

XENOPHOBIA, IDENTITY
AND NEW FORMS OF NATIONALISM

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XENOPHOBIA, IDENTITY AND NEW FORMS OF NATIONALISM

EDITED BY

Vladimir Milisavljević and
Natalija Mićunović



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Contents

| | | | |
|------------|--|------------|---|
| 6 | Editors' Foreword | 152 | Ana Dimishkovska |
| | | | Legal Argumentation on Trial: Dissenting Judicial Opinions in Cases Related to Racial Discrimination |
| 10 | Goran Bašić | 176 | Igor Milinković |
| | Introductory Remarks. Nationalism: What Do Intellectuals Think? | | Constitutional Identity as a Shield of New Nationalism? Some Reflections on the Use of the Constitutional Identity Argument in the Hungarian Constitutional Court's Case Law |
| 21 | Section I | 190 | Dean Komel |
| | XENOPHOBIA INHERITED, XENOPHOBIA TRANSFORMED | | Post-Yugoslav Syndrome of Dehumanization |
| 22 | Rastko Močnik | 206 | Muharem Bazdulj |
| | What is New in the New Forms of Nationalism? The Case of Hungary | | Two Faces of Nationalism: The Case of Bosnia |
| 42 | Lewis R. Gordon | 226 | Michał Kozłowski |
| | Postmodern Fascism and Other Facets of Contemporary Quests for Stability | | Goodbye Nasser: Dynamics and Contradictions of Gender Politics in the Middle East |
| 62 | William Leon McBride | 239 | Section III |
| | How to Make a Nation Great Again: A Primer, Based on Experience | | SOLUTIONS AND OPEN QUESTIONS |
| 70 | Natalija Mićunović | 240 | Aleksandar Prnjat |
| | False Hope of Transnationalism | | Xenophobia and Identitarian Nationalism |
| 86 | Paget Henry | 252 | Dušan Janjić |
| | The Rise of American Xenophobia and the Decline of the Global Minotaur | | New Reality and Old Powers: Globalization and Challenges of Preserving Diversity |
| 109 | Section II | 268 | Slobodan Divjak |
| | GLOBAL VS. LOCAL AND TOPICAL DIFFERENCES | | Value Relativism as a Result of the Offensive of Multiculturalism as a Form of Communitarianism |
| 110 | Ugo Vlaisavljević | 292 | Vladimir Milisavljević |
| | The Xenophobic Feeling of Ethnicity: Serbs, Croats and Others | | Farewell to Universalism: Nationalism and Xenophobia after the "End of History" |
| 132 | János Boros | 317 | Contributors |
| | Ethics and Identity: Towards a New Cognitive-Political Order. Based on the Philosophies of Kant, Rawls, Rorty and Vlaisavljević | | |

Editors' Foreword

■ It has been almost two years since we first decided to embark on a project of organizing an international philosophical conference which would be devoted to a familiar but highly disturbing subject: the extraordinary upsurge of nationalism in its novel and unprecedented forms, with extreme xenophobia as one of its central features. The conference, organized by the Center for Philosophy of the Institute of Social Sciences, under the title “Xenophobia, Identity and New Forms of Nationalism”, was held on October 4–5 of 2018 in Belgrade. It was attended by 17 lecturers from eight countries, most of them philosophers, but also sociologists, political scientists, jurists, journalists or fiction writers. This collective volume is its result.

As is well known, at the time of the inception of our idea, the issue of new nationalism and xenophobia had already become burning not only in Europe (in the political as well as historical and cultural meaning of the term) but in many other parts of the world too. Sadly, in the meantime, it has gained even more in impetus and significance in social, political and institutional life, above all in developed Western countries. Obviously, one of the main reasons for this state of affairs is the (so inappropriately named) “migration problem”, which is in fact the problem of inequality in the world society. If the words “migration” or “immigration” did not figure in the title of the conference, it is only because their connection to xenophobia, to the new forms of nationalism and to the politics of identity is so manifest, that those terms, as it seemed to us, could be omitted with no harm for the discussion of our

subject, and because we hoped that the imposing realities to which they refer would not be overlooked by the participants anyway. This has proven to be true.

However, the sheer topicality of the theme was not the only reason for our decision to devote a special attention to it. Dealing with what we have termed “new nationalism”, strongly colored by xenophobia and framed in identitarian slogans – most of them newly forged, but highly reminiscent of the past – is above all intellectually challenging, particularly from, dare we say, a philosophical point of view. It involves a distinctly philosophical task of identifying the conceptual borders of a historically changing, Protean phenomenon. What is at stake here is the relationship between old and new forms of nationalism, which forms the center of the first part of the volume (“Xenophobia Inherited, Xenophobia Transformed”). Is new nationalism merely a sequel to the historical one, or something radically different and novel? No doubt this question allows for different answers. At the very least, the new nationalism seems to have taken the place in the political spectrum which was up to now occupied by extremist far-right parties, and deserves for that reason to be treated as their successor. In particular cases, historical continuity is warranted by sticking to the old party name, regardless of significant and outspoken changes in the party program. However, one may even go so far as to deny altogether that the new xenophobic identitarianism represents a form of nationalism as we have known it, as is the case in the opening article of the first section (by Rastko Močnik).

Another point calling for reflection is the relationship between nationalist and xenophobic practices or feelings and the world of ideas or systems of thought in the broadest sense of the term (treated by Goran Bašić, János Boros, Slobodan Divjak). This relationship is at least twofold, as it can signify either the embeddedness of nationalism in ideological and philosophical matrices which serve to justify it, or the capacity of the latter to deal with nationalism and its detrimental societal effects. Here again, the most striking feature of new nationalism is perhaps its extraordinary capacity to change and adapt to different ideological and philosophical standpoints – postmodernism, communitarianism, multiculturalism or even liberalism. By appropriating the arguments of their opponents – by appealing to justice, equality or right to difference – new nationalist narratives blur the distinctions between

different theoretical positions and their usual political implications (most notably, the one between “progressive” and “reactionary” political orientations) and provoke confusions in our ideological maps – or testify to their inadequacy for understanding the issues of contemporary world. For example, new nationalism has developed an elaborate strategy of victimization of the very hegemonic social groups (as shown by Lewis R. Gordon), which works very well, even if it is based on completely false premises. In contrast to earlier forms of missionary or “civilizing” nationalism or imperialism, characteristic of the historical Western metropolises, it has also achieved important successes in presenting itself under the modest guise of a merely protective nativist movement, having a defensive posture and no other ambitions than to defend its “own” home or territory from aggressive newcomers (as argued by Aleksandar Prnjat and Vladimir Milisavljević).

The stress laid on xenophobia by the conference title presented the risk of suggesting that the new forms of nationalism should be viewed solely in terms of a subjective experience, which would result in moralizing or even demonizing criticism of it. This type of criticism is all too frequent in political and ideological disputes. However, taken by itself, it is of a rather limited scope. This danger has been averted by the approach adopted by most of the contributors, particularly by those who have highlighted economic and political causes which have given rise to new nationalism and defined its special character – above all, those which pertain to the transformation of capitalism in a globalized world economy of our days (Rastko Močnik, Natalija Mićunović, Paget Henry). Their contributions suggest that, rather than a wanton sentiment, xenophobia should be considered as an essential piece functioning in the complex machine of worldwide domination.

Several chapters of the volume – as a rule, but not exclusively, they have been grouped in the second section (“Global vs. Local and Topical Differences”) – have given special attention to local histories and developments of nationalism and xenophobia in Western and Eastern Europe, the USA, Serbia, the countries of former Yugoslavia and the Arab World (by William Leon McBride, Paget Henry, Ugo Vlaisavljević, Dean Komel, Muharem Bazdulj and Dušan Janjić). Some of them have adopted a more specific perspective of gender (Michał Kozłowski) or legal studies (Ana Dimishkovska and Igor Milinković), focusing, in particular, on the questions of discrimination and identitarianism. However

diverse, those topical analyses have let come to the fore essential, if unfortunate similarities between different states, regions or continents, epitomized by the growing importance of walls and barbed wire fences as a major political symbol of our imperfectly globalized world. In such a segregated world – to briefly comment on the title of the third and last section – “open questions”, and even disagreements, may count much more than attempts at finding final “solutions”. Editing of this volume was a pleasure, but it also gave rise to more questions and will, hopefully, lead to new adventures in researching intriguing phenomena of nationalism and identity.

At last, we wish to thank all those whose aid gave to this volume its present form and made its publication possible. In the first place, we are grateful to the reviewers who have thoroughly scrutinized its contents and went through the painstaking job of amending it by their valuable suggestions: professor Aleksandar Bošković (Faculty of Philosophy, University of Belgrade), professor Omar Dahbour (Hunter College and Graduate School, City University of New York), professor Arnaud François (Department of Philosophy, University of Poitiers), Suzana Ignjatović, senior research associate (Institute of Social Sciences, Belgrade), professor and corresponding member of the Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts Alpar Lošonc (Faculty of Technical Sciences, University of Novi Sad) and professor Đorđe Pavićević (Faculty of Political Sciences, University of Belgrade). We would like to extend our gratitude to professor Vojin Rakić, president of the program committee of the conference, as well as to other members of the said committee: professor Arnaud François, professor Jane Gordon, professor Lewis R. Gordon, professor Paget Henry, professor Dejan Jović, professor Michał Kozłowski, professor Martin Matuščík, professor William Leon McBride and professor Ugo Vlaisavljević. Our special thanks are due Mrs. Svetlana Inđić-Marjanović, general affairs assistant at the Institute of Social Sciences, who has been of great help in organizing the conference, as well as to M.A. Vesna Jovanović, librarian, who has carefully supervised the process of publication of this volume, and other members of the staff. The conference and publication of the book were realized with funding from the Ministry of Education, Science and Technological Development of the Republic of Serbia.

Vladimir Milisavljević and Natalija Mićunović

NATALIJA MIĆUNOVIĆ

False Hope of Transnationalism¹

Abstract

We think of transnationalism as a tendency to delegate local, national and regional problems to transnational bodies and extol their virtues as unquestionably unbiased, rational, expert informed, consensual, creating a system informed by Habermasian communication.

In the present state of world affairs, problems ranging from political, climatic, environmental and economic issues, to those concerning human rights infringements and biological and social diversity, are often seen as solvable through expert handling and mediated negotiations. The virtues of old-fashioned internationalism (of the Communist International, for instance) are dissolved in particularism and corporate style (because we need to understand the true nature of transnational institutions as corporations) identity politics.

Growing grassroots alt-right and mass populist low right movements attest to a disoriented rage towards the faceless acronyms (like IMF) deciding on millions of individual destinies. The hope of internationalism as the bright future of humanity is hijacked to a collection of phrases at worst and humiliating humanitarian aid at best.

Keywords: commons, inequality, transnationalism

■ It is important to distinguish the hope that is inherent in the vision of international solidarity, sometimes still glimpsed in the event of a global catastrophe, solidarity and humanist ideals best represented in the spontaneous protests, sometimes reaching global attention, and the “international community” residing in transnational organizations, which are keeping their importance in play through negotiations, where they factor in with their particular

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interests. We have to wonder: What went wrong with the cosmopolitanism, internationalism, globalism and transnationalism?

Let us look at actual activities of transnational institutions. For example, if the IMF is advocating privatization, that identifies them as a contrary force to transnationalism, or, at least, any true internationalism, and its nature as a multinational corporation and not a transnational institution.

In contrast to internationalism and with the constraints imposed on international relations by the transnational institutions, there is an expected turn to nativism as the policy of protecting the interests of the native-born or established inhabitants against those of immigrants, similar to local eating, and general flaky resistance to globalization.

In the relationships between different countries, different social groups and positions of different proximity to actual decision making, there is a growing inequality. Inequality is closely tied to all other problems; it is redefined by the importance of access to new technologies, new democratic practices and ever so scarce resources. The justifications of inequality by merit are redefined by what the merit is and, maybe even more, by the origin of income, property, inheritance, privilege or influence.

The generational gap between baby-boomer parents, co-conspirators of greed and privilege who still admit no wrong, and their millennial or whatever offspring who are given no hope, with doomsday clocks of all kinds looming over their heads, is heightened by the illusion that there once was a better future. The future in question and the struggle of recreating the world of their parents, put young people in a less fortunate position even when there are privileges granted to them, rendering them incapable of sustaining their status and wellbeing in the dystopian society in the making.

The lack of sheer understanding of what might be “in common” for different sexes, generations, classes and nations is fueling the divisions that are becoming dangerous.

Internationalism is essential in any attempt to solve any problem, yet, the divisiveness of nationalism stands in the way. Transnationalism failed because transnational institutions became either dominated by stronger parties in them, or became a ground of permanently contested negotiation. Negotiation is not cooperation. It

is a possible foundation for cooperation, but negotiations are oriented towards particular interests. As long as we believe that there is no society, only individuals, then we also believe that there is no international community, only nations. We are faced with a peculiar prisoner's dilemma: what is good for future generations is not the same with what is good for us now, and what is good for the planet does not correspond to what is good for individual nations. If everyone stopped using plastic tableware and eating meat, that would be good for the planet, but if only a handful of us do it, would we not feel like fools watching other people eat steaks and throw away their Styrofoam containers in regular trash? If every nation on Earth starts a carbon emission saving program, that would be good for the planet. However, what if just Scandinavian countries take it seriously, while a bunch of nuclear powers continue nuclear testing, would they not feel foolish? Those two levels mix, so when agricultural producers in France protest against ecological tax on their necessary-for-production diesel equipment, that is partly because they feel foolish watching Macron jet around the world. We come to an impasse because transnational institutions limited themselves to creating a negotiating ground, but did not develop a true international understanding of the common ground that is truly the *commons* of the world. I get so mad when I see golf courses and lawns being watered, that I refuse to try and save water to the detriment of my own comfort. Unfortunately, the natural resources and the social capital in terms of longevity, health, wellbeing and peace are treated like endgame in which winner takes all. Political discourse has veered so far from rational decency that no common ground is possible and political institutions, and, by extension, transnational institutions, have become so alienated from the needs and wants of citizens that their recommendations are not taken seriously.

Maybe the commonalities of humanity were overrated, and it is easier to find commonalities in smaller groups. Also, great opportunities that globalization created, also resulted in great temptations for unbridled greed and unfounded ambition.

New challenges arose from certain improvements in international relations that were not supported with enough foresight and good faith. Decolonization opened up a new market for transnational exploitation. Technological progress made advances in war and trade

quicker, and more difficult to counter. Introduction of indigenous cultures to the world stage relativized social standards based on customs particular to western culture. Financialization of economy, partially a by-product of digitalization, introduced spiraling economic inequality in national societies, as well as in the international arena.

The role of transnational organizations in the cartelization of global economy and its dominance over all other aspects of life-world is their integration of proposed standards into the system in such a way that the products thereof (treaties, recommendations, development projects) factor into the primacy of the managed delivery of all resources and their outputs to the global economy which is in turn dominated by increasingly financialized cartel. The values inherent in internationalism are reinterpreted as outputs of projects geared towards dominance and plundering of resources.

Inequality is integral to disintegration on the global level: disintegration of communities, institutions and ideas, and it is breeding nationalism. The loss of the very concept of commons is the loss of the ideal of humanity, without which, the sense of belonging reverts to race, gender, religious affiliation or something even less tangible, like a sports club.

Without redistribution, existent even in the maligned systems such as feudalism, it is impossible to sustain motivation for financialized output driven economy, and without a somewhat free market, it is impossible to even out, iron out, or just tame the worst dysfunctionalities of post-capitalism. Horizontal and vertical inequalities, with a parody of the merit system (i.e., giving ridiculously high bonuses to bankers), are detrimental to economy, life-world and decent, or even bare existence of a large number of people, rendering them dispensable. They also eliminate democratic adjustment in the political realm, creating no agent for global concerns. Outcomes are upon us: disintegration of the EU, the lingering of 2008 crisis, disintegration of political institutions, regression of the USA; nationalism and racism prevalent in the public discourse are products of the controlled agenda to divide and conquer but also of the new nature of social structures, leaving limited focus for *belonging*.

We need to look into the possibilities of restructuring the cosmopolitan agenda of humanistic movements in the changing landscape. The transformation of the nature of growth and the

value of sustainability over volume create a need for global institutions, more insightful and efficient than the ones we have. The economic downturn is met with austerity and aggressive, though rarely successful, attempts at growth, jeopardizing sustainability. Future is now more imminent and scarier than it was for previous generations. The global challenges, not only to the very existence, but to the soul of humanity, do not inspire enough cohesion in the global progressive movements to counteract the ever-growing powerplay between superpowers, including not only countries, but also production and exploitation cartels.

In order to truly understand why transnational organizations fail to perform their cohesive function better, we must look at the environment they are working in. The nature of capitalism is undergoing a change, the most profound change since the advent of corporate multinational capitalism as a more dominant mode of socio-economic exchanges than the traditional capitalism. The issues relevant to that change include innovations and technology, as well as the shift in the understanding of the relationship between representative and participatory democracy, and the understanding of the concepts of economic equality and economic justice.

Innovations and technology are relevant because we cannot pretend that bitcoin or a similar invention will not transform our financial transactions and the very understanding of the role of money in the economy. We can understand the nature of financial products for what they are: constructs in human exchange.

In this profound change, concepts of capital and labor, essential for study of capitalism, are transformed. Representative democracy is falling short of fulfilling its promise: that we will all have a say in decision making and that the decisions made will be for the best. As Piketty says in the conclusion to his monumental work on the economic controversies surrounding inequality, *Capital in 21st Century* (Piketty 2015, 625):

Dynamic development of market economy and private property, left to itself, leads to powerful convergence, especially connected to the development of knowledge and skill, but it also leads to divergence, potentially threatening our democratic societies and values of social justice they are founded on.

Participation of citizens in democratic processes linked to informed decision making, and not only in the election of representatives; as well as participative democracy and not merely representative democracy, are essential for quality citizenship and contribute to the real wealth, based not only on GDP, but also on Human Development Index.

Some of the past international movements were based on universal values which were expressed through shared interests. On the basis of belief that international relations can be mediated, at least to some extent, by the goals of those movements, transnational organizations, recognized as buttresses of international order, arose. International "community"/"order" is now ruled by the geopolitical dynamic of states' power play and is ostensibly mediated through transnational organizations like WTO, IMF, World Bank, EU, OPEC, OSCE, CoE, UN (UNESCO, UNDP, UNICEF, UNWOMEN, UNFDP, UNHCR), NATO, international courts, etc. Transnational organizations, due to the power play between nations, corporate nature of their functioning and a lack of sincerity about universal values, did not deliver internationalism in the sense of non-nationalism. In dealings between nations, competition outweighs cooperation which was supposed to be fostered by transnationalism.

How did transnational institutions develop their corporate nature? Once upon a time, after the hidden collapse of the post-WWII financial and economic order which had occurred in the 1970s, the managerial style became corporate, meaning that the focus of economic activity did not include wide spread prosperity, but rather narrowed down to serving the profit beneficiaries. That was not essentially new, but the style that accommodated disregard for the actual national interests in, say, destroying food sovereignty, was the consequence of alienation of national, i.e., political power from economic power. Therefore, political power became just a tool in increasing economic power, influence being traded as commodity. Obviously, these were not inventions of that era, but technological and bureaucratic development accelerated it.

Going back to nationalism is a way to confirm values (national, religious, traditional, for the lack of any universal ones) and fulfil interests (national, class, etc.). That is why we see a number of new (or recycled) grassroots movements that are xenophobic and

entrenched in the nationalistic perspective on history. Global protest in the spirit of true internationalism is in part impossible because of all the bits of incomplete contradictory information floating around, which make little drops of protest less likely to coalesce, as well as the “modern way of life” which seems like a waste of life on administration and entertainment. The way of life that requires constant vigilance against predators and distraction from thinking cannot truly be called progress. Protests of any kind develop from a feeling of resistance to injustice, a feeling grounded in natural understanding (Hume 1975, 186):

Suppose a society to fall into such want of all common necessities, that the utmost frugality and industry cannot preserve the greater number from perishing, and the whole from extreme misery; it will readily, I believe, be admitted, that the strict laws of justice are suspended, in such a pressing emergence, and give place to the stronger motives of necessity and self-preservation. Is it any crime, after a shipwreck, to seize whatever means or instrument of safety one can lay hold of, without regard to former limitations of property?

Hume explains here why the feelings of injustice, although they initially extend to include the reaction to the he injury to others, get severely constricted in dire straits. Creating the appearance of scarcity works both ways –mobilizes us for the common good, but also makes us competitors in the common market.

Global protests did not develop because there is always a promise of a better life, if you only make it to Sweden. Because the “5th rider of the apocalypse is stupidity” (BBC’S MASH report), there is no understanding of commonalities that transcend the narrow nationalistic interests. Fragmentation of resistance is also the result of fragmentation of shared values and interests. There does not seem to be an understanding that there is no true personal interest if, by virtue of loss of values, the integrity of person is lost. Different groupings of interest groups and identity groups, with little overlap, make it impossible to make a coherent plea for justice. There may be an impression that something on that path is gained, for instance in #MeToo campaign, but that is the confusion PR campaign makes, it cannot, by itself, bring justice or societal change. The appearance

of it collapses with different identifications with other groups, as in women who sided with Trump and/or Cavanaugh. The political choices, with politics being reduced to a segment of PR industry, remain divorced from any core values and interests. The diversification of political groups in accordance with the perceived interests and values, makes for the lack of any common ground, making it difficult for compassion to play a role, with the lack of universal understanding. Corporate structure encompassing transnational organizations, on the other hand, makes for actions that ignore particular interests in pursuit of organizations' goals. In a way, it is an old argument that social discontent breeds fascism, but always played out a little differently. This wave of new right-wing, intolerant authoritarianism is a product of global society undergoing rapid change due to enhanced interconnectedness. It is different in appearance from the classic totalitarianism due to the change in the way in which propaganda is disseminated, and the speed of economic change due to technological advancement in production and trade. Transnationalism is at the center of it, because its role changed from a regulatory, inter-state negotiating tool, to imposition of models of distribution and enforcement centralized as cartel-type interest groups. National interests, still blamed in the PR campaign for allowing corporate interests to invade the Earth, are misrepresented and hollowed out, as if the sustained peace and prosperity are outranked by dominance and aggressive accumulation of wealth (Varoufakis 2018):

Meanwhile, independently of establishment politicians' aims and their ideological smokescreens, capitalism has been evolving. The vast majority of economic decisions have long ceased to be shaped by market forces and are now taken within a strictly hierarchical, though fairly loose, hyper-cartel of global corporations. Its managers fix prices, determine quantities, manage expectations, manufacture desires, and collude with politicians to fashion pseudo-markets that subsidize their services. The first casualty was the New Deal-era aim of full employment, which was duly replaced by an obsession with growth. [...] The result is not only unnecessary hardship for vast segments of humanity. It also heralds a global doom loop of deepening inequality and chronic instability.

Considering international organizations as corporations is seeing what went wrong with the ideals of internationalism (Palladino 2018):

Legal rules that define and commit corporations have changed a lot since the founding of the United States and Wilson's era. Corporations today enjoy many of the constitutional protections that were once reserved for individuals. Wilson's comment is worth repeating because it is still true today: privileges given to large corporations are precisely this – privileges, not rights – privileges granted by the *state* in order for corporations to achieve objectives of general interest that would otherwise be difficult to achieve. Hence it follows that if corporations exist because we, as a people, allow it, then their existence should be conditioned by the satisfaction of our needs. [...] Today's corporations have retained the privileges and lost the public purpose. They cut employee costs to as low as possible, so that workers can't make enough to sustain their families. They outsource work so that people who used to make a fair wage and benefits as employees are forced to work as independent contractors. They use technology to invasively monitor workers. All of this, along with the attacks on unionization, keeps worker bargaining power as low as possible.

New forms of nationalism, xenophobia and national identity are manipulated as replacements for, let's say, professional and class identity. In so called culture wars, two kinds of identity are emphasized: racial, national, ethnic, regional and tribal, as well as sexual, political and cultural, as opposed to class and/or professional identity which corresponds to interests. This is the reason that political culture involves even more irrationality than before, since the interests of the voters are not in play, only their feelings of belonging. The need to belong is strong, and in the absence of groups that can express authentic needs, the identification with national, ethnic, racial, sexual and cultural history, is often the only option; "[...] it is doubtful that our sense of identity as members of a species is strong enough to overcome our sense of identity based on difference" (Ignatieff 2001, 130).

We may wonder why inequality is integral to disintegration on the global level, disintegration of communities, institutions and ideas,

and why does it breed nationalism? There is growing evidence that inequality brings about instability. Inequality, reaching new heights and distinction in scary outcomes for future generations, is going to be exercised at pre-natal level. The technology that allows it already exists, though we may not be aware, it may already be in use. Although it is amply shown in serious research that the economic conditions substantially correlate with early prospects, one of the basic tenets of the prevailing neo-liberal ideology is that merit is the major generator of education, income and general success. That makes it less appealing to foster cooperation instead of competition. Institutions and communities depend on cooperation to develop in a meaningful way, as they cannot be sustained through hierarchy and competition alone. Because the need to belong is strong, it is then expressed through different kinds of exaggerated group identities. The frustrations present in large segments of different populations are sometimes expressed through extreme nationalism, where the mere presence of others (women, refugees, migrants, other races, other sexualities, or simply people from the other side of the tracks) is seen as an unfair (notion of fairness being suspect anyway) threat that has to be addressed by a higher degree of cohesion in the group mobilized against the threatening others. What do they threaten? Something that rightfully belongs to us, *our* commons. This displacement makes it even less likely to see that the commons are disappearing in the narrowing top 1% of owners of financial (real and ghost money), natural (land, water, ore) and social (technology, health care, education) resources.

The loss of commons is the loss of the ideal of humanity, without which, belonging reverts to groups identified by race, gender, and of course, nation. Without redistribution, existent even in the maligned systems like feudalism, for example, it is impossible to sustain motivation for output driven economy, and without a somewhat free market, it is impossible to develop.

Nationalism's strongest divisive properties are needed to feed both the inequality and instability. It provides for enemies, within and without, to allow for the calls for sacrifices needed to overcome the danger, to punish the lazy and to exclude the people who could possibly coexist with us in solidarity. Austerity is the price we pay for permissiveness in allowing others (poor, manual workers, servants, darker skinned people, females, homosexuals,

artsy, bookish or simply different people) to share in the commons of our own device, to infringe on our birth right, to play the capitalism game for which they are not equipped by legacy, temperament and our understanding of fair play. The commons must be defended, our land must remain Christian (or Muslim, patriarchal, white, straight, traditional), our recognition of our value as individuals and as a community (what Americans call exceptionalism) is embedded in sharing the spoils: "Moral integrity is crucial to the actions of the humanitarian empire" (Douzinas 2009, 187).

So, commons exist, but not for just anybody. Feelings of entitlement sometimes make a confusion of rights and privileges. Speaking of rights, rights can be universal like human rights, belong to a certain community like civil rights, or be the result of merit. The notion that really is at risk is merit. Speaking of income, it can come from labor (merit), from property (rights), and from influence (privilege). Speaking of universal income, like the embodiment of social rights that European institutions often praised (see European Social Charter 2019 and European Commission 1997), it is the extension of welfare and exclusion from the labor force of certain parts of the population, needed with the lessened need for workers. Lauded as practically a communist idea in its generosity and inclusion, it is actually a fraction of the cost of unemployment and unrest, and keeps the streets clean, but, depending on its implementation, can have consequences similar to multigenerational welfare.

The argument for meritocracy fails in the growing inequality (Stewart 2018):

The meritocratic class has mastered the old trick of consolidating wealth and passing privilege along at the expense of other people's children. We are not innocent bystanders to the growing concentration of wealth in our time. We are the principal accomplices in a process that is slowly strangling the economy, destabilizing American politics, and eroding democracy. Our delusions of merit now prevent us from recognizing the nature of the problem that our emergence as a class represents. We tend to think that the victims of our success are just the people excluded from the club. But history shows quite clearly that, in the kind of game we're playing, everybody loses badly in the end.

The hope that transnational institutions will play the role of universal arbiter, just by equalizing arbitration, that UN, EU, IMF and similar acronyms will help fix what is wrong and particularly dirty at home, is para-religious. We hope to be given absolution (sometimes we do, of debts), to see the light and be completely transformed in our dirty habits. It is intended to police and replace humanism as the grand idea, so that we can isolate “monsters” in the remote parts and preserve privilege, quaintly called “our way of life”, understood as our birth right.

For us to rethink development and truly understand sustainability, is impossible if we keep all matters of international relations, financial transactions, trade rules and commercial practices secret as private deals between powerful wise leaders and complicated expertise of consultants. Ideological thinking: blind market faith, belt tightening and money fetishism are ruinous; instead, we can value people, nature, resources and history, future and knowledge, above mesmerizing numbers of commas in bank accounts.

There is a global trend of alienation of expert culture, especially in the financial sphere, from general socio-economic mainstream, and the concept of equality is one that is, in the core of its meaning, under attack of social policy that diminishes its content. We will need all the strength of our minds and imaginations to resist the urge to follow spiraling, toxic financial takeover of natural, economic, human and social resources.

As productive participants in the economy (laborers and such), we should not ascribe value to vacuous and dangerous speculation, since labor is an intrinsic part of value; and as citizens, we should not acquiesce in “manufacturing of consent”, lest there remains nothing of value to consent to. As Yanis Varoufakis says: we should be wary not so much of Greeks, as of International Monetary Fund bearing gifts, which dismantles public sector, demands sale of public assets and shrinking of institutions (Varoufakis 2013, 108):

The IMF happily offered to lend money to governments for the purposes of repaying the Western banks, but at an exorbitant price: the dismantling of much of their public sector (including schools and clinics), the shrinking of the newly founded state institutions, and the wholesale transfer of valuable public assets (e.g., water

boards, telecommunications, etc.) to Western companies. It is not at all an exaggeration to suggest that the Third World debt crisis was the colonized world's second historic disaster (after the brutal experience of colonization and the associated slave trade). In fact, it was a disaster from which most Third World countries have never quite recovered.

It is justified as a prerequisite for growth: "According to IMF development theory, growth results from the supply side incentives given to private investors" (Henry 2016, 154).

The disaster is not in our wallets as much as in our minds. As feminists claimed that personal is political, it is clear that financial is not mathematical, it is political. There are two advantages of "getting technical" for those who do so in arguments: majority of people did not do well in math and physics in school and are easily intimidated by numbers and formulas; and it cloaks the outrageous immoral intentions in the "mandatory by the facts, nothing personal, dear, we just have to follow rules, numbers, facts, technical details" statements.

Even feeble attempts to transcend national identity failed, in the biggest ever experiment to create a transnational entity (Mićunović 2015, 30):

European identity is a concept that is at best derivative and at worst empty. EU identity is based on an association of disparate states, not paying enough attention to non-members, even very influential and present in Europe in presenting its identity. Linguistic policy [...] shows a certain self-important insistence on members only communication, and no recognition of value of the fact that universal humanitarian ideals are not only European. The most important failure of EU is that there was never any effort at state-building, much less nation-building, because Europe is not a nation. EU could have a function as transnational organization, but it is more than that, so it should aspire to more togetherness than, say, World Trade Organization. The best and least painful way to integrate Europe more would be through creation of a common cultural space, but, due to its structure as a union of fiercely independent, consensus dependent nation states, which try to keep their

cultures isolated as if it was possible, disintegrative processes are actually aided by cultural policies of member countries and EU as a whole.

On the other side of the spectrum, there have been more success, but not of the good kind. Members of neo-Nazis, neo-chauvinists, skinheads and other groups that engage in “dispersing perverted people” differ from members of real communities in their negative rationale for the bond. If “a family is a group of people who hate each other because they have to live together”, as a cynic said, then politically and socially incorrect group is “a group of people who are together because they have to hate”. With all assurances from street gangs and neo-Nazi groups that they can represent a family to young people who join them, it is not the truth, because there is no connection based on love and affirmative validation (without a necessary confrontation with the enemy) which is essential for a family.

Nation states are experiencing a crisis of legitimacy. The old “nationalism of citizenship” as well as ethnic “blood and soil” models do not correspond anymore to the thoughts and feelings of many people who are in search of belonging, protection and aspirations that nations could provide. Alienation is taking new forms of escape in the virtual reality that has more powers of persuasion and more links to actual lifestyles of many people than any previous popular phantasy. The total (dis)information space creates feelings of frustration fostered by the lack of opportunities in real, accomplished communities.

I will let Edward Said conclude for me (Said 1993, 264):

There is a great deal of hope to be derived from this [assertions of ethnic particularities were not enough, just as solidarity without criticism was not enough] if only because, far from being at the end of history, we are in a position to do something about our own present and future history, whether we live inside or outside of the metropolitan world.

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