are confronted by two dominant streams, a (pseudo and/or state) fascism on the one hand and an increasingly populist ideology of 'anti' on the other. What if these are two sides of the same coin? That is, the fetishised problem of self-definition and otherness introduced by a now victorious global capitalism. What both Golden Dawn and the ideology of the anti point to (albeit from opposite directions) is the failure of global capitalism to successfully globalise its inhabitants. Somehow place of origin continues to matter to us even if it no longer sufficiently defines us. And in this lack, in one way or another, we appropriate ourselves through what we are not. But must this unfulfillable task of self-definition be construed along terms of polarization? Or can we accept, as multiculturalism claims to do, a proliferation of differences that are not reducible to black-white, east-west, left-right and so forth?

On first sight this prospect of tolerant cohabitation may seem an admirable aim. And yet, as actually existing policy it manifests all the traits of the above mentioned fascism, and principally the first. In 'multicultural' countries (I am thinking

in the first place of Australia) the state's monopoly on 'legitimate' violence is buoyed up by universal popular approbation. Here we see a chimeric mix of police state and nanny state enforced by adamant administrative procedures. In such a state, law controls the most trivial aspects of human behaviours and interrelations and achieves its perfected form in the most insidious way. That is, by gradually insinuating the sovereignty of law into the very mind and will of the people, until any show of violent dissent is condemned by all as an irrational act directed against the health and hygiene of the populous at large. As an insightful friend brought to my attention, the welfare system thus appears as another aspect of the same beast, as both employed and unemployed alike work under the illusion that they should be grateful to the state for its generous support, while all the while the state reaps the benefit of having a compliant, healthy and largely decriminalised population. Obviously, the notion of a decriminalised population depends entirely upon the visors, the nun's habit worn in order to restrict our gaze from dwelling upon the coterminous injustices, from the initial appropriation of land to the price paid for 'western' standards of consumption by people in at least psychologically distant lands, not to mention environmental rape and pillage. The fact is that a modern ethnically diverse state is as dependent upon this habit as is any a-moral position of a modern consumer. Not only because this position follows the philosophy of the three wise monkeys (see no evil, hear no evil, speak no evil), but because when it comes to practise it relies on the law as the crucial mediator of human relations. The efficient result is that we none of us tread on one another's toes.

Perhaps one of the things that foreigners from efficiently organised societies notice here in Greece is the willingness to engage in conversation; more, argumentation. I maintain that the great difference is that, despite differences of origin, village, city, north, south and so forth, there remains here in Athens to a great degree a common psyche, let's say *cum grano salis*. You sing your songs, eat your food, talk about differences in accent, but the differences are, on the large scale of things, ever so minor. Such that when it comes to serious political and even

philosophical debate there is, even if it's a phantasm, a ghost of itself, some kind of a shared platform from which to embark. Henceforth you search for differences. And that's what makes conversations here so shocking, passionate and often, fruitful.

It is not by chance that such conversations are rare enough to come upon in a so-called 'multicultural' society, where songs are sung in different languages about different wars and different persecutions, where more often than not the opposing side is within the present company, and where the only easily shared, because consumable, thing is food (and indeed if there is no split between body and soul perhaps this is the first step in accepting the other). Not to mention the challenges of living with the dangers engendered by different religions and a colonial past. So, of course, conversations remain largely with superficialities- as Jane Austen knew, one must, in order not to offend, talk only of the weather and the condition of the roads. No doubt this is inevitable, since if the differences between an Israeli and a Palestinian, a Chinese and a Tibetan, a Sri-Lankan and a Tamil are really insurmountable how else can one talk? And so, suddenly, common interest becomes the mediator. That is to say, consumerism, where our differences are recognised albeit through a certain reification or fetishisation- Buddhist prayer flags, yoga, cuisine, funk, blues, jazz, hip hop. There are so many varieties of this fetishisation, from orientalism to traditionalism that there is not one of us who has not succumbed at least 10 times a day. Ah, but I hear you cry, this is not fetishisation, but globalism! *What is the difference?*

Is it inevitable, however, that differences and here we are talking about *real differences*, can only be dealt with in two ways, legally and consumptively? That is, by normalising them, through a legalistic discourse of compromise where the state facilitates our ease of interaction so we don't actually have to be dependent upon one another, ask anything of one another or demand personal, unmediated vengeance. And so we can leave our real differences at home and talk about anything at all and be friendly, so long as we steer clear of politics and religion.

And yet, we don't forget who we are and where we're from because there's always the cultural fetish. And this always takes a form that the other can accept, a symbolic compromise onto another's territory mediated by capitalism.

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The question is, then; is there an alternative? Because as far as I see it, the current system, regardless of how successful it is, deals with otherness or difference by leaving it up to the market to decide who is and is not *the same*. While (state) fascism facilitates this dependence by eradicating capitalism's most vociferous opponents, the contemporary nation-state is well on its way to easing us all out of our dream of local allegiances and pre-capitalist social structures. And let's not fool ourselves, national borders do not describe some kind of intrinsic difference from one side to the other. What kind of a perverted dream must you live here in Greece to think that the word 'Greek' expressed a single descent? We all know that the rise of the nation-state was symbiotic with colonialism and the later stages of industrialisation. It's always about money, goods and private interests. If you don't have them you'd never bother putting up the fence in the first place.

Of course, the populist 'anti' ideology prevalent at the moment in Greece has no intention of breaking these nationalist boundaries. And what with neo-Nazi groups popping up all over Europe, we should keep in mind the laziness of popular dissent during the early years of the Third Reich (and also that radicalised resistance movements are so frequently the first target of rising dictatorships). It is not by chance that this 'anti' ideology was fired not by all the murders and attacks that Golden Dawn had committed against all those minorities, but by the murder of a Greek. People (and among them politicians) may well believe they are expressing anti-Nazi, anti-fascist sentiments, but by and large they still maintain a protectionist propaganda in favour of the nation-state posing a distinction between the internally fluid concept of what it means to be 'Greek' against the 'immigrant', against all those

foreigners. Aren't we living a naïve project of protectionism, as if the word 'Greek' means Greek salad without tomatoes, and *patates* without potatoes... not to mention the grape which made its legendary journey from the east? Is anyone objecting to all those imported goods?

We all know to some degree or another that immigration today is a direct result of the indiscriminate slicing up of the land into nation-states according to private interests. Is there a war today that was not begun over a century ago on account of external interference? Perhaps the single difference between so-called first and third worlds is that the former are better equipped to accept the boons of intervention while simultaneously rejecting the undesired by-products. Must we accept that humans are greedy, self-interested and weak? That we will continue to revel in our nice decors, our televisions, our obscene energy consumption, holidays, not to mention all those goods 'made in china' up until either they are taken from us by economic crises, disintegrating borders or environmental catastrophe? There is little to nothing in our comfortable lives that has not been manufactured upon the sweat and blood of others. But all



those goods we so willingly accept within the borders for the single purpose of consumption, somehow bear for us no relation to the men and women who have crossed the same borders, are detained or are sent back. The entire rhetoric of economics is dependent upon accepting the product without the by-product, labour without the labourer, gain without loss.

But why must the presence of the 'stranger in our midst' be considered as a loss? That the presence of increasing numbers of strangers threatens the economic stability of a country such as Greece is, of course, humbug; that there is not enough work to go around. There is not as much of anything as there was say ten years ago, and yet there is still more than elsewhere. In other countries there is much less and so people make do with less. And then there's always cultural capital: no immigrant arrives in another country without his share of wealth. It's just not immediately measurable with the weight of a euro.

So, we are approaching a crisis. And this crisis is as much a religious or medical, as an economic term. A day of judgement when individual quality of life should gradually become a mean, a global average. None of us want to live like they do in Nairobi or Bangkok, nobody would if they've lived with the ease and comfort offered by all these wealthy nations; but it has been long enough now that the wealthy have been living off the blood of the poor, taking the products of their labour while abstracting their persons. And yet, although the present crisis is presented as first and foremost an economic one, it is becoming increasingly apparent that one of its major side effects is a dramatic increase in racism and xenophobia throughout Europe.

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Which leads me to ask a question, the question of the foreigner or a foreign question: What has changed, if something has changed, in relation to the foreigner? Put otherwise, how do we, how can we live side by side with difference without fetishizing it, assimilating it, or sterilizing it?

Neo-Nazism does indeed recognise difference, though its project is then to eradicate it. The multicultural society also recognises difference though it does so only by subordinating it to the repressive forces of a single dominant culture, the order of law and the forces of the market. With the former we have a simply racist fascism, with the latter the fascism of tolerance where we are expected to be tolerant of everything except intolerance, such that we must keep a wide berth from such acts, topics and ethics we fear might inspire differences of opinion, disrespect or outright hostility. What is common to fascism and a neo-liberal representative democratic state composed of different ethnicities is that the question of the foreigner, the presence of unresolved difference, is not permitted to be raised. Here the presence of difference, or radical alterity is put *out of question*. On the one hand, by exterminating this presence within, or expelling it beyond the boundaries of the same; on the other hand, by reducing such difference to a fetish, whether this takes the form of 'culture' (i.e. *not civilization*), religion, language, food, art. That is, by depoliticizing difference and subordinating it to the common law, the same law that all must abide by, or the law of the same. So how can strangers cohabit in a society that believes that there is 'same' and 'others'? And how can we escape this banal and blatantly false polarisation?

The *ad hoc* solution to ethnic diversity most frequently seen in European cities such as Athens is a mild form of ghettoisation. 'Greeks' keep to their own, as do 'Chinese' (or worse 'Asians'), 'Blacks' (those nominally originating from the continent of Africa), 'Pakistanis' and so forth. The inverted commas indicate that a large part of the problem is ignorance. So long as all these peoples are designated with such general terms, according to the old boundaries drawn up by the interests of the colonial world, there will be little understanding of the significant differences between a Tanzanian and a Libyan. And yet, perhaps 'understanding' is not the right word. 'Greeks' are very keen to point out the differences between those who come from the Peloponnese and those who come from Crete. These differences are supposed to be intuitive, even now when the



majority of the population lives in the city. The truth is that now that those who can claim to have grown up and remained in their ancestral villages are but a lucky or deprived few, the dominant condition is increasingly one of migration, whether from afar or nearby, and I say this without regard for national borders. Such that the stranger in our midst, whether one is from Thessaly, Nigeria or southern France is, in principal, ourselves.

The foreigner is already in our midst. And this presence, especially in Greece where the law fails again and again to recognise the right to asylum or even to a just process, cannot help but point to the failure of the state. Not merely because the procedures are laborious and perverse, but because the nation-state is seen to be a porous concept belonging to a previous era while the law, failing to allow for global changes in economic precedence, can no longer maintain its mystique of power and universalism. The truth is that the foreigner

asks nothing. It is not the foreigner who raises the question as to the power and efficiency of the state, but the state itself. The question posed to the nation-state and the sovereignty of law is just as evident in the racist attacks, both physical and psychological, against the foreigner as it is amongst the centre-left who support a humanism of equal rights for all. Whether one's intention is to return to a pre-capitalist, pre-imperialist world before capitalism and without ease of travel or whether one's hope is for a Kantian style universal system of Justice, the problem is the same. The current system is insufficient.

So, what is different about the foreigner is not merely all those mostly superficial differences, of language, physiognomy, religion and so forth. Such differences inhabit a place as well and we live with them in those closest to us. If there is something different and challenging, threatening even, about the foreigner surely it is simply *our recognition of the fact that something else is possible, that there is another way*, and it is this that is posed as foreign. And it is against this that both state and the radical right concentrate their energy, while, whether from delusion or from a machiavellian politics of crowd-control, directing our gaze against an alternative object of difference. Considering the etymology of the word foreigner, we might say that the foreigner is no longer at our door, but that the door now stands open, introducing an as yet undefined break with the sovereignty of a larger hall that has assumed all rooms of the globe into one. The foreigner is the scapegoat, not just of the nation-state, but of capitalism. Is it any surprise, then, that history repeats itself every time a country finds itself in the strait-jacket of economic crisis and the people direct their disillusionment and frustration against what they see as the anthropomorphised figure of difference?

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The politics of dissent and insurrection are without doubt one way to redress this erroneous and treacherous outlook. But even then they must go hand in hand with the only absolute position of defiance or protest against the rising tide of xenophobia: the gift

of *philoxenia*, hospitality freely given. Of course a foreigner does come from elsewhere, his language and laws are different, and if he is refused entry it is because the law has forbidden him a place within a particular area, a specific law of the land. Yet this doesn't necessitate that he won't find a way in, he might even be received by someone, given food, a room, make friends and a life of his own... against the law? An illegal immigrant? But that's the whole point. For it is not he, but we who raise the question of the universality of law, who challenge its sovereignty by granting hospitality and gesturing to an ethics of responsibility for the other that trumps the law, that undermines it and that has the power to dismantle it. As Derrida recognised, hospitality raises an objection to the law by posing an alternative in an act that overrides the obligation of the citizen to abide by the judicial system and the decrees of the state. But hospitality is no law, cannot be made law, because once it is, the stranger is thus incorporated into the law and no longer a stranger to the law —one's gift is no longer freely given, and nor is it a gift given to the stranger.

What is strange about the stranger does not hold to his person but to his title as stranger, foreigner. This name 'foreign' indicates that there are limits to sovereignty and the law; that the state has boundaries, and that the other side is beyond the law. And yet, if we recognise the logic of the boundary we must also recognise that it is a bond where inside and outside, where he who is foreign and he who is at home are held together in a certain relation. And the responsibility for this relation is entirely one's own. Perhaps it is the only thing that can be owned. In any case how one stands in relation to the appearance of the stranger on the threshold is the best indication of who one is. Will you let him in and accept responsibility for protecting him against the murderous forces of the state? Or will you leave him on the porch in the rain?

Foreign are all who stand against the law, and raise the question of sovereignty, but most foreign of all are those so estranged from themselves that they will live and die in the order of law.

- *Thea*

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Never forget, never forgive

— The reason is that our drive to knowledge has become too strong for us to be able to want happiness without knowledge or the happiness of a strong, firmly rooted delusion; even to imagine such a state of things is painful to us! Restless discovering and divining has such an attraction for us, and has grown as indispensable to us as is to the lover his unrequited love, which he would at no price relinquish for a state of indifference — perhaps, indeed, we too are unrequited lovers! Knowledge has in us been transformed into a passion which shrinks at no sacrifice and at bottom fears nothing but its own extinction; we believe in all honesty that all mankind must believe itself more exalted and comforted under the compulsion and suffering of this passion than it did formerly, when envy of the coarser contentment that follows in the train of barbarism had not yet been overcome. Perhaps mankind will even perish of this passion for knowledge! — even this thought has no power over us! But did Christianity ever shun such a thought? Are love and death not brothers? Yes, we hate barbarism — we would all prefer the destruction of mankind to a regression of knowledge! And finally: if mankind does not perish of a passion it will perish of a weakness: which do you prefer? This is the main question. Do we desire for mankind an end in fire and light or one in the sand?