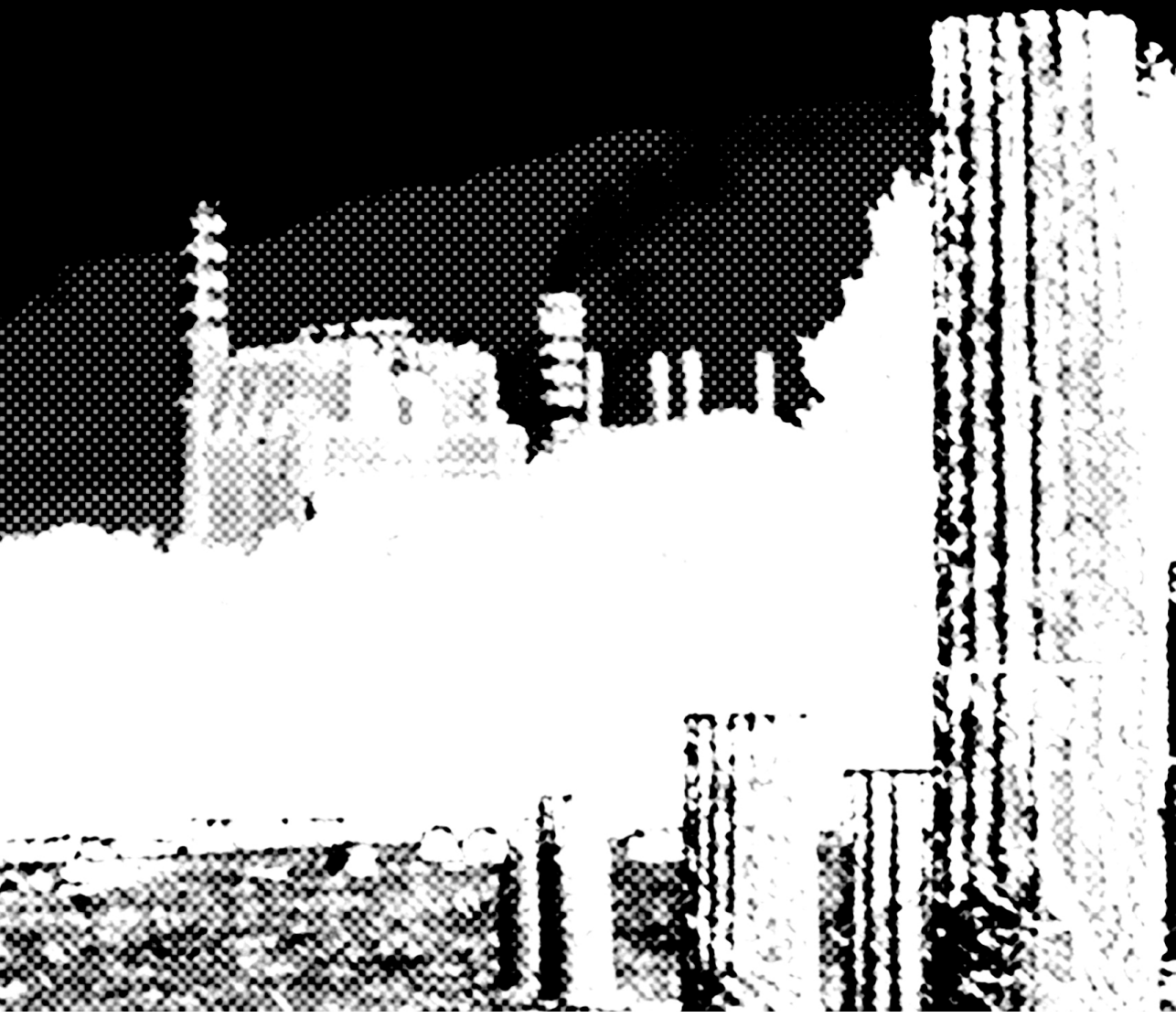


THE ANARCHO TOURIST REVIEW



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A few people passing through a brief period of time, in a very special city. . .

The Anarcho-Tourist Review is an anarchist split from The Barbarian Review. With that being said, it is self-evident that all political separations will have positive aspects, in the sense of proposing a different vision, and negative ones, in the sense of not sharing certain views. The real art of politics is to find a balance of openness with the existence of beliefs, and the ability to distinguish between what is truly essential and what is merely secondary. A further consideration would be the serious necessity for coherence in group theoretical work, in which it differs from larger, more necessarily inclusive ventures.

Thus a split occurred because, on the positive side, we are seeking greater political depth, more theoretical clarity, some practical accountability, and real advances in anarchist thinking. Furthermore, as negative criteria, we feel the strong need for a clear break with prior failed traditions, so here we do not tolerate leftism, its governmental practices and political parties, its outdated Marxism, nor its present-day shabbiness and obvious decomposition.

And as a final thought, we hope it will be as rewarding for the Greek and non-Greek to read, as it has been for us to collect and write down our views.

A Modest Introduction:

It's no exaggeration to say that we are putting these essays and comments together at a time of great changes. By now it is clear that the political and economic crisis which was triggered by 2008 was no passing episode. Eight years have passed and yet still no one is sure whether the global economy is stable or about to collapse. Rather than ending, the crises seem to just shift form and multiply. Nowhere is this clearer than in Greece. The political and economic crises of 2008 and 2010 ended neither with the 'success story' of 2014 nor with the 'first time left' government of 2015. Already at the start of 2016 the consequences of increasingly aggressive imperialism are shown to be ever more chaotic and bloody, while rhetoric and practices of the unhappy 20th century are swiftly sweeping across the US and Europe, as if old nightmares were once more coming back to life.

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Truly, we live in historic times: the Left is in terminal collapse after little over a year of pathetic and predictable defeat, the new form of authoritarianism for our era is taking shape, increasing regions of the earth fall under the sway of the undeclared global civil war, while refugees continue to cross into Fortress Europe and the new normal of austerity, repression and immiseration is only set to intensify. More and more grows the sentiment that no one, least of all these authority figures from left to right, really know what to do nor what will happen next, that things will only continue to get worse, and many secretly feel this subterranean wellspring of chaos opening up, from which unexpected events must undoubtedly arrive. In such a period where all things are advancing, so too does theory need to progress to a new shape, and more is expected of it than in quieter periods. Marxism is in collapse, its practitioners and proponents discredited: their power is broken. It remains now a purely historical legacy, having no more life in it. We need something new, this horizontal and innovating promise of anarchy that all now pay homage to in a variety of fashions.

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In this time of generalized societal implosion, we need greater vision to see the strange beauty of our era of ruins. Great storms lie on the horizon, and with it, the shipwreck of an entire era, of a whole shape of the world. Let's lose illusions and abandon once and for all the fixation with the ship of state and its art of *κυβέρνησις*. Let's ready our small vessels to escape, let's brace ourselves for hazards on the sea of Freedom, setting our twilit course for the archipelago of Anarchy, these floating forms and distant shores we discern only vaguely, twinkling like far stars and half-forgotten dreams. . .

In brief:

Nothing is finished. . .

. . .everything is only just beginning!



Just When and Where Are We?

Is the Greek state ceasing to function? This seems a strange question since there is still a Greek state with all its governments, police, passports and flags. But it is also true that something different and significant happened last July with the signing of the 3rd memorandum. It is impossible, or at least a bad idea, to try to write history as it is still happening. At any moment in time there are a huge number of possibilities any of which could happen and change the meaning of current and past events. Still there is the real possibility, depending on what happens now and next, that 2015 marked a major turning point for the Greek state.

At first there doesn't seem that much difference between the creation of the third memorandum in July 2015 and previous events. After all this is the third memorandum, it is just a continuation of the policies of the first two agreements. Nor is there anything new about a left government signing up to implement the very policies it campaigned against, this was an entirely predictable result. This is not even the first time the Greek state has been effectively bankrupt and placed under the administration of larger states. So perhaps we are just living through a repetition of previous events. But, just as we can never repeat the exact same event twice, there are differences with what is happening now.

Debt, default, instability, and the interference of foreign powers have been

constant elements in the life of the Greek state ever since its birth following the revolution of 1821. The basic outline is familiar. The Greek territories are neither wealthy enough nor geographically suited to easily support a modern state structure. States are extremely expensive organisations to set up and maintain. To function they need an extensive army and police force, thousands of bureaucrats, hundreds of buildings and a presence in every single part of the territory. Only a few places have the resources, or were able to steal them from somewhere else, to be able to build and maintain a fully working state structure. Without vast resources the managers of the Greek state have always had to borrow funds to either control or placate their population or keep up a competition with neighbouring states.

The territory of the Greek state presents another problem. This is not an easy-to-traverse land, you can not go from one corner to another and then on again in a simple way. Greece is divided up by sea and mountains into countless small regions. Each island, large and small, is a separate world spread widely across the sea. The mainland too is cut and divided by mountain chains. This is perhaps why the Greek state is the most centrally administered political unit ever to try and exist here. Famously, the Classical world was a hugely diverse one with an unknown number of city-states, tribes and kingdoms inhabiting the land. The later empires, Roman, Byzantine, Ottoman, ruled the whole area for centuries at a time but had nothing like the central administration of the modern state. These empires largely left the villages and towns to administer themselves under the jurisdiction of local or foreign potentates. Only the modern state has sought to coherently unite these lands into one political body. It should be remembered as well that the modern state only covers a small part of the old Greek world. The project to create a Greek nation state, and then the bellicose attempts to expand it that naturally followed, resulted in a disaster for some of the wider Greek communities.

Several times the loans the state needed to function, and the harsh terms their generally North European lenders attach to them, could not be repaid due to some kind of financial or political crisis. Then some combination of the great powers of larger capitalist countries stepped in to demand that their payments and profits were protected, all the while claiming they are saving Greece because the Greeks are too lazy/Eastern/incompetent to manage themselves. These great powers often form a committee to oversee the payment of Greek debt. Naturally, these events create political turmoil in Greece which can result in the end of a regime. Such events have happened a

number of times, so much so that the Greek state has spent several decades of its less than two hundred year history in a state of default or shut out of international financial markets. Such moments of crisis and defeat come around periodically and we should not be too surprised to find ourselves in another such time.

So perhaps, if we look at events only from the perspective of the Greek state, we are passing through another period of defeat and collapse which will feature some years of instability and uncertainty before the state finds another more functional form. A few members of the old political and economic elite will lose out and be replaced by a few new faces and names. In this case history will continue on as it has so far with its cycles of rise, decline and fall of different regimes within the same state framework. Then in a generation or two we will be talking about a new Greek crisis when the same fundamental problems come back again. However, this view ignores the international element of the current crisis.

The current Greek crisis is not just a Greek event. First, after several decades of capitalist globalisation no event is merely local anymore. An incident in one part of the world can quickly have an effect on the other side, this is what makes our world so fragile despite its outward display of strength. If the Greek state had defaulted in 2010 it is possible that this small part of one corner of the world with barely 11million people could have triggered a meltdown of the global economy. Second, our events have international importance because Greece is on its way to becoming the first Western failed state.

The entire proclaimed mission of the Greek state project has been to create a Western-style state and society in South-east Europe. Whenever the Greek state has failed its failure is always blamed on it not being Western enough. For when people say Europe, generally it is not the whole continent they are talking about-with its widely different histories, geographies and traditions-but just the Western section that has long been the home of large centralised powers. The current crisis has brought this idea back but in a slightly different way. It is a significant point that last year when groups started protesting against the possibility that Syriza wouldn't make a deal with the EU their rallying call was *menoume Europi*- we are staying in Europe. The current crisis has happened not with the Greek state outside Europe but after the state had finally achieved its mission of becoming Western. Paradoxically, now that it has reached this point it has the special distinction of being the

first Western state to start to decay.

Contrary to what many people say the Greek state has often been the first, or at least an early, example of a wider European trend. Back in the 1820's the Revolution was one of the first modern national liberation struggles. This resulted in the creation of the first new nation state to come out of the collapsing Ottoman Empire. In this way it was one of the earlier modern European states as it formed before Italy, Germany and a number of Balkan states. Moving forward to the next century the Greek state was both the site of one of the first battlefield victories for the allies in the Second World War and hosted the first conflict of the Cold War. The 1946-9 Civil War gave the US and UK their first victory over Soviet communism. So it is not too surprising to see the Greek state perhaps setting the trend for the rest of Europe.

It is because the Greek state was already in 'Europe' that the current crisis is different from what has happened before. Each of the previous periods of crisis and collapse had an international dimension but not to the extent that current events do. What I believe may make the current crisis the final crisis of the Greek state is the presence of the EU. The third memorandum signed over to the European Union both more assets and more control of the administration of the Greek state. Since Syriza made the agreement back in July we have seen the EU demand that its agencies have more control over Greece's borders and demand that the government withdraw any unauthorised economic plans. There is also the desire to set up a quicker and more effective privatisation fund to sell off the state's assets and the calls to allow in the vulture funds. This third memorandum has speeded up the looting of Greek assets and strengthened the EU's day to day role in administering the Greek territories.

In a very real sense the Greek state has become the first province of the EU. It is the first nation state in the union to cede large parts of its sovereignty and administration to the whole. The task of all the various Greek governments of the last years has been to implement the decisions made by the EU and the Troika. This loss of sovereignty has been a common feature of previous Greek crises but the difference this time is that before it was a committee of disunited powers that took control for a period of time whereas now sovereignty has been signed away to a super-national body that aims to become a new state. Previously, once Greek debts were either written off or paid off then the international committees ceased to exist, though of course the Greek state has always been closely watched by Britain or the USA. Only

if the Greek state were to leave the EU, or be kicked out, could this pattern repeat now.

If the EU, and the Euro, is to survive it must at some point become a single state. The 'ever closer union' has to end in either the creation of an EU super state or in the union's collapse and the decision time for this is rapidly approaching. If the Greek state manages to keep the Euro currency and stay in the EU it will have to stick to the budget and political rules set by the union. Just like the other nation states it will be a province of a larger state. No doubt for practical and emotional reasons the symbols of each nation state would remain but they would be even less useful than they are now. So the Greek state would not disappear but its function would have changed. Often significant historical changes like this are not obvious at the time as it is generally easier to maintain existing administrative structures rather than make a complete change.

In this way the Greek state that stays within the EU has returned to the point it was at prior to 1821. Before that date the Greek territories were part of a larger grouping, the Ottoman Empire. Now to all practical purposes the Greek territories are once again the province of a larger political unit, albeit only a theoretical European state for the moment. Large sections of today's elite welcomed and continue to champion the EU in the same way that some of the local Byzantine elite welcomed the arrival of the Ottomans in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. When the time comes to write the histories, the period c.1821-c.2015 could be viewed as the life of a particular political entity in much the same way that the period of Louis XIV-Louis XVI is viewed as the time of the ancien regime of France, that long spell of military adventures and aristocratic extravagance crumbling into financial and political mismanagement, decadence and intellectual change, before it to gave way to something else.

However, this is only one possible option. It could very well be that the Greek state will still be forced out of the EU or Euro. Perhaps the EU will not want its new province after all. Even in this case it still seems that the Greek state has reached a critical moment in its history. Should the Greek state be removed from the EU in some way then it would appear at first that the current crisis is exactly the same as previous episodes. An exit would most likely mean an official default with the Greek state being removed from a type of currency peg. This is just the same as has happened before. The immediate consequence would be a period of political instability. Again such episodes are not uncommon, for example the years of coups and counter-

coups by Royalists and Venizelists following the Asia Minor defeat of 1922 or even something similar to 1940-49 when the Greek state more or less ceased to function under occupation and civil war.

In this case the Greek state would above all have a problem with the story it uses to legitimate itself. All states need to have a story that people can believe. Generally the state justifies itself by claiming it is created by the people as a single community and often adds a goal which everyone is working towards. If the state doesn't have such a story about itself then it would be seen for what it is, a structure designed to maintain and enhance the control of elites. For the Greek state the central part of its story was that the people of Greece had thrown off Eastern tyranny and were going to take the place among the Western Europeans which their long and glorious history had promised them. As said above the Greek state project was meant to have as its end goal the creation of a modern Western state in the Greek territories.

In the future it will be difficult to rebuild this story that gives legitimacy to the Greek state because the story reached its end. This crisis happened with the state having reached its goal, as that long journey only ended in a success that turned out to be a failure. This isn't just an abstract problem but a very practical one. Any political system only functions when people actually believe in it, the king is only a king if enough people believe he is and a state functions when people trust it and support it. A Greek state trying to recover from a crisis outside of the EU, which may itself have either collapsed or shrunk by this time, would need to come up with a new reason to exist and for people to believe in it since the old idea proved, not to be unattainable, but to be a failure, and in other senses, to be spiritually empty...

Looking at these two possible outcomes, both of which are equally likely at the moment, we can see that our current crisis may not be just a repeat of previous events. The details of our times are very similar to what has happened before but they take place against a different background. I believe then that it is very likely the current crisis in some way marks a major shift for the Greek state that goes beyond just another passing economic and political crisis. So this lets us at least orient ourselves as to where and when we are. Meaning that we are dealing with historic moments and not just the passing events of a political circus. This leaves us with an important question, what do we do now?

Gentlemen! We find ourselves in an important epoch, in a fermentation, in which Spirit has made a leap forward, has gone beyond its previous concrete form and acquired a new one. The whole mass of ideas and concepts that have been current until now, the very bonds of the world, are dissolved and collapsing into themselves like a vision in a dream. A new emergence of Spirit is at hand; philosophy must be the first to hail its appearance and recognize it, while others, resisting impotently, adhere to the past, and the majority unconsciously constitute only the matter in which it makes its appearance. But philosophy, in recognizing it as what is eternal, must pay homage to it.

-Hegel, Lectures at Jena of 1806, final speech

LET US READY OURSELVES TO WELCOME

THE NEW SHAPE OF SPIRIT!

Comments on the Revolutionary Struggle programme

The world has changed, and continues to do so, quite rapidly since 2008. These rapid changes have so far only resulted in confusion. At the moment we see the radical left, the great hope of the European left post 2008, implementing an extreme neoliberal programme. A prominent Marxist, recently feted for the opening of his new political party in Berlin, believes it his job to save capitalism. The fascist, xenophobic and misogynistic far-right across Europe are trying to coordinate internationally to denounce the fascism and misogyny of ISIS. Even the police have started to use anti-fascist slogans. From our side we should add to this mix the general problems that anarchist movements face.

Across large parts of the world it is now a fairly common opinion that politics is changing with numerous old political establishments being faced with various challenges. Respect for and belief in politicians are approaching new lows in many places and there is an increasing disconnect between those in power and those below.

relatively easy time, they have even taken the opportunity to advance their political goals and get richer. They worry some what that people have stopped believing in their invincibility but the only major challenge they have faced has been from the left side of parliament and this is being dealt with easily enough and helps restore people's faith in parliament with no risk of having to offer much real change. Even if it is losing some of its legitimacy the political elites have so far been able to comfortably maintain their grip on a monopoly of violence. The anarchist and revolutionary movements have struggled to respond to the latest political developments. Even in this time of changes the movements have not found a way to affect and challenge the central political levels.

Everywhere anarchists are a small political minority. In a number of places even saying that is an exaggeration. Though they generally are a visible and often vibrant minority, anarchist and revolutionary movements struggle to interact with the societies around them on a wide scale. Small numbers means that when it comes to proposing some ideas or some kind of political programme the anarchist movements are in a weak position. Not only that but anarchist principles often discourage any thoughts of organization, let alone proposing any programme. A political programme is often a set of demands addressed to the state. Or it is a set of demands that a party or group issues and then expects everyone else to follow. Neither idea encourages people to organise themselves. Besides, since no anarchist movement anywhere is big enough to consider itself a mass movement (a reality perhaps not even possible in today's world) there seems little need for a basic political programme.

Anarchist movements prefer not to focus on the events going on at the central political level, this is generally the game of political parties, and given the movements small size it has been better to focus on small-scale experiments and actions. There is a belief that anarchists should think long term and generate gradual change and build strength and capabilities. I don't disagree with this, we should be in no rush and, as has been famously said, we should not be afraid of ruins. It should also be noted that in many places there have not been any political events for a long time now. Most people living in western countries have either lived their whole lives, or at least the larger part, with a total absence of serious political events. In such a condition all people can do is carry out small experiments and think of the past or the future with little prospect or desire to intervene at any significant political level.

But I believe we have to adapt to the times we are in and right now, at least in the case of the Greek territories, we are within historic times, living serious political events. An emphasis on slow gradual movement building suits times when not much else can be done. However, when the situation changes and a political system's grip on a society starts to weaken then our approach has to change too. For some years now the Greek state has been seriously struggling to function in an effective way with only the security forces functioning relatively effectively.

I believe I'm not alone in thinking that in the last years anarchist movements have been missing an opportunity. In Greece, anarchists have been part of a wide ranging struggle that has severely affected the functioning of the Greek state. The reason why the Greek crisis is still on going when everyone else claims other states are already in recovery is not just because the Greek economy was in much worse shape, nor is it just because of the incompetence of the IMF. The various sections of society that have struggled against the crisis and its 'resolution' in the last few years have to a large extent been successful. For example, by the IMF's own analysis while around 60% of the first memorandum was implemented on time, for the second memorandum the figure falls to below 20%, by far the lowest for any current IMF programme. Even though not a single parliamentary vote against the memorandums was successful, and the famous referendum was forgotten in a week, successive Greek governments have had problems carrying out the tasks given to them. Since 2008, and especially since 2012, every Greek government has been walking on eggshells fearing that their next move could trigger an explosion. The current situation then is something like a stalemate. The Greek state's ability to act is limited by both resistance from below and corruption and stupidity from above. At the same time the struggling sections of society can not go forward because they are too divided and don't really know what to do.

This has opened up a political rupture in Greece. The Greek state has so far been unable to restore the political normality that was first broken by December 2008. In fact this rupture in normal political life has only got worse over time to the extent that the Greek state is now struggling to carry out any kind of programme at all. History and theory suggest that some kind of rupture is necessary to create or accelerate social change but most of us have little experience of living through such times.

I think it is quite a widely held view that in general, and again in Greece

now, anarchy is very good at fighting against something but not very good at getting its own messages and ideas across. Because of the historical and political position that the Greek state is in, there is a great need for ideas. By the time these words are read it is possible that the political situation may well have changed substantially again such is the current instability. As things stand Greek society is faced with two likely options, to become a province of a neoliberal EU and see meaningful politics move ever further away or a slip further into chaos which the nationalist right and neo-nazis are positioning themselves to exploit. For all their good intentions and hope the parliamentary left only offered a repeat of previous failures. In this situation it is not only desirable but necessary for society to be presented with other options.

There is then a need for some kind of basic anarchist programme. This would better prepare the movements to have a role in events that may follow and perhaps offer society another option as the reality of the Greek state changes. Agreeing with a set of ideas proposed by a group doesn't mean that we change from being an autonomous individual to a mere follower and I don't believe that having a basic programme goes against anarchist principals but instead could help them become a reality rather than a distant dream. This is also a part of our historical heritage, where the experiences of Makhnovism in the Ukraine, and later the FAI and Friends of Durruti in Spain, helped to orient larger movements and provided a pole for organization and political coherence.

In practice this means that anarchists would have to both organise in new ways and start reaching out to different sections of society. Attempts to 'convert' people to anarchy or seeking to control and manipulate struggles in the same way political parties do would be useless or dishonest. However, while we are in no position to try and win over whole sections of people, there needs to be at least an anarchist presence in different struggles. We have to assume that any struggles against the current government will be seized upon by the old regime parties, the fascists or the old left. Without an anarchist presence in anti-government struggles there will be no way to counter the growth of these groups. We have a choice between watching other groups benefit from events or trying, however hopeless it may seem, to influence them ourselves. We have to find ways to show that anarchist and revolutionary ideas can be practical solutions to the problems society is faced with.

In its variety of forms and experiments the anarchist movement has a lot

that needs to be said and is both possible and necessary for today's situation. So it should not be difficult to come up with a basic set of proposals. An outline of one such programme has already been published before as an attempt to start a dialogue on the subject by Revolutionary Struggle, which has as its basic points the following:

- Unilateral termination of payment of the Greek debt.***
- Exit from the Economic and Monetary Union (EMU) and the European Union (EU).***
- Expropriation of assets of Capital, large companies, multinational corporations, of all movable and immovable property of the capitalists.***
- Abolition of the banking system, erasure of all debts to banks, handover of small possessions that were seized by banks, and socialization of bank assets.***
- Expropriation of state property and utilities companies; expropriation of church property.***
- Socialization of the means of production, industry, ports, means of transfer and communication, transportation, utilities, hospitals and educational institutions; the workers will engage in their managing.***
- Abolition of the State and the bourgeois parliament of professional politicians, to be replaced by a confederal system of popular assemblies and workers' councils, whose coordination, communication and decision-implementation will be achieved through delegates elected and immediately recallable. At national level, in place of the old representative bourgeois parliament there will be a supreme Confederal People's Assembly, whose members will be authorized members-delegates elected and immediately recallable by the local popular assemblies and workers' councils.***
- Abolition of the police and the army, to be replaced by an armed popular militia, not a mercenary one***

This programme deals directly with the immediate issues we are faced with and is neither an impractical set of distant targets nor a list of slogans. It is by no means the only possible programme but it does cover many of the points we would like to see in an anarchist revolution. It would be up to sections of society bigger than our current movements to carry out such a programme but at least by proposing a set of actions and a direction we may be able to influence the course of events. Perhaps spreading a programme can help the

various factions of the revolutionary movements cooperate through action rather than through theory.

A basic anarchist programme may be of some help in addressing some of the problems faced by the movement today as it could advance the ongoing debates about organisation, strategy and tactics. Perhaps a revolutionary programme can help bridge the differences between the different positions within the movement as it is a list of basic goals which most would want to reach. Having such a common set of goals, the various pieces of the movement can then act toward them by their own methods rather than trying to first outline a method of action before expressing the actual aims. If we think of a programme in this way, as a set of revolutionary aims, then it matters less who originally proposed them. Nor does it mean that everyone has to follow the same strategies in order to advance the programme. There would be the chance to work together toward these aims rather than first trying to unite and then figure out what to do.

The first two points, termination of debt payments and exit from the EU and Euro, may in fact happen without any revolutionary action. This already shows something of the relevance of the analysis behind such a program. The Greek state could be kicked out of the EU and Euro at some point in the near future in which case it would be completely impractical for the state to try and continue paying off its debts, though no doubt this is what the creditors will demand. Also given the state of the post 2008 financial world the abolition of the banking system, or a severe restructuring, is something which may happen anyway due to its own collapse at some point in the future. Either way the expulsion from the Euro and conversion to a new currency would likely suspend parts of the financial system in Greece at least temporarily, as we saw last year.

The expropriation of state and capital assets would be necessary for any revolutionary movement. First as a practical measure of survival and second to deny such resources and assets to any reactionary forces. There is a substantial amount of wealth and resources kept in the hands of the state and the capitalists. Buildings, land, cash, yachts and workplaces could all be put to better use. Socialization of the means of production and the use of expropriated assets is also something that anarchist ideas are capable of imagining. The history of the movement is full of examples of how to get things working again once they are out of the hands of the bosses. Even from our times various anarchist, syndicalist and workers' groups are carrying out

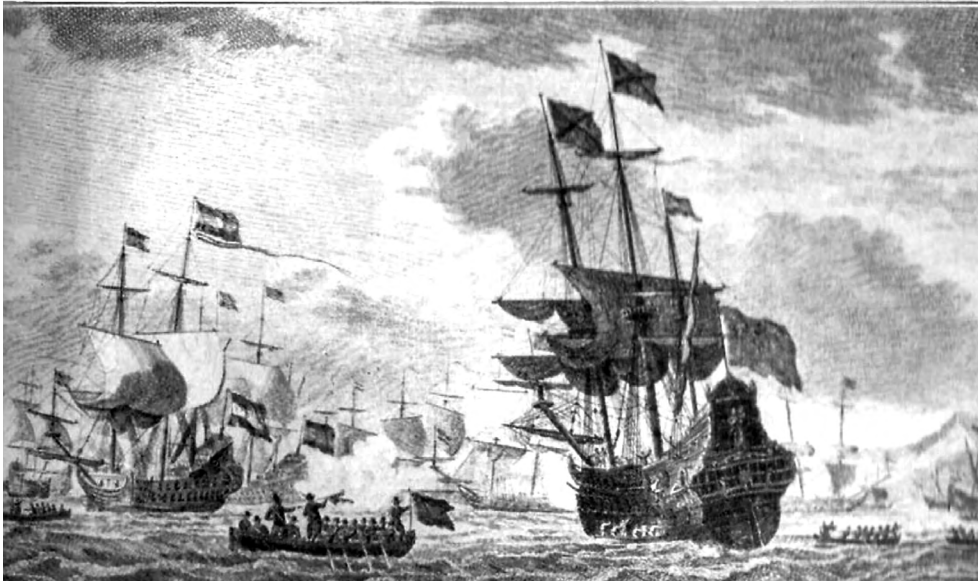
collective and self-managed projects.

These days the abolition of the state looks more like a practical possibility than ever. Here we could learn from the examples of the assemblies, communes and confederalism that are under way in the Kurdish regions. In recent years there have been hints that a form of stateless organisation is not impossible in the Greek territories. The, albeit imperfect, example of the movement of the squares a few years ago gives some basis to work from. While this movement sought to mirror parliamentary politics rather than replace them, it at least showed that the idea of local, small scale political communities has not yet been completely erased in Greece.

The above list is a basic outline of what an anarchist political revolution would aim at. These are ideas and practices that are already present in the movement. Thinking about and spreading such a programme would help us to concentrate on the situation in front of us rather than looking towards a distant horizon. We should not be afraid of any supposed isolation from where we start. The workers' movement began in the minds of a few individuals; the internationalist revolutionaries during the First World War were only a handful; Makhno, or Durruti and his close comrades would simply appear as bank robbers and criminals to an indifferent society, until revolution came along and revealed them in their true form, as representatives of anarchist revolution. In a changed, and changing, world you can never be certain what will happen next.



**'On 14 July 1789 there weren't even ten of us republicans'
Camille Desmoulins**



Notes on a tactical development

Recently in Greece we have seen the deployment of a new tactic by the riot police at large demonstrations which requires us to think how we go about activities on the street. During the last few major demonstrations in Athens, the strikes of December 3rd and February 4th and the December 6th events, the riot police units have quickly formed a type of moving kettle around anarchist blocs. A large number of units were moved into place on both sides of the street in order to surround a bloc. Once in place these units followed the bloc throughout the march route and were supported by other units at the back and along major crossroads. The result is that demonstrators are placed within a cordon from which no movement is allowed.

In its use so far this cordon tactic has been effective at imposing control over demonstrations while avoiding head on confrontations. The tactic is not aimed at punishing demonstrations, as with previous governments, but at stifling and demoralising crowds. Once inside one of these cordons you feel that there is no way out and that you are allowed to move only at the will of the fully armed uniforms surrounding you. The riot police seem to have moved up a level in terms of organisation and effectiveness. We should be thinking of ways we can do the same.

If demonstrations of any size are to be met with full police cordons from now on it is important that we start to think of ways blocs can respond or avoid being contained. To my mind there are two general approaches which may help disrupt or block these cordons. These would be a higher level of aggression to make it more difficult for the police to put a cordon in place, or more manoeuvrability from blocs in order to avoid cordons. These approaches may be more or less possible/ appropriate at different times and with different crowds. Both probably need a higher level of organisation and coordination between the people on a demonstration than is currently practised.

One of the first times these full cordons were deployed was at the general strike of December 3rd in Athens. This day was also a demonstration of how some people may wish to approach cordons. On this day the march was also accompanied by a number of people working in affinity groups and moving independently along the sides of the main blocs. They also did not wait until the march was in the heavily defended Syntagma zone before they started their actions. Organising in these affinity groups may be the best way for small groups of people to avoid police cordons. They can move around more easily and are not limited to staying in one part of a demonstration area. These groups can also carry out preparations for their actions on their own.

Whether we are thinking about small affinity groups or large bloc actions it could be more effective if activities start from the beginning of demonstrations. Once a cordon is in place any opportunity for people to do any actions other than walk, such as stenciling and spraying slogans, blocking roads, etc, is lost. At the moment the police tactic is to put a cordon in place once people have started some activity. So at the start of demonstrations there is still a short space of time when actions can be carried out. Using this time fully may help us avoid the effects of cordons.

There are probably few ways people could physically prevent a cordon being set up. Put simply, riot police are far better equipped and motivated for physical force, and are better protected from it as well. However, given that current policy seems to be for the police to contain and not attack demonstrations it is possible that if close contact with demonstrations always meant having to attack them they would have to rethink their tactic. It may be helpful to think more carefully about personal defence at demonstrations. A useful tool to generalize could be stronger and reinforced banners, shields

or something similar to the 'book blocs' seen elsewhere in Europe. Some such defences may be helpful in defending against police attacks on the edges of blocs. The risks of such attempts are obvious however. If prevented from surrounding blocs, police will likely use tear gas but this at least creates a confrontation the cordon tactic is designed to prevent.

Another point to consider is the space a demonstration is moving through. Certain areas can either restrict what the police can do or can give blocs the chance to move out of a cordon. The police need large wide avenues to operate a cordon as they offer enough space for the march to be on the road while the police move along the pavements. On large roads there is little aside from open confrontation which can challenge a police cordon. However, it would be very difficult for the police to maintain a cordon on smaller, narrower streets. They would have to push into the crowd with the likelihood of confrontation. Some spaces, such as squares or crossroads, can also present blocs with opportunities to change direction or move out of a cordon. So the type of area we move through has to be considered.

Moving out of a cordon would be difficult but not impossible. Blocs would have to become more mobile and coordinated in order to turn, break up or change pace. If the police have every part of a demonstration route covered then we would need to find ways to turn off from this guarded route, perhaps abandoning the usual end point in order to keep a demonstration going. Generally if blocs are going to stay free of being trapped by the police they have to be prepared to move before a cordon is set up. This could be done by turning onto a smaller street or cutting across an open square. The bloc would then have to move quickly to avoid confrontation with the police units trying to prevent them. From here people then have to keep moving and either leave the area of the main demonstration to go somewhere else or try and rejoin the march at another point.

It is easy to see when the police are preparing a cordon as large numbers of riot units have to be moved to the sides of a bloc. These few moments before the police are in position may be the last chance to get away and continue a demonstration. Being able to do this needs some level of coordination and communication as moving several hundred people quickly is not always easy. A few people within the bloc would have to make the decision to move out of a cordon and then act. So long as the people in a bloc have some idea this may be necessary it is possible for hundreds of people to evade police traps.

It just requires some organisation and for people to know what is happening. No doubt the first times it is tried it will be difficult and may fail but at the moment our traditional demonstration routes are failing anyway. Splitting blocs into smaller groups, either in a prepared way through affinity groups or as a result of events, may help demonstrations become more mobile. The different parts of a bloc can try and move on their own or look to rejoin the larger demonstration depending on circumstances. Some large blocs even split up into smaller groups from the beginning and each head in a different direction to a preprepared destination. This will require a fair amount of communication between the people making up a bloc. At some point a large mobile bloc will want to split into smaller parts as this is the best way for people to leave a demonstration area. Mobile blocs do not go to a demonstration end point and then go home, they gradually spread out and disperse into the city.

Another important consideration is information. It would be very helpful if people have an idea where the various police units are stationed so they can be avoided. Where possible this is helped by having a few people moving ahead of a bloc or in the streets around it, sometimes even on bicycles. These people can keep in contact with the bloc and warn it of a police cordon or suggest roads to take to avoid the police.

The advantage of the mobile approach is that it creates many possibilities. If we are honest we have to say there is not enough originality and new ideas in our demonstrations. In Athens, whether the start point is Monastiraki, Propylia or the Museum, we always follow a known route. By now the police and city administration know well how to close off those areas and allow the rest of the city to carry on as normal. At each major demonstration we walk into an area that is prepared so that we can be contained, isolated and ignored. Basically we routinely fail to offer something new.

Imagine the possibilities of a bloc breaking away from a large march. Always the police have riot units stationed all around the area of a demonstration but it would take time for them to react and move. Once a quick moving bloc of several hundred people has slipped off the main route there are a number of directions it can go. In Athens for example, if a bloc rather than following Stadiou Street down to Syntagma slipped away, a 5-10 minute run could put people in Monastiraki, Ermou Street, Kolonaki, or Omonia. These areas being made up of smaller streets would make it more difficult for the police to form a

cordon and also give people a good chance of dissolving the bloc and slipping away from the area if needed. Automatically people would be spreading the disruption the demonstration was meant to generate to new areas. We would no longer be predictable, the confusion we would cause would be our best ally.

It is possible we may be able to defeat the cordon tactic at the political level. This new police/government doctrine seeks to contain and not confront demonstrations. The use of affinity groups and better defences for large blocs could force the police to either back away or confront. The police themselves would be happy to confront given their advantages but if they have always to fight demonstrations then their cordon tactic would have failed. If police cordons always resulted in raising tensions rather than containing them, then they may be abandoned as counter productive.

Recent developments also ask questions about our overall approach to demonstrations. There are many times when holding a march of several hundreds or thousands in order to show a level of public support or bring an issue to attention is all that is desired or needed. But there are times when we should also look to do more than just show that we disagree with something. At times we follow too closely the actions and thoughts of the left. There is a point and purpose to having an anarchist presence at trade union demonstrations or left political gatherings but we should remember that these groups aim to talk to and persuade the state to protect their interests. The traditional protest march to parliament is largely a normal functioning part of a parliamentary democracy, not a challenge to it. If we think again of Athens there are two problems with a typical anarchist approach to a large march to Syntagma. First the idea that by attacking police in Syntagma anarchists can inspire a crowd to riot or attack parliament needs a huge crowd to be both present and stationary in the square. Second, the police are very well practised at dealing with incidents in Syntagma, it is often their chosen field.

Drawing on the traditions of direct action could create something radically different. Moving around the city would bring more places and people into an action than are normally involved. There would be more chance for actions such as blockades of roads and rail lines, shutting down of offices and departments and generally disrupting the normal routine of a city that is often unaffected by large central demonstrations. We could here ask ourselves what we aim to do. Do we only wish to march in front of parliament so the government and the leftist groups demonstrating can see us? Do we wish to

find the nearest police unit so we can simply attack them for the sake of it? Or do we want our participation in large demonstrations to offer an example of creative direct action, which while not shying away from confrontation with the police, seeks to achieve some political target?

Apart from the two approaches to the police cordon tactic outlined above, we should also be asking questions about tactics and strategies in general. Our current lack of a response to the general situation we find ourselves in has been evident recently. During the last few months anti-austerity general strikes and demonstrations have returned but seem to lack the spirit and, at times, the numbers of the years 2010-12. We have so far stepped away from trying to bring a new spirit or purpose to these gatherings and instead continue to relay on methods that, despite their potential, failed to develop a much more promising situation than the one we find ourselves in now. Over the last year or so it has been interesting to see the increase in the spontaneous gatherings, occupations, and decentralised actions that generally form part of the practice of polymorphous campaigns. The same spirit can be brought to large demonstrations by updating old habits, for example by gathering in different places, with different routes, or with the aim of having spontaneously creative routes can help to build on these practices.

Some of the most interesting events of the last few months have shown how a shift away from normal street demonstrations can be effective. In a number of cases the focus of actions has moved from the streets to the roads. This has been seen a number of times and was also one aspect of the terrible situation refugees trapped at Idomeni found themselves in. As borders closed a number of protests and blockades were carried out on the rail lines and roads of northern Greece. For sometime the main rail line which carries exports from Greece to the Balkans was out of service due to these protests and blockades. The rail line which begins in the port of Pireaus, runs through several central Athenian neighbourhoods and then leads out of Greece near Idomeni is a vital piece of economic infrastructure. The blockade of the rail line actually forced companies to re route their trade traffic away from Greece and so caused actual economic damage to the Greek state and shut an increasingly important international trade route. Such actions highlight the vulnerable physical areas of the economy.

Another interesting, and perhaps provocative, example of recent blockades were the farmers' mobilisations in early 2016. The farmers' blockades were

the most challenging mobilisations that the Syriza government has so far faced. While the government was able to wait them out and defuse them with dialogue, after a few weeks the government was beginning to look weak internationally and was starting to suffer economically too. The combination of road blockades, aggressive city centre protests, attacks on Syriza offices and pickets outside banks and tax offices brought an anti-austerity campaign to levels not seen for many years. In the end the farmers were just another isolated minority sector fighting on its own as Syriza were allowed to hesitate and delay implementing the austerity measures which prevented a tense situation coming to a decision. Still, the farmers' actions were an example of targeting economic infrastructure in practice.

Elsewhere we see roads and highways becoming a more useful site for demonstrations than city streets. Over in France the roads around Nantes and the ZAD have been used for demonstrations and have several times shut down or slowed traffic for substantial periods. The main highway circling Paris is a common site for early morning blockades and stoppages staged by various unions or taxi groups. Further afield the Jat community in India was able to get their (perhaps unjust) demands recognised by heavy rioting combined with an occupation of the canal carrying Delhi's water supply. The economy has many more sensitive points than the streets around parliaments.

Longer term, we may need to look at the possibility that large street demonstrations will become something no longer tolerated by the state. In Greece we see the deployment of huge police forces and cordon tactics to contain and intimidate demonstrators. In Paris we see a state of emergency, preventative house arrests and the kettling and assault of those who dare to take to the streets in person. Spain now has its infamous 'gag laws' that place heavy restrictions on the ability to gather in public. This shouldn't surprise us. The years 2008-12 showed that the streets still have a political relevance when actions go beyond a show of disapproval.

Riot police units are key to the functioning of modern Western democratic states. Previously the state ultimately could only respond to threats from large public gatherings or political actions with lethal military and police force. This created problems as the blood that was frequently shed made situations worse and de-legitimised the state's actions. Now with militarized riot police units that can control gatherings without lethal force the state has the perfect tool to contain problems without making things worse. As an example look

to the recent history of the Greek state. The last use of lethal military force to crush an uprising was the Polytechnic Revolt in 1973. The military crushed the revolt but lost its legitimacy which contributed to its fall the next year. The new democratic regime created modern riot police units to avoid this problem. So the state can now do the same things as a dictatorship, suppress uprisings, evict occupations and prevent public gatherings, generally without using de-legitimising lethal force. The modern riot police are the foundation of the stability of the democratic state.

Over time the Greek police force have adopted and successively used new tactics. Their previous approach of amateurish outright aggression is giving way to the more professional contain and dominate approach widely seen in northern Europe. At the same time that the Troika are trying to bring Greece into line with the advanced capitalist states in terms of economy and society, they are also trying to make sure the police force has the required level of control. The police are starting to use tactics developed in countries such as the UK, France and Germany. It is on the streets that we see the true face of the Troika programme, the divided, monitored, controlled and joyless societies of the Western world are to be replicated everywhere.

As we move into the era of the 'Security State' the forms of political action may have to change. With security now being the primary function of the state we see more and more public gatherings being controlled or simply banned. This desire for security, from a large section of the population as well as the state, raises the possibility that in the near future demonstrations too will only be allowed to take place in a totally 'secure' environment. An effective response may be to focus less on public demonstrations and more on concrete actions, a switch from trying to persuade 'the people' to a practice of disrupting or attack away from the traditional approaches of demonstrations. These approaches, centred around rallying people and marching to the parliament and ministry, were based on an idea of the state that is no longer so relevant. Decisions are not made in parliaments and ministries as much now. These places only house the local administrators of the market. The state no longer has much need to respond to its citizens. We see this in the deconstruction of the welfare state, the militarization of police forces and the continuing process of handing over common spaces and resources to the market. Greece is currently ungoverned, some in the media and diplomatic circles like to say, but not because the parliament actually resists the Troika demands but in part due to the state's fear of the streets. Now more than ever we have to find ways to keep up this pressure.



Fragments For The New Politics

We are accustomed to understand radical political change as a result of more or less violent revolution: a new political subject, which is called the constituent or the constitution-making power since the French Revolution, destroys the existing political and legal order and creates a new constituted or constitutional violence. I think the time has come to abandon this outdated model in order to align our thinking on “destituent” or what you might call “transcending” power - that is, a force that can simply not take the form of a constituted violence. This constitutional violence corresponds with revolutions, uprisings and new legal constitutions, it is a form of violence that enforces new law. For destituent violence completely different strategies have to be devised, the particulars of which must be the task for a politics to come.

-G. Agamben, interview with Die Zeit, September 2015

As in the citation above, many of the ideas commonly received as ‘normal’ concerning revolution are proving just how much they need to be reconsidered. Thus this could be thought of as a modest contribution to rethinking or updating various political ideas. So for example in speaking of politics, many are beginning to re-examine democracy as a concept. I would like to expand a bit on that theme, but for our own use in constructing a practical revolutionary perspective, and also for considering what opposing political system do we exactly face? Clearly, it is quite a good critique to begin with that democracy is not the perfect political form, despite having many benefits, and also the idea that the “democracy” we are presented with in current ideology has little relation to the historical meaning of the term. This is also topical as the ongoing anti-terrorist circus (at least its Spanish installment of arresting anarchists) largely revolves around a small book whose title is “*Against democracy*” (recently made available online in English).

What I would begin with is confirming the common view that the enemy we face is in no way ‘pure democracy’, it is a much more devious foe. This is because the basic political reasoning underlying present day states is neither democratic nor anti-democratic, it is largely to be found in the idea of the “*mixed constitution*”. This famous political concept (also called simply, “polity”) was the idea of combining all the various forms of aristocracy, democracy and monarchy into a harmonious balance. But this ancient concept of Plato, Aristotle and Polybius, revived by Montesquieu and British liberalism of the 18th century, would never have called itself a democracy, rather it was quite clear that it was called in an offhand way a constitutional monarchy, or could be conceived of as a representative and “mixed” constitution. But in many European countries today the government is still a constitutional monarchy, and even the Americanized version of this executive power, the elected president, has not substantially changed the structure. Another point to consider is the idea of *representative* government, which was foreign to the old city states that originated this political thinking. The kings at Sparta and Macedon had to lead their troops into battle and might die there; the Athenians would vote for and if necessary recall their military commanders, and also every citizen was expected to turn out for supporting a war effort in some way. A curious ahistorical mode of thinking often leads us to demand “direct democracy” as a slogan, but what we are really asking for is the old conception of democracy, not a representative idea of the “national assembly”. Then we should be honest with ourselves and say: what size of political units can be managed using the old forms of

thought taken from city states and small regions? Maybe Anarchy is going to break apart the state and make way for much smaller political units (Bookchin’s bio-regions, whatever term we want to use). After all what demanded representation and not participation, at least in an immediate sense (and this is stated quite clearly by various Enlightenment thinkers) is the size and population of the territory. In classical Athens, the territory was Attica, and the citizens were quite a small number of the total population. In the modern era now that more are eligible to participate in political life, and our territorial agglomerations are larger, the solution of Liberalism was for representation (bypassing some of the more direct localisms of the feudal times).

If we went back historically far enough, we would find that where political-religious *representation* durably replaces the old direct political-religious localism is in the Roman Empire and its deified Caesars. I would briefly define this representation as the divorce between politics and communities. This becomes far more formalized and apparent under Christianity. With this brief observation (however much I would like to expand on a lengthy historical digression) we can sum up and establish clearly that we face two things: 1) the modern political system in its practical functioning as a mixed state; and 2) this modern mixed political system with its “religion” of abstract representation, the nation-state, economic growth, the Spectacle, etc. The one underpins the other, like an arch. If we practically question concepts in opposing them (territorial integrity of the nation, the army/police, prisons and courts, parliament, religion of hedonistic consumption) this necessarily suggests a breakdown in the machine functioning, since these are the expressions of its mixed forms (judicial, legislative, democratic, etc.). I promised not to digress, but I like to note, following Agamben among others, that the ‘representational’ or spiritualized concept of participation, of democracy, is often expressed as *collective acclamation*, be it of the Emperor before the gladiatorial combats, or in the consumerism and images of the modern Spectacle. This has a lot to say about the fortunes of the word ‘*ekklesia*’, which in its origin denotes the democratic space, and later becomes the space for witnessing the empty pageantry and foolish rituals of the Christian Church. In passing, it seems we are ending this ‘come one, come all’ tradition that goes back to Christianity. It is interesting to remark that the way Christ runs his community is a tyranny, based on his self-deification, open to everyone on an equally low basis (everyone is sinful). Whereas you can see that Socrates will talk with anyone, but he only associates on an intimate basis with an aristocracy of

talent constituted around himself. But theocracy (in its literal sense, rule by man for an absent God) has always been linked to tyranny, indeed, it might be said it is simply *spiritualized tyranny*. This provoked the largest problems for Alexander the Great amongst the Greeks, but by Imperial Roman times, people had been forced to accept the tacit deification of their rulers, a development Christianity happily fitted itself in to.

To return to our guiding thread, I don't think all this is pointless erudition, rather Anarchism can profitably relate to this in several ways. Concerning the political forms, first we should not over-value (even direct) democracy to the exclusion of other political forms. Although some of the most liberated moments in history are those of this democracy, e.g. in the Renaissance, in the France of 1793, much is to be said for a mixture of various elements. I would also clarify that the forms of government might best be thought of as qualities. I mean that instead of democracy, aristocracy, monarchy, we should consider what they really imply- perhaps as participation, action, deliberation- or they could also be profitably transposed and explained as economic, political, and ideological moments. To go even further, for anarchists we could separate the moments of our early belief, as being represented by Proudhon, Bakunin, and Stirner. The point I am trying to make is that these aspects of politics are all stronger when they are united, because they all refract a certain portion of reality that we have to relate to. In the 19th century it was quite common for the workers to have cooperatives and trade unions, political parties, and also newspapers and books. They quite consciously set out to unite and create these diverse tendencies. When these are all working together, it is a positive cycle where they each help the others- and conversely, when they lose the unity, they degenerate on their own: unions and cooperatives, into reformism and alternative consumption; political groupings, into irrelevant sectarianism; and intellectual efforts, into shrill isolation. But when they are combined in a movement then it functions much as a little city that has mixed all the various moments of democratic, aristocratic, and monarchic values- and this will allow us to combat the 'mixed constitution' of the Liberal world of today, which is something prior radicalism, largely based on Marxism, has never succeeded in doing very successfully.

There are many reasons for this, but I submit one of the first is that Marx shows himself early on as a champion only of democracy, and seems to think the only possible enemy is absolutist monarchy. Marx, famously, is defamed or proclaimed as either a tyrant or a democrat. Tyrannic, in the First International, his personal behavior and advocacy of the vaguely

defined dictatorship of the proletariat; or democratic, in other of his expressions, like the early writings or the 1871 *Civil War in France*. More provocatively, one can find the same dual character in Lenin- for instance, a democrat in *State and Revolution*. But with a grounding in classical political theory, the subtle connection between democracy and tyranny is quite unsurprising, along with the fact of their quick transition into each other. For Lenin, the direct democratic rule of the Soviets proved itself not capable of dealing with the problems of the Civil War and Revolution, as well as the limited democracy within the Bolshevik party, so this had to be gotten rid of- and it was, in a truly exaggerated and immoderate fashion. In overvaluing democracy, a serious danger clearly lies in a natural reaction, swinging back to an excess of authority.

Besides, overvaluing democracy leads to the reality that we can often find out why democracy was criticized in the past. Similarly it leads us to question was 'democracy' our mental image of it, or something slightly different, more approximating in fact to a 'mixed' character. After all, the Athenian 'democratic' golden age is synonymous with Pericles, who is something like a virtuous monarch, loosely advised by philosophers (Anaxagoras and later Socrates). In fact the duration and the brilliance of the various 'reigns' of Athenian democracy, as with Themistocles, Pericles, and so forth, are exactly the opposite of what we commonly associate with our contemporary image of 'democracy'- namely constant changes in governance, largely related to political parties and independent of personalities. These lead us also to ponder the classical criticism of democracy (which we find in Plato, Aristotle, etc.), largely that it is not effective in war, a majority is no guarantee that a thing is correct, people are frequently guilty of envy or ingratitude towards men of talent, and also its functioning often leads to the formation of various factions that fight each other until a tyranny or another type of government is established- this largely based on the typical examples of the decline of Athens in the Peloponnesian war and its later inability to oppose Philip of Macedon.

In a practical sense, this has large relevance, which is why I bring it up. I refer specifically to the attitude of the radical movement during the first Syriza era (January-August 2015). The most important manifestation of antagonism and critique, just a few months after Syriza's election, was the hunger strike of political prisoners. This clearly had immense importance, both in itself- to improve conditions and reject the imposition of worse- and for itself, as a clear statement for radical political change and continuing antagonistic politics under Syriza (a view which has been totally confirmed).

But if we take the topmost number of ~10,000 to be optimistically what we could call 'the movement' in Athens, only about ~2,000 showed up to the largest demonstration in support of this strike. I won't get into all the things going on inside the strike, but focus on the largest issue, its lack of wider support. Thus here is a good, contemporary and practical example of 'the majority' in the radical space having a completely erroneous political stance of apathy. As Aristotle points out in his critique of the ideological basis of democratic belief, we are all equal in potential, but not in actuality. The premise is correct, but not the conclusion, and thus unbalanced democracy often has difficulties dealing with the problems of actuality-and where are there more difficult problems than in serious moments of political conflict? Indeed, what is commonly critiqued in the Zapatistas and Kurdish struggles for instance, are the less democratic aspects of the armed units (just as even in the past other anarchists criticized Makhno or Durruti and the FAI). But the unthought and undeveloped in these critiques are the practical difficulties of democratic assemblies or nebulous popular opinion overseeing political conflict (which is a different, but related, proposition with democracy in the militias themselves). Anyways, a final worthwhile thing to note concerning the hunger strike, was its federalistic character. Different groups and individuals can participate as they like, in the way that they want. This is a better, and certainly more anarchistic model for resolving things, and a more realistic way of thinking about ourselves, than some sort of quest for a monolithic totality. Spreading and acknowledging this model (and admitting the reality of our fragmented situation) also might lessen the dispiriting tensions in 'the movement', by allowing everyone to know that they have their own uncontested space, from which then we can all come together on important issues.

Actually we should carefully reconsider the words of Emma Goldman, when she wrote that "Anarchism is inherently aristocratic". She wrote this in the context of defending Nietzsche, against the appropriation of the right and the anathema of the Left, and for the cause of intellectual tolerance. Anarchism is, or should be, aristocratic in the sense of its disinterested pluralism, and conceived this way is surely a welcome antidote from the reflexive small-mindedness of the Church or the USSR forever in search of heresies. Intellectual cultivation and the necessary tolerance that accompanies it would be quite necessary for any new conception of revolution. After all, in practical terms, it was painfully obvious that lack of theoretical grounding made for the large difficulties the Greek movement had with Syriza. Large portions of the movement were attracted to it because

they lacked an historical comprehension of reformism and the Left (or were unable to apply historical examples to the present), they had no capacity for critique of institutionalized multicultural values profitably promoted by postmodern capitalism, and, all in all, the hedonistic social scene of Exarcheia was insufficiently politicized (a failing for which we all bear some responsibility). In fact if anarchism is to become more of a force in the world, it would mean rejecting the current democratic values (this is provocative as we live today under EU tyranny-but again shows how democracy is not immune from association with tyranny, it is quite effectively intertwined with it) and actually promote values of raising up, not leveling down-and instead of always trying to exclude, finding ways to work together. Truly noble political acts would then be seen as those that take the first step to bridge differences and ignore personalized considerations to find common ground.

Finally abandoning an overvaluation of democracy is necessitated by the developments of today. We no longer have that once-heroic subject, *le peuple*; and we no longer have the enemies revolution has conquered in the past, namely absolutist monarchy. This is why for De Tocqueville, to name one example, revolution, democracy, socialism, universal suffrage, etc. are all synonyms-coming from a monarchist country on the Continent under the Restoration, these poles effectively do oppose one another. But they no longer do so, which is a fairly obvious observation. Before today, the world has only really seen under Imperial Rome a decaying mixed state, and one sees how the bad aspects combine in an inverted mixture- a corrupt, oligarchic tyranny is frequently rent into warring factions (as seen over Syria and Ukraine) and there is an ignorant populace that can always be easily manipulated.

Indeed, after the horrors of the 20th century, surely we cannot really have the same naive and easy Rousseauist faith in 'the people', the 'general will', nor unlimited democracy, however direct it may promise to be. In some sense we cannot have the same faith because it is not the same people- the workers have won, they smashed the royal palaces and slowly became middle class, and the time of absolutist Christian monarchs is forever ended. It is always important to avoid veering to excesses- after a period of seemingly unlimited faith in the people, there is bound to come a reaction to the other side, and you can see this already in the great contempt with which the global elite treat "the 99%". Today anyone would say, looking at Europe as a whole, that we don't have the large heroic underclass of 19th century Paris, immortalized in History and the works of Hugo. But with all the recent

protests against austerity or environmental destruction it shows we are not yet at the level of the vicious, mindless and depraved mobs of the Late Empire-even if, given the general vulgarity and decadence of most of today's so-called culture (e.g. *the despicable baseness* of "The American Way of Life"), the appeal to the lowest instincts and unthinking emotionalism under the rubric of 'anti-terrorism', or widespread rhetoric for violence against immigrants, it seems we are going there.

Which can be quite scary: radicals no longer "represent" any underclass capable of occasional heroic exertions, but are a (largely middle-class) social minority in an increasingly totalitarian body politic, and there no longer even exists the sociological class once represented (in Marxist tradition, the proletariat). We would have to abandon the idea we represent anything or anyone- let's just say what we are, identical with negation, or, the advance of Liberty. This observation of our extremely marginal status, should also help us preserve something like *a monarchic conception*. Not in advocating for monarchs, but in the sense of the term (*monos*) in the insistence *on uniqueness*, like how the ancient Athenians had for wars the voting of the position of *polemarchos*, a campaign having one or a few talented generals-an obvious concession to the monarchical realities of war. More obviously, the monarchic conception is something that should be frequently reflected upon in the spiritual or intellectual sphere, that one individual or a few individuals, may often be proved right against the whole weight of a society- they are not only a minority, they are a super-minority. But whether it is the genius of the misunderstood artist, the scientific protests of Galileo, the condemned virtue of Socrates, or the protest of only a handful of European internationalists against the First World War-we surely need to concede, not total, but some importance to the individual. In truth with our isolation and today's general social apathy, but also what I also believe to be the fundamental rightness of our position and its connection to a more virtuous life, we are actually much more monarchic than we think. And in truly atomized Protestant countries, it is mostly from individuals that any kind of social opposition expresses itself (as with Assange and the handful of Wiki-leakers). Perhaps this would wind us back to De Tocqueville's other observation concerning *Democracy in America*, how the American model of society seemed to freeze and atomize society and this, even in the 1830's, promised a new and horrible form of tyranny-but that also this extreme mechanization of life, pointed to the possibility that only a few people acting together might be able to topple the entire structure.

Now concerning the second issue of representation, this is a great and often unperceived problem- much as fish can't see the water, we also can't see representation. Actually much of the acting and routines of the movement are highly symbolic or representative, and I add one more voice to the chorus that encourages us to move away from this. One could have a fairly easy and cruel critique of how much of radical routines resemble acts of devotion, pilgrimages, yearly processions, confessions of faith, grand Church synods and weekly meetings, etc. As it's already been done, I will forego that, but will note that assemblies do not have intrinsically more meaning in the Polytechnic, nor do anarchists always have to wear black and spend time drinking in Exarcheia. In his habitually clever way, Goethe makes the perceptive remark that Christianity was a political revolution, which, when it was defeated, became moralized. This is the old Christian disconnect between faith and acts, potential and actual-the setting up of an abstract standard for endless critique. And after the enormous defeats of the past few decades, radicalism too has become associated with impotent moralization disconnected from reality, which one could also define as negative inactivity combined with practical irrelevance. The danger is the total devaluation of concrete and objective criteria of acts in favor of hollow professions of faith. These are quite common critiques, but what I think we often fail to notice that what forms all these things are the abstract character of the 'representation' of radicalism. In a practical way to overcome this the most positive things are the proliferation of local assemblies and decentralized marches, and also actions in smaller towns and in the countryside (e.g. recent local coordinations for Black December, the spirited provincial marches this December 6). This was beginning to be developed more in the 2014 Romanos hunger strike, has been seen in anti-fascist organizing, and obviously was a part of December 2008. If all goes well we have a healthy spirit of emulation in radical actions (which group, neighborhood or city can cause the most damage becomes a sort of competition) and a "directifying" of the movement, since it goes into every neighborhood and every group. This is appropriate because Anarchism marks the end of traditional political representation as it aims for the end of this bureaucratic state that promotes abstract values of representational belonging.

In sum, if we can get away from these two related things, overvaluation of democracy and political representation, we will have gone a long way upon the path towards a new, and paradoxically old, way of doing politics. But this is only the beginning to rethinking commonly accepted radical norms.

II.

Another thing that has become incontestably clear after the Syriza debacle and the concurrent implosion, petty squabbling, and final disintegration of the Left- besides the complete disgrace of its intellectual supporters (Badiou, Ranciere, Zizek, Harvey, Ali, Negri, Hardt, et al.)- is that the dualism of nationalism and internationalism (or in other general terms, local and global) no longer has much radical potential *on either side*, because both have been assimilated into the functioning of the modern world. Also more grandly this means one would be forced to ask, *what does revolution even mean or set out to do today?* With the first issue, I mean that the radical nation-state with its protectionist welfare policies, ‘the local’, still promoted by some of the nostalgic “Old Left” groups like the Greek Communist Party (KKE) or Popular Unity (LAE), is not really a threat to the orderly functioning of things-in the last instance, such a state would simply be quarantined off from the world until it was forced to compromise, or you would find there was not much earth-shaking radicalism in the promises anyways (as in today’s Venezuela or Cuba). And in many instances, unlike in the past, this national sovereignty can in no degree be claimed for any sort of “progressive national liberation



movements” which granted Marxism its victories in the third world. If anything today this is more associated with dilapidated “balkanized” states, like those that came from the dissolution of Yugoslavia, or in the least bloody case, this is simply bland bureaucratic posturing and politically uninteresting-the past separation of Czechs and Slovaks, or the currently proposed separating of Wallons and Flamands in Belgium, Scots from the U.K., the U.K. from the Eurozone, etc.

On the other side, and in a converse way, contrary again to much of Left dogma, internationalisation and the erasure of borders into larger political units is in no ways objectively radical-witness the unification of East and West Germany, or the prosaic course of the European Union. Surely no one thinks NATO, the IMF, UN or various other international schemes are radical. Thus the Left is caught in a dilemma of its own making, because it has in the past represented national revolution (or national parliamentary progress) leading to the formation of a more or less autarchic welfare-state, but it did so in the official name of internationalism and cosmopolitanism. And this is the reason for the confusion today, and a sure sign that the old ways of doing politics that we associate with the history of the Left, is coming to an end.

Starting from this self-evident basis it might be profitable to advance to the second issue, what exactly have past revolutions done, and what exactly did they mean or set out to do? The goal would be to arrive at a sort of clearer conception of what we can do today in the world in terms of changing it- and if we are lucky and competent enough, it might be said that we can perform a sort of *aufheben* of both moments of the local and the global, while escaping the horns of the present dilemma, insoluble for dying radical traditions. Here we will have to think about (and rethink) a few moments that represent the recent ideas of revolution, or what I would prefer to call attention to, *large spiritual changes* in a society. In going backwards, I will talk about that event that began the modern era, the French Revolution of 1789, go back to Protestantism, and even go back to that generally unremarked yet curiously contemporary epoch, Late Antiquity (interestingly, Graeber and Agamben have both referenced this period in recent works).

To begin: it is often claimed that the French Revolution gave us nationalism and secularism. *Not so!* We are supposed to have been given aggressive nationalism by 1789, but it should first be noted that the radicals in the early stages were not at all in favor of war- in fact, it was the reactionary party that inspired the foreign war, in hopes no doubt of governing through chaos and emergency. Finally the later famous feuds between Robespierre and Danton concerned, in part, with whom should France make peace and ally- Prussia or Austria? But the entire point was to end the external war, and to establish a lasting 'peace footing' for the revolution to develop itself. It is important to note this because the idea of the all-conquering armies of revolution, permanent revolution, and the demand that revolution must right away conquer the whole world, something which has remained in the collective imagination with Austerlitz

and the Red Army, is actually in no way associated with the thoughts of these revolutionaries in the past-indeed, it is in fact directly refuted by these examples. Even under Bonaparte, Europe was moving past nationalism towards an integrated European system. In fact aggressive nationalism might be said to come only from the wreckage and failure of 1789, much as secularism or militant atheism are products of the failure of the new state religion.

Which brings us to the next topic: as a most provocative re-thinking of a commonly accepted view which is none the less false, this revolt actually tried to give the French not a purely negative atheism/secularism, *but a new religion*. Therefore in this epochal modern event, the struggle is in no degree about imposing atheism, but to a large extent over *what religion will replace Christianity?* Secularism itself (*laicite*) is the later residue, a toned-down form that emerges long afterwards. Actually as the revolution became more radical, Catholicism was hit hard and a new philosophically-based national religion was arriving. This gave us the popular *Goddess of Reason*, associated with the Hebertists, and the *Supreme Being*, of the Robespierre faction. A few years later, the Babeuf conspiracy is partially linked to another philosophical-religious sect. It may well be said that this very radical revolution is surely anti-Christian, but it is in no degree irreligious.

As the Terror wore on, Robespierre became more withdrawn and more disappointed with the results of the revolution, or as St. Just remarked, "Terror chills the heart". Even purging the Hebertists and Dantonists could not bring about a renewed sense of collective purpose. Jacobin idealism, it seems reasonable to suppose, oriented far back into the past, hit upon the expedient of recreating something like the old civic religions of Antiquity, yet with a peculiarly Roman flavor, as this had a fairly obvious political coloring and orientation, and their new religion was basically the monotheistic Deism of the Enlightenment. In one of his last acts, Robespierre ordered citizens to share their dinner with their neighbours, in a bid to foster fraternity. But he should have reflected that fraternity had been lost in the recent factional struggles. This was surely a pure but an all-too rigid and narrow conception of revolution. The descent of the revolution into this fratricide and later the well-known amorality of the Thermidorian era, inspired Schiller with the famous remark, to the effect that a great moment had only found small people. I would only add that this great moment was tried to fit into small conceptions. But the important point to think about is the idea that revolution was only viewed as a temporary gap in time, and the real thought of the revolutionaries was, *how to successfully end the revolution?* And for

us today, no doubt we are inspired to think, *what exactly does this mean or imply?*

On this note we can wander over to the next example, Protestantism, which shared many characteristics with the French Revolution (Hegel, De Maistre, Carlyle, and many other thinkers made a connection between the Reformation, the English Revolution, and the French Revolution, as sort of links on a chain). But Protestantism was so weak that it always was on the defensive, and there could be no thought of an overwhelming military victory for Protestantism, especially in its infancy as a movement of a few renegades from the Church and a handful of local potentates. In fact their entire titanic struggles are largely over establishing themselves in security and defending their religious and political liberties (as in Switzerland, Holland, Germany, etc.), and also in the vein of sober realism for ourselves, they had to fight for over a century to do so. Here, politics is again linked with religion, quite clearly: where Protestantism established itself, it led to a more rational and 'mixed' form of government republicanism, and also was associated with a federal, not a unitary model of a state. If we go very far, the European Union and the Americanization of the world in parliamentary democracy, are simply the ultimate consequences and results of this Protestant, federalist, statist model. In a certain sense, as we see here, revolution means establishing a different worldview, a spiritual project, and its living matrix of expressions in the world—a way of life that is fundamentally different from the old one, with different political and spiritual practices, goals and sentiments. Revolution is strangely defensive in nature, but offensive in a spiritual sense. Its existence and successes are an encouraging example, which constitute an affront to the old way of doing things. In an ethical sense to relate to today, this means we would have to find something potentially more rewarding and meaningful than the globalization or intensification of the "American Way of Life". In a very real sense revolution is really one spiritual project replacing another—and the world of today is still trying to find a response to the Protestant conceptions that have evolved capitalism and the modern bureaucratic state.

One should also briefly mention Late Antiquity, which sees the collapse of the Roman Empire and the growth of the new Christianity. This could also help us reflect that all great revolutions and even spiritual changes take place amidst total societal breakdowns and chaos. Here there is almost no political conflict at all, but still it is surely a very large spiritual change that took place. In this period there are small fragments of things that pop out, such as the minor independent territories of the Bagaudae (assortments

of barbarians, runaway slaves, criminals, etc.) and also related talk of the Armorican Republic (largely in present-day Normandy and Bretagne) which declared its secession from the decaying Empire and made efforts to govern itself. This is about all that can really be known from the patchwork historical record, and so I won't impute some sort of ideological basis to these movements, other than remarking they are basically the centrifugal sort of movements that seem to inevitably happen when any Empire decays, and this is quite clearly in evidence in our own day. But in Late Antiquity, the Christianity that had destroyed the social fabric of the old world, could not provide the basis for any sort of new conception of healthy political life (there remaining only the spiritual sickness of the monasteries).

If we leave this unhappy period and quickly advance to very modern times to close out this survey, Marxism had some success as an attempted federal and social model with Titoism in Yugoslavia (incidentally quite close to some of the plans of Rigas, this highly original 18th century Greek revolutionary) but we have to ask ourselves why this collapsed so quickly and disastrously. I would suggest it is here the problem of 'ending a revolution' that poses the difficulties: too much importance was placed on the state and one charismatic figure at its head (the same problem as with 1789, Robespierre and Napoleon), and not enough was done for the actual inwardizing of the beliefs in the population (whereas with the prior examples of Christianity it is before all a belief, later manifested in the state).

The real question, especially after the end of the French Revolution and the collapse of many of the Marxist states, is: *how can we make a better model of revolution than Protestantism*, which established this federalist principle, and allowed it to spread with a rational consideration of common interests? As Machiavelli remarks in his republican *Discourses* (and this is so frequently not remarked by others), in Germany men could trust one another, whereas in his native Italy, the example of the Church and nobility ruined morality and made it impossible to work together. There was simply no trust and mutual concord possible, everyone followed his own subjective inclinations, and on this basis, it was impossible to build a lasting conception of civic virtue (this being largely a happy accident of a few Renaissance patrician families). But the expression of mutual middle-class trust and a certain rationalization of political life, is summed up in Protestantism. In other words, this religion linked itself, not only to economic conceptions, but to a certain conception of politics, which was found to be quite profitable in a certain long-term view (ironically, the opposite of its decline into today's short-term capitalistic view). For the Dutch republic to allow refugee

Protestants, various dissenters and sectarians, exiled Jews and freethinkers, etc. to live together in relative freedom allowed it to become the model commonwealth of the 17th century. They were something like an island for refugees and free thought, which later became the position of England. Protestant Liberalism inspired a practice of a limited tolerance, but for its time, it was the most tolerant society available. And where it had its notable successes, Marxism *initially* promised a greater freedom than the corrupt regimes it replaced- and incidentally, still represented a more ‘rational’ and philosophic course than the old regime. The Romanovs of 1917 who leaned upon Christian mysticism, militaristic nationalism, and the proto-fascist militia of the Black Hundreds, were far less tolerant and their projects far less reasonable than the (initially multi-party and effectively anarchistic) program of the October revolution to end the war and redistribute the land. But perhaps Anarchism now can realize the same long-term benefits of tolerance, re-connect the link on the chain between philosophy and revolution, making a new model of revolt but even in much clearer forms- intellectual, political, religious, etc. And so too, we might once again start to conceive revolution not as the ineluctable triumph of a sort of righteous stupidity- as in the Christian or Stalinist model- but like 1789, as revolt really is in its essence and should be in practice: an explosion of repressed intellect against the irrational ruling stratum of an authoritarian and decadent society.



THE GODDESS OF REASON

III.

In rethinking radicalism today, or for a new model of revolt, one would have to acknowledge that Agamben’s only other possible intellectual counterpart, in terms of decades of intellectual renown and contemporary relevance, would be Jurgen Habermas. In fact they would pair quite well together, Habermas as the positive set against Agamben’s negative. In practical terms, Habermas has proposed a more federalized EU with spiritual conceptions of solidarity and citizen participation, along with proliferation of rational political debate as in the old *agora*. This represents something like a clearly defined and concrete project, transcending the nation-state while keeping local political life alive, rooted in the classical past while developing progressive gains of the Enlightenment and more modern revolt. And at an intellectual level, he represents a position appearing in this review and shared with Agamben, the critique of Marxism as theoretically insufficient, for which neither of them have ever been forgiven by the increasingly irrelevant left academic establishment. Habermas also has a firm grounding in the thorough German Idealist tradition, which had bypassed the divided Enlightenment standpoint of the isolated rational subject confronting the objective world- and this has allowed him, especially in his oft-ignored *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity*, to point to serious flaws in the intellectual schemas of Foucault and other postmodern thinkers, to show (in his words elsewhere) the problems inherent in the “conservative-revolutionary understanding of critique” of Benjamin’s messianic theological approach, and most notably to have a serious critique focused on Heidegger (in following the historic tradition of Lukacs and the Frankfurt School). But I suppose all this intellectual wealth has the problem of the uncritical and lifeless positive, that however reasonable and well-grounded it appears, it lacks much of the vitality of a more critical stance, and seems unable and not likely to realize itself within any normal framework of the modern world.

On the other hand, Agamben lacks such a clearly defined project, but proves the value of his views time and again by telling us either what to avoid, or what will not work. A recent concept proposed by Agamben (especially in evidence in his new work, *The Use of Bodies*) is *destitution*. With his usual insight it allows him to advance a different model than constituting a new radical power- a model which has reached its last gasp with the quick failure of Syriza (notably, a failure only Agamben, among the famous ‘radical intellectuals’ of today, had predicted). But on the other hand this model of deposition or destitution is still highly vague, and a skeptic

might call it simply abstract negation, or wonder in what way does it differ from his friend Debord's councilism. Yet from the negative has to proceed the renewed positive: in some sense to give more content to this negative, would just mean (in an intellectual sense) orienting it historically, and thus (in a practical sense) proposing the radical federation of zones of destituted power. But their connection is already evident in a certain sense- ZADs, Val de Susa, Halkidiki, Chiapas, Rojava etc.- but as the systemic political crisis of the new century deepens, to be successful they would have to take steps to become more autonomous and to unite themselves ever further, in political, ideological, economic senses. These 'liberated zones', to use the old phrase, would be a different and non-state sort of territorial arrangement, secession from one federal union (or in today's IT terms, a network) in favor of another one. This is quite contemporary, because largely today the question seems to be, in business and technology as in politics, who can construct the most valuable project and the most meaningful network? Who can associate to themselves the most different actors and allow them the space to work harmoniously together? This will have a large and unconventional role to play in any new practices and conceptions of revolt, far beyond the typically exclusive and increasingly discredited conceptions of the Left.

It was Bonaparte who acutely observed that federalism destroys large states, but strengthens small ones-so with this as our principle, we should be at an advantage. The one difficulty is that today we face large mega-states built upon this federalist principle, and thus their dismantling seemingly will have to be piece by piece. This process would have elements appearing a bit like those from the previous epochs we have discussed-but the most recent parallel, which I mention in passing, would surely be those territories liberated by "the Armies of Crime"- the Resistance- these "mountain republics" growing in occupied Europe as the Nazi Reich (and its anti-terrorist crusade) was collapsing.

I suppose the real point, bypassing the local/global, inter/national divide is not talking about this or that accident of geography or history, but rather, what unites regions in struggle? They are not in any way territorially contiguous, nor are all even combating the same specific thing, perhaps here an airport, there a high speed train or gold mining, etc. But what would unite them is the act of struggling itself. This goes beyond the physical borders, and also beyond ideological ones, because not every community in struggle can be expected to conform exactly to a certain anarchist vision, even if they are all acting *anarchically*. This would again be related to a certain realistic pluralism in struggle, with the ideal of finding a golden mean

of support and critique- but it should always be kept in mind and repeated (at least by us) just how relevant are very basic tenets of anarchist theory, like electoral abstention, direct action, anti-statism, anti-representative politics, etc.-and current showcase examples of disappointment from Syriza and Podemos, the HDP in Turkey, Corbyn and now Sanders, show just how true this is. These views are not at all a sort of dogma plastered onto every event, they are a strategical prescription that have proved themselves to be quite correct in past and recent history. Similarly, the idea of radical anti-state federalism is nothing so new, it is the old form of organizing espoused by Bakunin in his writings on the Paris Commune. Everything consists in renewing and enriching the relevance of the views of the past for today.

Therefore we've proposed a resolution of the present national/international dilemma, and more largely, a reorienting of revolt. A practical way forward is a radical federalism of communities and territories in anti-statist struggle, which incidentally can help us connect back to more recent histories of revolt, how the Protestants defied the armies of the Counter-Reformation, all the way to the past of the old Greek city-states that united to defeat the rich and civilized Persian Empire of their day at Salamina. And now thinking of *what does it mean*, this reworking of old terms, I would suggest we re-think the term 'revolution', a decisive particular historical moment, and connect it to the idea (referenced from such divergent positions as Stirner and Camus) of constant ethical rebellion. Then we could also replace the outdated 19th century idea of class struggle for the State and controlling means of production, to rebellious struggles for liberty, which would again take our focus out of the economic sphere to put us back in the political one. As a corollary the traditional political party and trade-unions, completely decayed in our day, could be replaced by the 'mass avant-garde' of the radical movement and struggling territories. The last beneficial change in this rethinking would be shifting the focus from Marx's never-clearly defined proletariat, to a freer model where anyone who wants to can participate in the struggle for Liberty.

In sum, this means connecting Anarchism, the movement, and Anarchy, the situation-as a means connected to its quite natural end. And thinking to ourselves, that we may be arriving at this epochal moment, when Anarchism perishes in its becoming real. Anarchy has always been inside anarchism, but now, from the bud, comes the flower. In older classical terms, you could just say that to establish a republic, civic virtue has to exist for the republic to establish itself, and then to be constantly re-created anew. We are making the last revolution that enshrines the principle of rebellion on its

banner. In this way revolution becomes not anything written in stone for all time, given by a parliament or control of a state, but rather, the emancipatory event, the loss of state control, that makes possible all sorts of different ways of living Liberty, of a plurality of religious, artistic, ethical and political expressions.

The true political failure of Antiquity, as well as the Renaissance and French Revolution, was the inability to make a lasting and fair confederation of small polities; instead, these are produced by the martial brilliance of Macedon, Rome, or France, which means they do not have a character of assent and participation. Opposed to this is what the Delian League was in its inception, and also the example we have of the later Achaian League, for which there are quite real parallels between the federative experiments of early Protestantism in Switzerland, Holland, and England. The difference is between the failure of the former and success of the latter. But this suggests that inside the Protestant conceptions was hidden a sort of germ of rational or abstract thinking, which functions as the 'glue' to hold the things together. In our modern thinking, the rationality is all there is left- it simply makes self-evident sense to associate with others outside of one's immediate neighborhood. In this sense a new thinking of radical federalism, locally rooted, ignoring the boundaries of the nation-state yet in opposition to the international mechanisms of austerity and control like the IMF or ECB, would be yet another link on an historic chain. These liberated territories would form a different federalist project, one rooted in a different morality from the prevailing Protestant neo-liberalism, and incidentally one that at least in the beginning, would probably be most rooted in the European South- this Hegelian observation of Agamben's that was controversial only a few years ago, has now become a common observation.

If there is a brief sketch of what specific ethical views we might share, or what might conduce to a "Mediterranean Way of Life" able to globalize itself and defeat the unbearable American version, it would surely at least include respect for the environment, rejection of practices and ethics of neo-liberal austerity, commitment to some sort of ideas of social justice, sympathy for refugees combined with hostility to imperialist wars in the Middle East, participation in local political life, and antagonism to centralizing statist powers, to quickly name a few obvious ones. But the most significant difference with the world of today would be the opening up of a field for ethical experimentation, of unity in difference, and pluralism.

In closing, and to rework Gramsci's famous phrase, I would say today we should be fatalists of the intellect, but voluntarists of the will. For the

first, it's clear most everything will crumble away with continued economic crisis, increased imperialist wars, the fading of natural resources and the various disasters awaiting technological-industrial society- and for the second, nothing should be feared but inaction. The final implosion of the welfare state, of the Left and its morality is, in one sense, quite depressing- but on the other hand, if we know how to look, it's liberating, as this is only happening because of the secret victory of the truth of the principles themselves. As Camus wrote in another period of decline, "The disarray of the workers' movement in Europe in part comes as it has lost its true Fatherland, from where it drew its strengths after all its defeats, *which was the faith in Liberty*". If we would reorient ourselves today from the wreck of this historic movement, we would have to begin with considering this faith in Liberty as something ideal which can never be lost, so long as it is still believed. And surely, if History expresses the advance of Liberty in various forms, then we have to know ourselves as inheritors of these past forms, and comprehend our undeniable and positive relation to philosophy. After all, in thinking of these things, Herodotus relates that it was the sage Thales who first recommended a federal organization for the various cities of Ionia.

Now classically, philosophy has been concerned with the good life, what it means to *eu zein*. One could take this essay, in some way, as also re-thinking Utopia, or as it might be called in older terms, the good life. We can no longer call it a 'non-place' because it really can exist, and there is no need for Christian separation of idea and matter. However this is a word that has been discredited, and we should reflect upon why. Largely because in the 20th century there was a grand vagueness of aims and methods plastered over with universalizing slogans, a focus on the state as the motor of change, and a preponderating and misguided influence given to the economic, with very little thought given to individual and political freedom. But an intellectualized anarchy, connecting us back to the old struggles of Liberty throughout History, can change all that.

All in all, I hope this can bring back into repute a certain vision of *the true republic*, often lost and only barely glimpsed after its star-crossed wanderings throughout history, from Classical Athens to Florence of the Renaissance, to the Paris of the Great Revolution, going down to our modern times. This would mean we have a necessary sense of the desirability of a genteel poverty, a distaste of avarice, a reverence for freedom, and also a certain marked intellectual tolerance. If we set these upon our banner and work to practically unite our struggles, I believe we will reach the historic level of our critical situation and meet with political success in the increasingly dark times of this new century.

Tourist Season

More and more tourism is moving away from being about people travelling to see and understand a place. Instead tourism is a mass industry whose economic and political role is steadily growing. The last tourist season, in both Greece and the rest of the world, showed a number of things. Tourism is a major source of capitalist growth, and one that is being boosted by the modern 'sharing' economy. Crisis states like Greece are doing everything they can to bring in ever more tourist money, no matter what the social and environmental cost. And finally tourists are good for propaganda, defending and promoting the interests of tourists can be useful cover for a number of projects.



Greece:

Within the Greek territories recent trends continued with international tourism increasing and domestic tourism falling. Current estimates state that the number of tourist arrivals increased to around 26m people, compared to around 24m the previous year. Additionally turnover increased by around 13% on last year, making tourism one of the only growing areas of the Greek economy. With the economy shackled to austerity programmes for the foreseeable future, the growth of tourism is becoming a greater necessity for the state.

Beneath the story of general growth the statistics show a big division between international and domestic tourism with the international tourism market growing and the domestic market seeing sharp falls. Places mainly popular with Greeks saw declines of around 20% as fewer people were able to take any break at all during a tense summer and following years of crisis economics. This means that a two-tier tourism industry is coming into effect in the Greek territories. Rich international tourists, and the industry that serves them, are having a great time. On the other hand, inhabitants of the Greek territories are struggling and are losing the ability to even take a break from their stifling cities. This land is on its way to becoming a playground for the world's richer middle classes. A further example of the special status accorded to tourists, and the lower status given to inhabitants, was seen during the imposition of capital controls on the banks last summer. Inhabitants of Greece could only remove limited

amounts of cash from ATMs but those limits did not apply to tourists. The near collapse of the Greek economy was not allowed to disturb the tourists.

These days tourism highlights some of the absurdities of this world as holiday makers share space with refugees. There were many symbolic images as refugees waded ashore onto beaches full of sunbathers, and as luxury yachts glided past sinking rubber life rafts. Recently the people protesting the construction of refugee detention centres on the island of Kos have framed their actions as a defence of tourism. The images of thousands of people arriving every day and bodies washing up on the shore are having a negative effect on the industry. Their objection to these prisons for the world's poor and desperate is not that they are inhuman but that they are bad for the island's brand image.

Both the tourist and the refugee are foreigners in the places they pass through yet the former are said to be a blessing while the latter are a curse. Tourists come to relax and spend money so everything is built and altered to accommodate, feed and protect them. Refugees come to save their lives but they are ignored, abandoned or beaten. The contrast between the tourist and the refugee shows both the extent of racism and the value given to some one who has money in today's world view. The tourist is courted as a good sort of immigrant, and the immigrant is excluded as an undesirable tourist.

It is absurd that so many people are so afraid and angry over the arrival of 800,000 but yet are happy when over the same time, and often in the same place, 26m people have arrived. Mass tourism has a bigger impact on any place than immigration. In many parts of the world the money tourists bring is essential to transforming communities into new capitalist market places. The refugee family sitting in a tent waiting to be allowed to move on is seen as a danger and a threat while the groups of drunk northern Europeans fighting among themselves are the new normal. The tourist industry turns local cultural traditions into a dinner time show, it prices residents out of whole sections of cities and adds little of social value. In many cases the hotel and restaurant owners, travel companies, and bus drivers have openly and shamelessly profited from the refugee crisis, charging the desperate even more than the tourist.

Again the tourist industry had a political use in 2015. Previously, tourism was used to promote the Greek 'success story', the idea that the crisis was over and everyone should come and enjoy Greece again. This year there was solidarity tourism, the idea that the best way to help the Greek people

in their struggle against debt and bankruptcy was to visit the country and boost its tourism revenue. Increasingly the tourism industry is able to turn disaster into marketing opportunities. As well as Greek solidarity tourism, 2015 saw a campaign to get people to visit Tunisia as a way to stand up to Islamist attacks on tourists there. It hardly needs pointing out that the growing tourism industry is of little benefit to Greeks as a whole. The increased profits (including those from many solidarity minded tourists) go mostly to the owners of the hotels, airlines and transport companies. Despite the growth of tourism the workers in the industry are going through the same decline in conditions and wages as everyone else during the crisis. I would suggest that the supposedly large contingent of internationals at this summer's demonstrations (in front of the Parliament for the signing of the 3rd memorandum, and in Halkidiki) was a more useful show of solidarity than tourism.

The plan for the growth of the tourist industry follows the same basic idea as the rest of the memorandum business policies. The way the tourism industry is growing is sending the increased profits into just a few hands. For example, Cosco, the company which is in the process of finalising the privatisation of Piraeus, has plans to expand the port's ability to host cruise ships with the aim of quickly making it one of the main destinations for cruises. Cruise ship tourists have little or no interaction with the place they land and all their money is carefully directed into specific places, these are the 'high quality' tourists businesses often seek. Contrast this with the increasing number of small and medium hotels that are not benefiting from such increases. It's estimated that hundreds of small hotels are going up for sale or being closed. The growth model for tourism follows the memorandum outline with big companies benefiting from the collapse of the smaller.

International:

Elsewhere we see other examples of the political use of tourism and a growing backlash against the industry. In particular the leftist led city councils in places like Barcelona have at least begun to worry about the industry. As a city which bases a large part of its recent growth on tourism Barcelona is something of a trend setter for touristic European cities. In recent years a protest movement against the increasing effects of the tourism industry has been growing. The new leftist administration and protesting residents have been looking at one new aspect of the tourism

industry in particular, the rise of rental sites such as airbnb.

For those with a mind to reform the tourism industry these holiday rental websites are interesting. The basic idea is that anyone with a spare room can advertise it and rent it out to tourists. The advantage for the tourist is that it is generally cheaper than hotels and since these are rooms in a normal residential apartment it gets people away from the isolation of hotels. In theory things like this could be good. Already chain hotels, even luxury five star hotels, are complaining about the competition. This could be a way to distribute visitors around a city rather than having to create special tourist areas.

The reality of such rental practices though is quite different. Firstly, those renting their spare rooms are often the wealthy middle classes with a nice and big enough apartment to cater to tourists in the first place. In a number of cities landlords and multiple property owners account for a large number of the places offered to tourists. So, tourist cash is still going to the select few. Rental websites also don't seem to have a problem offering rooms in settler accommodation in occupied Palestine. Second, this practice is just doing something that was already being done before but this time for money. The first generation of tourist hosting websites, like couchsurfing, offered a similar service but for free. Airbnb takes the same idea of staying in someone's house rather than a hotel but presents itself as safer and more luxurious and of course adds money. This shows the increasing parasitism of the capitalist imagination upon various ideas of a solidarity economy. In addition it is often the case that a large number of these rooms for rent are located in tourist areas, in which case they are helping to drive out the few people who still lived in these neighbourhoods.

At the moment the reactions of city administrations and the state to such websites varies from place to place. As these websites are a relatively new development state reactions are only just beginning. Realising that there is money to be made the state has started to react. Athens is wondering if rental websites are just another way for people to make money without being taxed. Paris will allow airbnb to operate so long as it can impose a tax and Barcelona is likely to do the same. And so we see another modern business cycle nearly complete. An idea created in the new 'sharing' economy, free accommodation such as couchsurfing, became monetised with airbnb and is now on its way to being taxed and regulated by the state. This is a good example of the new internet-based sharing economy forming

the basis for fresh profits for the middle class and state, with the excesses endlessly trying to be reformed by leftist politicians.

Even so, these new rental websites are not helping to lessen the impact of mass tourism. For instance, residents of Barcelona now complain that blocks of residential apartments are being turned into hotels. Now for people with spare rooms it is much more profitable to rent them short term to tourists than to give the room to someone who lives and works in the area. This has a number of negative impacts. It is bringing the tourist industry into residential areas and is also taking homes away from people who live there. So rather than softening the impact of tourism its reach is expanding. As these websites grow they are beginning to have an effect on the housing market by turning more and more homes into financialized, made-to-order commodities. So far the city has imposed fines on rental websites but has also moved to legalise and regulate them. At best these bureaucratic moves will slow the growth of the tourist industry but do little to reverse it.

The damage tourism can cause is no more evident than in Venice. During the age of mass tourism the city has lost half its population as residents can now no longer afford to stay. In the high tourist season its not unusual for there to be more tourists than residents on any given day. In a similar situation to Barcelona, and perhaps Athens in the future if the privatisation and development plans for Piraeus go ahead, cruise ships play a particularly damaging role. Not only do giant cruise ships pull up and tower over the city's famously beautiful buildings but they bring thousands of extremely temporary visitors and potentially undermine the fragile city on the water. In March this threat was picked up by the NO TAV movement during a demonstration held as the French and Italian Prime Ministers met to discuss the rail project. Both the high speed train and the giant cruise ships threatening Venice are results of the same poor logic that pursues short term economic gains despite the long term destruction they bring. The result of the link up between NO TAV and the protests against tourism was the tentative return of radical politics to the seas. Intelligently, the protests took place on both land and sea and resulted in brief naval skirmishes as people in small boats tried to reach the Doge's palace. Not only was this a smart linking of the problems of tourism and pointless grand projects but also a, reasonably, successful first action for the black bloc navy.

Meanwhile, in the South China Sea all sides in the dispute over the Spratly

islands have been using tourists as ammunition in their war of words recently. A number of states claim to own a set of tiny reefs in a strategic location in the South China Sea. With China, Vietnam and the Philippines claiming the islands, and the US determined not to allow China such an important military base these tiny islands are one of the world's potential flashpoints. Into this dispute step the tourists. All three states have been using tourists to support their claims to the islands. Vietnam has organised cruises to the islands and the Philippines too is planning trips. In January of this year China made a point of flying two civilian passenger planes to its new island. Here the tourists are another instrument of the state, directed to certain places to fulfil political ends. Increasingly, directing flows of human traffic, whether touristic or otherwise, is becoming a domain of struggle and control.



Comrades, Beware! It's A Provocation!

"I find it foolish, and quite odd,
That stubborn folk seek to deny:
If 'Islam' means we all serve God,
We all in Islam live and die."

-Goethe, East-West Divan

"Christianity robbed us of the harvest of the culture of the ancient world, it later went on to rob us of the harvest of the culture of Islam. . . 'War to the knife with Rome! Peace, friendship with Islam' : this is what that great free spirit, the genius among German Emperors, Frederick the Second, felt, this is what he did."

-Nietzsche, The Anti-Christ

"How, at a mournful tribe of fugitives, escaping from the sword, men run to gaze !
The road is distant near a league ; yet, in the dust and heat of noon, they thither crowd.
For my part, Jane, I have no wish to see poor houseless innocents, who passed the Rhine,
And fled its fruitful banks, dragging along the remnants they could save, and shelter driv'n
To seek, in our recluse and happier vale! Twas kindly thought of thee to send our son,
With such cast clothes as we could spare, and such refreshments as we had to give : for sure
The rich should feel delight to aid the wretched . . .
So discoursed the host of 'The Golden Lion' with his wife. . .
and thus the good and careful dame replied:
Linen, however old, is still of use, not to be bought, nor lightly given away :
Yet the old went not alone ; but shirts, and garments,
Many, and good, some not half worn, I sent,
To cover shivering age, and naked childhood."

-Goethe, Hermann and Dorothea

*Yes, this is a dialectical provocation very explicitly aiming to dissolve apparently fixed categories, like Western and Oriental, citizen and refugee, or Christian and Islamic, which most of the European establishment, following in the footsteps of poorly argued American theses about a "clash of civilizations", increasingly wants to promote. If we really wanted to make progress, we could start with provocative citations in favor of the Orient or concerning refugees from well-known 'classical' Western figures, then perhaps could move to a serious and respectful discussion about different historical periods, and their respective merits or demerits-along with prior historical experiences concerning refugees.



Farewell to the University

As the state is decomposing, its constituent parts decompose as well. This, in my view, is nowhere more evident today than at the universities. At the beginning, surely it should be admitted that it is very easy to have a purely negative mode of relating to the university and intellectual life, as with the aging Debord alone in his cottage, for example. But really we have only ourselves to blame if we are not trying to make it possible for a scholarly life to function in a realistic way outside of the state and corporations. Similarly this would take us past easy moralism, as we all know reasonable people or even comrades who consider themselves trapped at the University, and actually begin to work to find a way out from the stale bureaucratic routine of pointless busywork, empty careerism and so on. We would have to go back and reflect how arduous is this intellectual path in life, and also, to think in a material way, about this quest for knowledge as a free passion, not one involved with daily sustenance. In this sense, the sculptor Socrates and his critique of the sophists, who traded their knowledge in a mercenary way for money, could be profitably recalled in today's present circumstances:

for instance, in regards to the the highly prized 'luxury commodity'¹ of harmless social critique, with today's well-remunerated celebrity professors of radicality. So too, one might recall the generally unknown but extremely important figure who shaped the tenets of Neo-Platonism, the dock worker, Ammonius Saccas. One could not overlook either this noble lens grinder, Spinoza; nor (for their youthful years) these private tutors, Hegel and Holderlin; and certainly not this solitary pensioner walking the empty streets of Turin and Genoa, Nietzsche. On this theme, Karl Lowith, in his excellent study *From Hegel to Nietzsche*, made the perceptive remark that after the purging of the Young Hegelians from German Universities in the 1840's, serious intellectual life now carried on in an independent or perhaps 'underground' manner. After that date, almost none of the significant figures who have shaped our modern life are thinkers in any 'official' capacity. Thought no longer is housed in the university, it is the university that has to run after and try to recuperate free thought. But then let's further this separation, and really start to seriously organize intellectual life outside and against the university, to prepare for the new era inaugurating itself. A sterile negation will always fold back in on itself, and later be put away in a museum-the real question is, what is to come practically afterwards?

There are some interesting experiments and tendencies in this practical and anti-university direction, and though I have serious disagreements with this figure, the attempted or proposed setting up of a local alternative university by Michel Onfray, I regard as at least one interesting attempt to come to grips with the present living death of the university. Most of all though, this shows the reality of the analysis presented here, that there is a serious need felt (even in a provincial French city like Caen) for alternative perspectives outside of the university. Politically more interesting and much closer I find are the texts, presentations and publications coming from sites of struggle, as those from the ZADs, for instance from the struggle near Toulouse, in the French work *Sivens Sans Retenue*. It might be presented as an analogy that while the prior task was intellectuals investigating life in the factory district or in the midst of revolution, nowadays the interest will lie in social movements and struggling radical territories. If philosophy was born in the open political culture of the *agora*, then philosophy has to find itself wherever openness and political engagement are. The prescription there would be much the same as our larger societal problems- localization, 'directification', pluralism, and the idea of some involvement in our surrounding political life.

Thus in my view, it's quite clear that the real places of discussion and learning are the movements of neighborhood streets and squares (just as it

1. The very words of the Italian radio program that hosted an interview with Varoufakis at the somewhat extravagant price of 1,000 euros a minute.

was for the *agora* or forum of the past) and the liberated territories coming into being through their struggles (ZADs, NoTav, etc.). The cloistered and narrow world of the university cannot survive any contact with the more real, and less polished, outside world. Instead, everything has to be run through the filter of bureaucratic practices and an outdated Marxist ideology, which has less and less connection to postmodern reality. Moreover, the old bureaucratic-statist and monastic foundations of the modern university and its influence in thought can be done away with- the monotheistic, monocultural (and indeed monotonous!) idea of imposing 'the one truth', outside of which are only heretics and the foolish. Rather it is to be hoped that everyone, as in older times, will agree there is something we are all looking for, but they will approach it in different ways, coming from a variety of different contexts and experiences. Then we would once again have a sort of 'craft' and 'local' character to intellectual life, that an irreplaceable group, view and way of life would be found either here or there, that many different schools and worldviews are to be found, and can continue in differences without needing to come to blows or even rhetorical violence.

As Symmachus justly wrote during the transition from the Antiquity to Christianity, in his famous debate with Ambrose, "*We look on the same stars, the sky is common, the same world surrounds us. What difference does it make by what pains each seeks the truth? We cannot attain to so great a secret by one road. . .*"

For an easy summation of most of the things put out by these knowledge factories, which bear the same dismal stamp of the quantitative, the same alienation and misery as in all the other domains of modern production: in a general article or text, one puts somewhere a citation from Walter Benjamin to evidence a certain delicacy of sentiment, a passing reference to the Paris Commune of 1871, and as the icing on the cake, ties in today's protests with Mai '68, ending with a conclusion to support (albeit critically) dying social-democrat projects like Syriza, Podemos, or maybe lackluster Latin American Chavez-style movements. Finally anything really intellectually exciting-wholesale critiques of today's dying Marxism in favor of Anarchism, or anything to do with provocative Hegelians like Kojève and Lukács (e.g. Agamben's remarks a few years ago regarding a Mediterranean 'Latin Empire' of anti-austerity revolt) is sure to come up against opposition inspired by the common sentiment: *that's in bad taste!* The University in this way functions as a moderating and homogenizing influence, neutralizing whatever has life in it, then trying to profit from it and control it. As well as ceaselessly promoting and branching out to its sisters, the art world and

its lucrative cultural funding, the NGO world and its projects, the Leftist political party world and its positions, etc.

But it would not be so clever to continue in this vein. Indeed, it's a facile exercise to mock the intellectual standards of today's "radical intellectuals"; rather, these can be self-evidently dismissed: there are more important things to be done. But one would have to note that the projects of Syriza, Podemos, etc. simply by coming from the modern university, from this fact alone one could have easily predicted their mindlessness and abject failure to deal with reality. I find it a bit politically necessary to push this point home, in that the opportunism promoted by academia and the 'postmodern' or 'NGO Left'² of today, has a distinctly unhelpful air. When the sun is shining, then we can talk about revolution and even insurrection, promoting a purely fictitious unity about distant events (Chiapas, Rojava, etc.) But inevitably there will be nary a peep about Greek political prisoners (e.g. *armed struggle has to be a continent away at least!*). And as soon as the weather changes, everyone hops on board the Syriza bandwagon. One senses that this could be repeated until the end of time if there was not a bit of forcing of accountability. The only positive here is that the Syriza experience has discredited these figures *en bloc*, as a whole: they got just enough rope to hang themselves with. If one wanted to be a bit cruel, it's becoming increasingly clear that this 'radical industry' of critique could be correlated to the political-cultural-societal misery of the Anglo-Saxon world (and indeed, is just another parasitic segment of a larger, thoroughly fictitious postmodern economic production-books as false and useless as subprime junk bonds or empty suburban housing developments, in the same society of dupes and media hucksterism). This lack of any critical discernment would be further evidenced in the immense and guaranteed success of any French work published in English translation- provincials love Paris, now conveniently reduced to a kitsch commodity, an empty simulacrum of sophistication and urbanity- in this way, even the totally passe, 50-years-late, superficially reworked Maoism of Badiou can find an Anglo-American audience.

But in reality, politics necessarily means choosing from different tactics and their relation to objective success; therefore, this reformism of the present-day has to be considered a miserable failure, its academic proponents as discredited, and we can re-open the idea of violent political upheaval directed against the State.

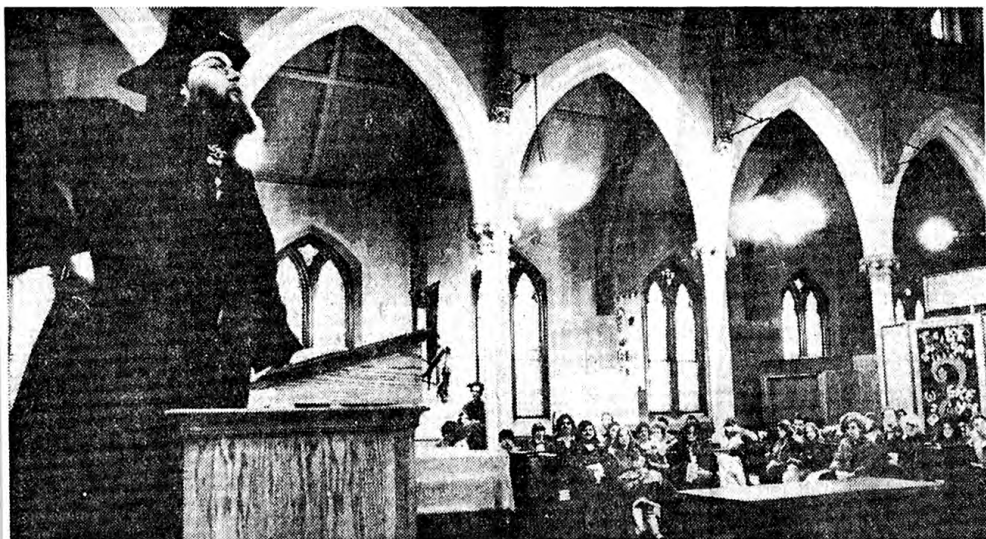
2. Rare and noteworthy exceptions to the embarrassed silence, were the internet articles: *The Postmodern Left and the success of Neoliberalism* and also the recent piece of Wildcat (UK), *Profession and Movement*.

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But what could this mean for intellectual life at a practical level? Well, we have to start somewhere, and in a small and realistic way. For a start, let's really make an ethical break with the old practices and concepts of the Left and the University (which share the same intellectual grounding- one truth, one party, one professor, etc.). So, at this Review we have no individual articles, so there could not be any possible personal advancement in that regard. We maintain a high standard of quality for submissions, not just publishing for the sake of publishing-because we have no university resumes to round out, nor quotas to fill, nor academic funding to spend. We don't forbid academics from participating if they meet these terms, but as of now we have no academics at the project. Finally we don't have to be afraid about offending anyone with our critiques of Marxism, the Left and its political parties, or famous leftist intellectuals, because we are not in any way invested in those projects, nor do we respect those people, nor do we need their institutional nor media approval. No self-respecting person would beg for crumbs from the tables of these valets of the modern Spectacle.

So, let's begin to come to grips with the radical extent of the changes promised by today's events-

Let's really begin practically to lay the foundations for intellectual life outside the university. . .



IN GOTHIC SPLENDOR at the Cambridge Baptist Church, Kale of Harlanston (Caleb Hansen) lectures in medieval professor's robes to some of the 300 to 350 persons who came from as far as Philadelphia and New York for the "Medieval University" event this month. (John McDonnell photos)



Identity politics then and now

When revolution historically reappears after an absence, this strange burrowing mole that disappears and now pops up again (following Hegel's metaphorical using of a citation by Hamlet), it seems a set rule that it always confronts a prior, if much faded, version of itself. In the Paris Commune of 1871 the revolutionaries were combating Napoleon III and a decayed Bonapartism, in the revolts after the First World War, the combats revolved around overthrowing social-democratic, 2nd International governments (which project succeeded in Russia, but miscarried in Germany). Later in the New Left period of upheaval, the streets confronted a petrified Stalinism and 'really existing socialism'. So too, it should be no surprise that the world we fight today, for instance with "Danny the Red" Cohn-Bendit lining up behind the Socialist Party, or Obama and Merkel providing a multicultural face to imperialism and neoliberalism, resembles a sort of burlesque realization of the past generation's revolt. It seems to be a sort of dialectical dialogue of revolution with itself and its own insufficiency.

If we go back and study what this New Left revolt largely centered around (if we can find anything central at all) was the demand to really *live revolution in the present time*. This was the invisible thread, this guiding thought to all the disparate protests which, I think it needs to be said, at that time involved serious and occasionally violent political organization, as opposed to today's insipid and empty official rhetoric. This applies not merely to official discourse of multiculturalism, but also the New Left

ideology and vague, tepid Marxism that has now been fully incorporated into the functioning of postmodern capitalism (as its chic, alternative pole of 'ethical' cultural consumption, pseudo-rebellious intellectual lifestyle, and so forth). Well, it is always important not to throw the baby out with the bathwater, as one says- let's not get rid of the idea of revolution or treating one another with respect.

In a larger fashion, it is the general idea of ideological control over the absolute truth, of the *fatwa*, the papal excommunication, the political denunciation, which is revealing its unsightliness today, and perhaps one might hope, also passing away. Which is quite a large change in the world, or perhaps one might say, a large changing-back for the world. Losing the conception of a sort of absolute moral purity due to faith, set off against an absolute immoral evil, is quite important as we enter a more pluralistic setting. Already the decaying Left is showing its crumbling by the increasingly shrill denunciations being bandied about, everyone excluding everyone else, no doubt the better to hide their discomfiture over the Syriza debacle. So too in anarchist circles (especially North European or North American ones) this gesture is increasingly reduced to absurdity, given the small numbers and social irrelevance involved in most cases. There simply is no central committee or generally agreed political line. So if for the present everyone is going to get criticized, we can all prepare ourselves for critique but be hopeful as this negative practice will generally be devalued through inflation, and actually use this to enjoy an unprecedented freedom to act and express what we like.

Far better to have a model where everyone has their own little ethical world or occupations, but then we come together in actions in an enthusiastic and federated manner, where the cooperation is voluntary. Then I think we would find ourselves not so marginal nor so few as we imagine in bad moments, and instead of a fragmented eternal squabbling, we could draw strength from these varying differences and polymorphic movements. The general problem these simplistic (and indeed often dualistic) models are increasingly running into is the richness and diversity of the actual world. Just as many believing socialists were shocked at the integration of the working class into the most horrendous capitalist schemes for world war and fascism, so too this general model of the absolute 'good' and 'bad' cannot really fit the diversity and strangeness of this world of today, and perhaps not of any world.

In contemporary terms this leads us to the problems of opposed groups who have been posed as the morally 'positive', 'good' victims- the

rights of women and of immigrants facing off for instance in Cologne, for a first example. There the more or less wealthy western women, dressing and behaving largely how they want, were harassed by groups of immigrants or refugees fleeing the destruction of the Middle East, who come from completely different worlds. I think there are many of us who think both groups should be treated in a respectful manner, and that there is not really a need to prioritize or exclude, either focusing on feminism or anti-racism. But this dilemma causes problems or anxiety in the society today (especially on the Left), precisely because it is the refutation of such a simplistic moral model, which should not have existed in the first place. If we say it is a conflict between the official feminism of Merkel, a far-right response, and establishment philanthropic views about immigrants that are quickly being abandoned, then where can a radical response lie? But clearly it is not in any of these official, ready-at-hand options. In a more realistic sense, it would lie not in quick soundbites or immediate reactions, but in a serious thinking dialogue about different cultures, about the shortcomings of presenting Europe's postmodern consumerist life as a universal standard of ethics, about U.S. imperialism and the destruction of the Middle East, relations between women and men, etc. The point to make is *it would not be so easy* and would actually require engagement beyond shouting a quick slogan or picking a position presented from an official list. We would have to begin to take ourselves seriously, and start proposing concrete alternatives that would deal with the diversity of the larger world. Then we would actually start to engage with the varying shades of gray of the actual world, and perhaps we could even work out some practical responses or political directions that would lead to some political success (on issues like mutual toleration or living together while coming from many different places).

The second good example is with Julian Assange. He has been accused of rape, which is surely a heavy accusation, but the manner and methods of the prosecution, lead one to agree with him that the real object is not protecting anyone, but rather political persecution for his role in Wikileaks. But then far from being such an apparently simple moral tale, it really shows the cynical use of conventional feminism by various repressive forces, which was already at work when the Americans claimed they 'liberated' Afghan women from the Taliban. It might even make one think, as to the presumably American originators of such a plan of operating, that it seems to reek of the old methods of the KKK in the South of the U.S.A. But then again this shows that a real response would not be a quick moral denunciation one way or the other, of throwing overboard the rights of

women or abandoning (often admittedly liberal) protests against the new electronic dystopia, but actually in every case concretely evaluating a given situation, not plastering onto it giant slogans or moral conceptions, which become unthinking codewords for absolute approval or denunciation.

In a larger sense, all this means that we are leaving an era of universalistic thinking, where we launch proposals for global moral reform directed by the state (and where the state tries to extend its reach in a universal matter), and also these universal categories, of absolute evil or absolute good that we apply indiscriminately to everyone fitting or not fitting our specific ideological preoccupations. In passing I find this probably accounts for much of the sectarianism and bitterness that seems to occupy the radical space these days and drain everyone's energy- because in this simplistic model with its Christian roots, for those who have attached themselves to our faith, we have too high expectations, and for those who have not, we have too low or negative expectations. From this results the lack of capacity to relate to the rest of society, as well as the discouraging moralism from inside the movement. But with all this being said, it is also important not to descend into the facile relativism of post-modernism, which is clearly in collapse today. Pluralism does not have to mean that nothing is true, more correctly taken it would mean that there are many different reflections of one truth. But the practical corollary to this is that we have to acknowledge differences, while finding ways to work together. This would also mean not throwing overboard the things we take seriously, ideas of changing the world for the better, political action, and so on. It would be better conceived as defending them from being reduced to irrelevance, by making them dangerous once more, by giving them a firm grounding in reality.

So, no subject is taboo, let's begin some real searching discussions- let the debates, discords and cacophony of the agora resound once more!

A Kaleidoscope of Memory-Images

A summer thunderstorm looks to be on the way, dark clouds covering the slopes surrounding Athens. It was a short time before the July referendum, about which so much sound and fury was raised, and which in the final instance, merited so little attention. . .

And at the small theater for traditional dancing on Philopappou Hill, so far from all the political self-importance, hidden away on the far side of the old hill of the Muses, a crowd of people in the gathering rain, going back and forth to these agelessly young, older than old, harmonies of the popular dance. A country in slow collapse, and rising above it, the murmuring sounds of half-forgotten songs. . .

But what exactly is going on? So few are able to discern the true guest at the gathering, *the negative*, that feeling of this curious absence, instead wanting only to put their own narrow and outdated ideological view on the events. . . but in this slow waltz of World-History, with its twists and turns, reaction and revolution, backwards and forwards, the figures in this "moving picture gallery of Spirit" (the moving figures which might be conceived of as the different historical revolutions) very much resemble a scene from a dance. . .

I stand there, thinking about what it all means, this careless dancing set against impending ruin, so naive, so wise- *what exactly has happened?* They have already lost the logic of the economic and of the universal imperative. The page in the book of the world has already been turned, we are just not yet fully aware. *The "silent revolution" is stealthily making its invisible progress . . .*

*

Plateia Victoria- most of all, just to see what is going on as the borders become officially closed. A mass of unhappy humanity huddled or standing, people talking in different tongues, all kinds of clothes, blankets, food and trash lying about, police at the top of the square, whispers of Idomeni and closed borders, memories of war and poverty, the Middle East ripped apart by competing imperial ambitions, and the Greeks giving away what remains of their first world wealth, like some great potlatch. . .

Overall, once more and in a different context, this strangely dark, metallic

or black feeling I have felt quite a few times in Athens. This is the feeling that, above all the various events, really keeps me here. Everything is dissolving, and soon we won't even remember whatever unhappy relations or shortcomings within the radical scene, the splendors and miseries of Exarcheia-

it will all be washed away in this great storm. . .

*

"What exactly is this party for?" we ask, having wandered over.

"Something like an unofficial pre-carnival preparation", is the response.

So there they are, the crumbling 19th-century buildings of Kerameikos, music from speakers inside, a strange half-light from the flickering street lamps, and a host of colorful costumed revelers, modern references and figures, but also the old maenads and satyrs, whirl over gaily to greet us. Like a Saturnalia from the old Empire, tottering to collapse; like a feverish Rococo party at the end of the Ancien Regime; and something totally contemporary, from our own world of abandoned factories and environmental disasters. . .

I explain my feelings, this wonder and curiosity I sometimes feel so strongly here: "I think that something very strange is bound to happen in your country at some point," I remark to my friend.

"And that you say it, at this moment, and in that way, I think you're probably right. . ."

And with that we resume our nocturnal wandering. . .

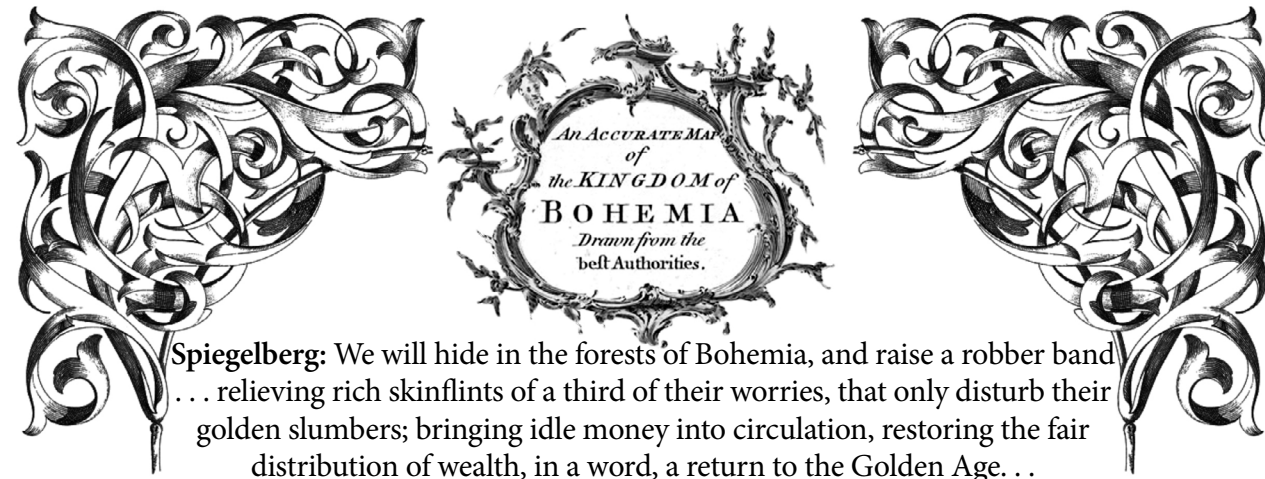
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The older radical, an "anarcho-pateras" figure, smoking on the steps of the Polytechnic. . .

"In my youth, they were simply called illegalists. But it's more or less the same thing today as with informalists or nihilists, whatever you want to call them. The growing pains of our movement. And we have so many problems in the movement right now. Even so, I believe, and hope, that on the big day, somehow we will all find each other again on the barricades. . ."



The French Revolution is only the forerunner of another revolution, grander
and more solemn, which shall be the last.
Manifesto of the Equals- Conspiracy of Babeuf



Spiegelberg: We will hide in the forests of Bohemia, and raise a robber band . . . relieving rich skinflints of a third of their worries, that only disturb their golden slumbers; bringing idle money into circulation, restoring the fair distribution of wealth, in a word, a return to the Golden Age. . .

Moor: . . . Oh! He who should put a sword into my hand, to deal a deadly blow to this generation of vipers! He who should say to me: if I can pierce the heart of its life, crush it, strangle it- that man shall be my friend. . .

Roller: We want to be those friends of yours, let us tell you!

Schwarz: Come with us into the forests of Bohemia! We're going to raise a band of robbers, and you--

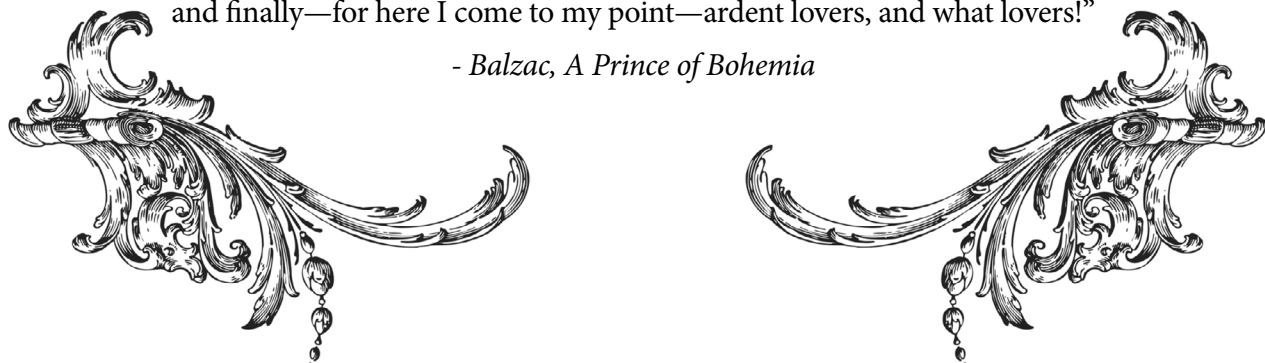
Schweitzer: You are to be our captain!

Schiller, The Robbers

“Bohemianism, which by rights should be called the doctrine of the Boulevard des Italiens, finds its recruits among young men between twenty and thirty, all of them men of genius in their way, little known, it is true, as yet, but sure of recognition one day, and when that day comes, of great distinction. They are distinguished as such at carnival time, when their exuberant wit, repressed for the rest of the year, finds a vent in more or less ingenious buffoonery. What times we live in! What an irrational central power which allows such tremendous energies to run to waste! . . . There are writers, administrators, soldiers, and artists in Bohemia; every faculty, every kind of brain is represented there. Bohemia is a microcosm. . . In Bohemia, you find the flower doomed to wither and come to nothing. . . The word Bohemia tells you everything. Bohemia has nothing and lives upon what it has. Hope is its religion; faith (in oneself) its creed; and charity is supposed to be its budget. All these young men are greater than their misfortune; they are under the feet of Fortune, yet more than equal to Fate. Always ready to mount and ride an if, witty as a feuilleton, blithe as only those can be that are deep in debt and drink deep to match,

and finally—for here I come to my point—ardent lovers, and what lovers!”

- Balzac, *A Prince of Bohemia*



With Thoughts of Late Antiquity

“Our time resembles that of the Roman Emperors, in many points.”
- Hegel

I. (past) So few remark upon the time of Late Antiquity, which is quite surprising, as it is an era much like our own: unheroic, prosaic, with all aspects of life overseen by a bureaucratic tyranny, alongside a general decline in culture and meaning in life. Boethius, Proclus, Macrobius, and so many noteworthy others from this period will always escape general attention. Perhaps it is because they greet us from an era that could only live satisfactorily through erudition tinged with a certain melancholy for the fading of immemorial traditions. And perhaps also because our own age does not like to think of societal decay or regression, still believing in endless progress, and as the saying has it, these analogies of historical thought strike us too close to home.

But we should inquire concerning Late Antiquity, what sort of time, then, was it? An unhappy and strange era- when intellectuals had to watch their

words very carefully, and in a necessary search for allies went after protection in unbecoming places, at the official court, or with short-lived usurpers and barbarian interlopers. All this attests to a more general situation, as political life was voided of meaning, subjective material desires became the whole meaning of life, collective endeavor became impossible, and society was totally corrupted by bread and circuses. The clear-sighted of that time saw a world slowly collapsing into ruin from its own folly and wickedness. Perhaps, in their feverish recording of old traditions and new compendiums and commentaries, they all felt unconsciously that, to give a different meaning to the popular saying, they had to work quickly, as the night was coming in which no one could work. And as in the Pythagorean saying, luxury was followed upon by insolence, and this in its turn by destruction. If we would like to understand views of rejecting the world, we would have to understand they originated in a more rarefied sphere, that of the Neo-Platonic philosophers who saw little or no need to consort with a depraved society around them. And then we would have to think, perhaps this is not true for all times, but was actually true at that time.

Because these are those abandoned times when the oracles fall silent, and the fountains cease to flow. The Republic is only a memory, the age of the Antonines a pious hope, and the Empire careening from disasters to dissolution. The gods are declared to have passed away, as with Pan, or to have deserted a depraved humanity, now determined to worship the bones of its impious and unwashed criminal saints. These are the times of doubt and the occult, when practitioners of the “false art” flourish, and men lose their moral groundings. . .

And the falling of the dusk: the teaching of philosophy in Athens was banned by the tyrannical eunuchs and monks at the Byzantine court- a court whose gilded exterior only serves to conceal a terrific rottenness, an unmentionable horror, that must remain a “secret history” (of Procopius) as a memorial of autocratic times and abandoned mores. And in the same year of the edict against philosophy, Benedict began his life on Monte Cassino, as if the old scholarly life of the *agora* was being directly transferred to the cloisters of monastic isolation.

Somehow, those from these fading centuries still arrived at the feeling of a fullness in life, of comradeship for a good cause, of a lost generation in a world decaying, and they attained to a worldly wisdom beyond all petty cares and concerns, in the affectionate portrait of the recent past, of convivial

and learned discussions upon the *Saturnalia*, for instance. Or Proclus, at the end of his life, wishing all the philosophic texts could be taken away, save for the Oracles of Chaldea and the Timaeus, along with his commentary to it- with the logic that people would only misunderstand all the other works, and so come to grief. Indeed it must have seemed at the time of Christian ascendance, that philosophy, poorly and popularly misunderstood, was wreaking untold havoc throughout the world.

How like unto the past few decades would seem these proud and carefree Romans of the early Empire- hedonistic, Epicureans and atheists all, witty and cultivated, free lovers, individual atoms of owners of property with their inalienable rights, the frivolous world best captured by Petronius Arbiter- and how too, does the appearance of Late Antiquity speak to the swiftly emerging new era for us- a new concern in life for spiritual meaning, material pleasures having given way to empty and dissatisfying dissipation, the growth of an immense collective irrationality, the isolated individuals and their juridical rights now hopeless against the spreading chaos, as successions of rival emperors dispute over the whole earth. . .

Just some images that remain:

Augustine, lying on his deathbed as the Vandals are sacking North Africa, reading Plotinus and other pagan philosophic works. . .

Boethius alone in his cell awaiting death, with not a thought of Christianity in his life's testament, the *Consolation*. . .

The last of the philosophers chased from Athens, seeking refuge at the Persian court, and from thence to vanish in the mists of time. . .

This wonder of the world, the Serapeion burned, and Hypatia murdered by the Christian mob. . .

II. (present) No future save for “no future”. The endless present of collapse, over a landscape of long abandoned ruins whose signification has long since been forgotten. The buildings are black and crumbling, derelict and neglected. There are men and women whose sole wish is to get you lost in the labyrinth, while the streets of the Metropolis echo with the emptiness of false revelry. *Amor Vacui, Mundus Senescit*: a loveless world, aging and dying. And the fruits of the liberations of the past, decayed into libertinage and license, taste only of ashes.

*“The sale of half-hose has
long since superseded the cultivation
of Peirian Roses.”*

Strange new plagues arrive to take the place of the old, just as environmental destruction parallels the feeling of the old world, that the rivers were growing sluggish, and Nature herself declining. The increasing aimlessness of ever larger and ever angrier mass protests, and the growing role of hooligans in our political life, for better and worse, calls to mind the old stirrings of the mob, as recorded by Libanius in Antioch, or the famed Nika riots under Justinian and Theodora. And everywhere the Empire reigns, but does not govern, through its own debility and the servility of the populace. Anything can be believed, because the objective rules of statecraft and politics, logic and criticism, have all decayed. Rulers are liable to any extremes of wickedness, and the masses, to extremes of credulity, given the serious collapse of any objective thought in the general decay of a civilization. Senseless crimes of Islamic terrorism come to dominate the headlines, this perfected enemy of spectacular democracy, and with the strange constellation of alliances behind its continuance, placed alongside scenes from expanding neo-colonial adventures. Who has invited the barbarians inside the gates, and just who (Stilicho? Byzantium and its court? The Church?) is conspiring with Alaric, Genseric, and their successors? It becomes impossible to say, worth noticing only as a general principle of societal decline. And the ongoing, sad tales from this modern migration of peoples. . .

They used to talk of Greens and Blues, games of dice and tessarion, and the rules of the symposium, just as even in the last century, fashionable talk was of the Opera and the salon. So too, many things we take for lasting in this our own world, will surely disappear. . .

Mute, we watch the collapse unfold in its slow and strange majesty. A black abyss opens up, all the old things that have shaped our lives begin to vanish, even as we find our friends and comrades. And so we realize we are not actually so moved, to see this tired old society pass away. . .

And the tolling of the mournful evening bells, at the waning of the world. . .

*

III. (Future) I mull over the parallels- has the world of today simply lived the first part of a longer and stranger decline- is the world since the modern era of revolutions simply living out a parallel to that brief time of the *Christianised* Roman Empire (roughly, the century of Constantine to Honorius) before it collapsed away under the blows of bad fortune, this edifice eaten away by decadence and rottenness? Is the era then, in search of its other prototypes- a Benedict to provide suggestions for collective life, a Cassiodorus to preserve basics of culture and learning, an Augustine to separate (or indeed, perhaps more appropriately now to unseparate?) things of the spirit from matter? That then, unlike in the unhappy past, there would be no contradiction between popular spiritual movements, and philosophy? And at a higher level, would there be a correlate to Neo-Platonic philosophy, to complete the shape of the world, and to give form to the new emerging world? Would then it be a worthwhile task to separate Anarchy from Anarchism and Marxism- the spiritual meaning of revolution from its past and insufficient material incarnations? Would this be most successful to bring about the understanding of a divided unity, thus undoing the harmful dualistic work of Augustine? Are Neoliberalism and Marxism simply decaying into Anarchy, in the same way that Protestantism decayed into Liberalism, and perhaps more appropriately, how the Late Roman Empire collapsed into the Christian Middle Ages?

. . .and in the distance, a strange and dark horizon. . .

The explanation of this enigmatic image : in the foreground, and on the right side, lies Antiquity, denoted by its stately columns and marbles strewn around, the vandalized statue still pensive, as if still wondering over the ruin of its world. Then a bit farther, and on the left-hand, or *sinister* side, lies Christianity, the Church and its horrors, medieval superstition and ignorance, crypts and catacombs, nothingness crumbling in on itself. Finally in the distance, in some sense as the synthesis of these two moments, lies *the modern world*, of the factory, popular revolution, applied science, now in its turn beginning to decay and dissolve with the passage of time. These are the three large epochs of World-History, and we might, as if imitating the statue, profitably meditate upon these particulars, which would inevitably lead us to inquire- *just what is to arrive next?* Everything seems to have been accomplished, leaving only melancholic ruins from the various eras...



Anarcho-Tourist Reviews

Goethe, in his effort to develop a true standard of critique, drew attention in a witty way to the over-negative French culture of his day, by counting up the negative and positive words in a few standard artistic reviews. Evidently, the negatives far outnumbered the positives. In this amusing manner he pointed out the superficiality of a certain conception of critique. After all, the real art of reviewing is to draw out and highlight what is useful and meaningful, not to mark off demerit points. This also means that some tasteful selection has to be made in determining the items to be reviewed, since the correct fashion to do this is in the manner of reasonable dialogue and appreciative endorsement, which cannot be given away so lightly. In brief, let us hope that this same positive spirit can inspire us in our reviews here, and act as a beneficial example.

David Graeber *Utopia of Rules*,
Melville House, 2015

That bureaucracy isn't just a fact of life but is by now a way of life is quite clear. To officially exist these days is increasingly complex, while to exist unofficially can be difficult, dangerous and more often than not illegal. In many places if you want to, or can't avoid to, live officially there is no escape from the web of financial and state bureaucracy. For example, to get a bank account, often a necessity these days for being paid, you probably need an address. To prove you have an address you need to pay bills and have an identity card. Sometimes to get an address you need a good bank account and a job first. To get a job you often need an address, and a bank account. Etc etc...

David Graeber's point in the *Utopia of Rules* is that despite this continuous increase in bureaucracy there has been a lack of discussion or analysis of it. Even though bureaucracy is such a basic modern experience people seem to have largely stopped talking about or critiquing it. So the anthropologist sets out to create a critique of bureaucracy. While the Right has a critique of bureaucracy, it is the creation of the state that limits individual and market freedom, the Left doesn't seem to know how to respond to it. Part of the Left's current inadequacy is its inability to come to terms with this modern problem of bureaucracy. Indeed the Left is more likely to admire the bureaucracy that stifles life and thought. The

result of this search for a critique is a series of three essays that look at different aspects of bureaucracy, its reasons for existing and why people often support it.

The first of these revolves around the role of violence in bureaucracy. Though it's often said that we live in a world in which violence is declining the number of rules which are implemented with violence is increasing. As Graeber points out, where there is a seemingly calm and harmless bureaucracy there is probably a guy with a baton or a gun to enforce it somewhere. As well as this interrelation, violence and bureaucracy are also linked by stupidity. The size of modern bureaucracies means that these systems can't deal with people as individuals but instead just as numbers, the following of a set of rules replaces genuine human interaction. Both violence and bureaucracy are simplified forms of communication and so both ultimately reduce people, on both sides, to a level of stupidity.

A useful point is that the increase in bureaucracy is a result of the rise of American empire. Institutions such as the UN and the creation and financialisation of a global free market are a huge step up from previous empires. While the British Empire may have ruled large parts of the world and, as Graeber no doubt knows through living there, the UK is a very bureaucratic place, it is true that *'the Americans attempted to administer everything and everyone'*. This from the people who claim to be the most free. Not surprisingly the same goes for neoliberalism. The economic doctrine that is forever criticising the state for being too bureaucratic and strangling free markets in fact is largely responsible for the increase in bureaucracy and regulation it so often attacks, after all free markets don't just exist they have to be created and maintained.

This is a general point which applies to Greece. Southern Europe is often derided as being a land of dysfunctional bureaucracies and tax evasion which neoliberalism needs to come and rationalise and organise. The common line is that the Greek state is too big and needs to be trimmed to allow business to flourish, a course of action which will release the burden of bureaucracy from the simple person. Yet in reality the memorandum policies will only increase the amount of bureaucracy and rules in order to bring Greek society up to the same levels of total bureaucratization as is practised in the US and Northern Europe. The only difference being that the welfare state bureaucracy will be replaced by a private sector administration. For example, a memorandum government may cut the paperwork needed to start a business but will increase the checks and controls for opening a bank account, renting an apartment, create electronic barriers and

transport cards for the metro and bring in biometric ID's at America's request. The widespread rhetoric that neoliberalism frees people from state interference is nothing but a clever lie.

The second essay is based around Graeber's disappointment that the mid-twentieth century dreams of continuous technological progress never materialised. Whereas his childhood saw the US landings on the moon and seemingly plausible dreams of space exploration and an automated world, the reality of the twenty-first century is that the latest generation of rockets seem just as likely to blow up as lift off and instead of flying cars we have unmanned armed drones. Amongst other points in the essay there are two main reasons for why technological progress stalled. One reason is that research and progress were diverted into surveillance, control and military technologies. So the wonders of this age are not the robots that do all the manual tasks or the colonies on Mars but precision guided bombs and stealth jets.

We should not really be so surprised at this turn of events. Many technological advances of the twentieth century were originally derived from military technology and the military doesn't have much use for developing technologies that improve or change daily life in positive ways. The comparison Graeber draws between the creation of the postal service and the internet, the first of which grew out of the Prussian military and the second from the US military, shows that revolutionary hopes in new technology can be misplaced and also hints that while inventions were also often military driven in the past, in the current age it seems to be even more so. After all, the inventions that most captured the imagination in the twentieth century, the rockets of the Space Race, were just US developments of Nazi military inventions (indeed under the knowledge and guidance of the Nazi officer Werner von Braun).

But just as important a point, and one Graeber must know all too well, is the effect of market forces on the university. Introducing market principles into the university, a place meant to be about the steady gathering of knowledge, forces professors and researchers to put more and more time into constant competition and pointless bureaucratic evaluations. The eccentric characters who so often play critical roles in advances and research are these days more likely to be defeated by the university bureaucracy.

The final essay tries to get to the reason why societies and individuals often approve of bureaucracy while also hating it. By way of modern super heroes

and some philosophy from late antiquity Graeber arrives at the conclusion that ‘*what ultimately lies behind the appeal of bureaucracy is fear of play*’. Being rational is generally an act of restraining the baser or more dangerous instincts since completely free creativity can be destructive. Bureaucracy is meant to be a rationalisation of a dangerous world by a set of rules and procedures which produce a known result. Such rationality and order are naturally comforting, even if, like the state itself, it is a utopian fantasy that can’t exist in the real world. The end result of this pursuit of complete rationality is the world we are in today, a world of total bureaucracy where play or adventure are violently outlawed and prevented.

‘where bureaucracy has been the primary means by which a tiny percentage of the population extracts wealth from the rest of us, they have created a situation where the pursuit of freedom from arbitrary power simply ends up producing more arbitrary power; and as a result, regulations choke existence, armed guards and surveillance cameras appear everywhere, science and creativity are smothered, and all of us end up finding increasing percentages of our day taken up in the filling out of forms’

I would add that the complex and ever expanding web of modern bureaucracy and control is to our world what the feudal and noble rights and dues of the aristocracy were to the pre-1789 world.

Giorgio Agamben, *The Use of Bodies*
Published in English, by **Meridian Crossing Aesthetics**
March 2016

The final volume in Agamben’s work in the “Homo Sacer” series, this serves as a summing up, conclusion, and also a looking forward for new perspectives. Thus, one should be acquainted with the prior works and the themes they raised, namely: the intellectual archetypes of the prison camp, the state of exception, the archaic figure of the *Homo Sacer*, the man-outside-the-law given over to a sacred destruction at the hands of potentially anyone, and so on.

Given all the developments in the world of today, with detention centers and walls being raised against flows of refugees, and the more or less ambiguous legal status of the refugees themselves (for instance some of the Syrians fleeing

could be construed, in legal parlance, as deserters from the recognized army of their country; conversely, many of the Afghans are fleeing certain death from an insurgency led by their former Taliban government against foreign occupation, even though their country has been legally proclaimed peaceful) along with an ever-expanding state of exception given recent terrorist attacks in Brussels and Paris- even without his other political interventions, all this would make Agamben a most necessary intellectual to deal with.

Therefore, in a brief way, what is raised concerning “the use of bodies”? First, one would have describe this work, as indeed the whole *oeuvre* of Agamben, as largely eclectic. Not in the pejorative sense often given to the word, but in the sense given to an encyclopedic standpoint, devoted to making connections across histories and disciplines. Therefore many themes are raised or elided, and in a brief review not everything can be touched upon. Let’s mention some of the more provocative ones.

There is a focus for a few chapters on the ancient figure of the slave with reference to Aristotle’s well-known arguments, later connected to the idea of the Christian priest serving God in a highly mechanistic manner, a discreet nod to the factory proletarian, culminating in today’s technology and our relation to it. This would be an interesting parallel, as if the spiritual void between the masters and slaves of Antiquity, and the top-hat capitalists and starving proletarians of yesteryear, has not been abolished, but rather transferred in a strange way into the relations between post-modern humanity and technology. The one small corrective to such a view might be that today’s Western relation to technology is also mediated through the poverty of the Third World-as the button clicked on the screen can deliver cheap clothes, but necessarily these have been fabricated in Bangladesh or China.

Even so, this would not change the notable fact of extreme distance, that the ‘slaves’ of today are no longer in the workers’ district of the same city, they are a world away, or confined behind walls and dehumanized by a ‘state of emergency’ (as seen in Gaza, or at the borders of the US and Mexico, or with the Fortress EU). Hence, it would not detract from the usefulness of the observation, especially in light of the fact that an increasingly larger part of today’s radical struggles are against economic-technological projects and the relations they impose; and indeed, they do not propose a different management of the same project, but oppose an entire way of being-this world of high speed trains, destructive mining, useless airports, and so on.

Necessarily we ask, what can we do in such a bad situation as the world of today? Agamben might be said also to advocate changes in our thought, notably, suggesting in a partial way the use of Neo-Platonic intellectual syntheses

worked out in Late Antiquity. It would be an interesting detour to note how little attention his teacher Heidegger paid to Late Antiquity—precisely because the problems Heidegger dwelt upon, might have also occupied the attention of others before him. Agamben, with his erudition, seems to have noticed this, and is exploring and remedying this lack. Indeed, it is Late Antiquity that dwelled upon reconciling Plato with Aristotle, and the Pre-Socratics with the Hellenistic schools of Stoics and Skeptics. It is also in Late Antiquity that we begin to discuss more fully and concretely this thorny philosophic concept of ‘Being.’ All this has meaning because if such a synthesis was even partially worked out, then for instance, supposed *aporias* of philosophy may have already been addressed previously within the Western tradition. As a correlate, these contradictions might have also been wrestled with and resolved in more modern times especially if, as a certain opinion has it, Hegel has simply revived and expanded the developed Neo-Platonic system most fully seen in the works of Proclus.

Well, however much one would like to go on, it is up to the reader to come to their own conclusions, and assuredly to read the work on their own, which has far more themes than could be mentioned briefly here. Let’s close with some of the final admonitions of the work, for something like a prelude to an intellectualized anarchy, the proper theoretical form for today’s revolts:

“This destituent power is what the anarchist tradition, as well as the thought of the 20th century, tried to define, without ever really succeeding. . . and equally as well, a good part of the practices of the artistic avant-garde and political movements of our times can be seen as the attempt—so often cruelly failed—for making real this destitution. . .”

Then let’s really begin to liberate our thinking and practices, to let shine our “radical heterogeneity, in order to let it act as a purely destituent power”, this *hypostasis*, this remnant of true meaning, this spark of revolution, as Hegel famously wrote, “this sunburst that, at one stroke and in a single flash, illuminates the features of the new world”.



After Don Quixote had satisfied his stomach, he took some acorns in his hand, and, examining them with great care, raised his voice to speak words such as these: “What a happy time and a happy age was that which the ancients called Golden! And not because gold—which in this our Age of Iron is so valued—was gotten in that fortunate time without any trouble, but rather because the people who lived then didn’t know those two words, mine and thine! In that holy age all things were commonly owned. To find their daily sustenance, they had only to raise their hands and take it from the robust oaks, which liberally offered their sweet and ripe fruit to them. Crystal clear fountains and running rivers, in magnificent abundance, offered them their delicious and transparent water. In the fissures of boulders and in the hollows of trees, the diligent and prudent bees formed their republics and offered to any hand, without recompense, the fertile harvest of their very sweet work. The robust cork trees shed their lightweight bark without any artifice other than their own courtesy, with which people began to cover their rustic houses, built only for protection against the rigors of the heavens. Everything then was friendship, everything was harmony. The heavy plow had not yet dared to open nor visit the pious bowels of our first mother, for she, without being forced, gave everywhere from her fertile and broad bosom that could till, sustain, and delight the children that possessed her then . . . Fraud, deceit, and wickedness had not as yet contaminated truth and sincerity. Justice was administered on its own terms and was not tainted by favor and self-interest, which now impair, overturn, and persecute it. Arbitrary law had not yet debased the rulings of the judge, because in those days there was nothing to judge, nor anyone to be judged. . .



Viva Quixotismo! Viva Anarquia!

