

The rise of post-fascism

Over the past 15 years, a new type of far-right political current has emerged in Greece, as in many other countries around the world. The origins of this current can be traced to the convergence of existing far-right formations and a part of the patriotic left. This process began with the Movement of the Squares and the protests against the austerity measures of the “debt bailout” agreements (also known as “Memoranda”),¹ continued with the nationalist demonstrations against the Prespes Agreement,² and culminated in the movement of pandemic and vaccination denialism, which also attracted individuals and groups from the anti-authoritarian milieu.³

In our written interventions last year against this new reactionary current, we focused mainly on “individualistic irrationalism, of extreme right-wing or postmodern flavor”, as the ideological background of the convergence of the far right, on the one hand, and a part of the left and the anti-authoritarian milieu on the other. We examined how both sides reject modernity and Enlightenment altogether. We discussed the ideologically nationalist, reactionary opposition to “globalization” and “imperialism” as an element that inspires both wings. We argued that the fundamental position of the new far right current is to defend the “national community” –and the “nation state” itself– against the “global elites” that want to destroy nations and denigrate them,⁴ stressing that “the political basis of this convergence is a [...] discourse against the ‘new world order’, ‘transnational capital’ and ‘globalisation’ in defence of the ‘national cultural community’”. Finally, we have shown that both sides share a conspiracist view of world history. Of course, we made it clear that this movement is not an

¹ Certainly, the movement against the memoranda can in no way be reduced and equated with this process given that the left nationalist tendency was still dominant and distinct from the forces of the far right, while the movement also contained a minoritarian but unequivocal proletarian anti-capitalist / anti-state tendency.

² Moreover, there was also a convergence in relation to the racist and nationalist conspiracy theories that have been developed against the mass arrival of refugees and immigrants in Greece from 2015 onwards, as documented by the comrade Polycarpos Georgiadis in his article “Η Νέα Τάξη Πραγμάτων της Ακροδεξιάς. Μέρος Τρίτο: από την «αντισυστημική» συνωμοσιολογία στις δηλώσεις υποταγής στο κεφάλαιο [The New World Order of the Far Right. Part Three: from “antisystemic” conspiracy theories to declarations of allegiance to capital]”, *Red & Black*, <https://www.rednblack.gr/arthra/i-nea-taxi-pragmaton-tis-akrodexias-meros-trito-apo-tin-antisystemiki-synomosiologia-stis-diloseis-ypotagis-sto-kefalaio/>

³ With the exception of the newspaper “Diadromi Eleftherias” [Διαδρομή Ελευθερίας] and the group “Pyrgitai” [Πυργίται] which had already joined this current trend by supporting the demonstrations against the Prespes Agreement.

⁴ See e.g. the communiqué of the *Interdisciplinary Association for the Defence of Democracy and Bioethics* [Διεπιστημονική Ένωση Υπεράσπισης της Δημοκρατίας και της Βιοηθικής], “On the 200th Anniversary of the Revolution of 1821” [Για τα 200 χρόνια από την Επανάσταση του ‘21], <https://dimobio.gr/?p=426>.

monolithic bloc, as there are strategic and tactical divisions within it. This fact is directly expressed by the existence of three different parties in the parliament that belong to this bloc – Greek Solution (Ελληνική Λύση), Victory (Νίκη), Spartans (Σπαρτιάτες)—as well as a multitude of extra-parliamentary parties, collectives, websites, and individuals.

Although we still consider these positions valid, we felt it necessary to further investigate the theoretical and historical basis of the formation of this new far-right current, both to draw conclusions that could be used in the struggle against it and because there are elements of this current, particularly those originating from the anti-authoritarian milieu, that require a more detailed and thorough analysis. This would help highlight the areas where they converge with and become integrated into this current.

We believe that the struggle against this current is an extremely important and necessary aspect of the struggle against the State. In the face of the capitalist crisis and the intensification of contradictions at all levels (war, migration/refugee movements, climate catastrophe, inflation, epidemics, etc.) a counter-revolutionary force has emerged on an almost global scale. This force, under the guise of “anti-systemicism”, has the capacity to mobilise en masse the most reactionary sections of the working class and petty bourgeoisie in favor of restoring national homogeneity and social stability –in other words, in favor of the violent restoration of the unity of the circuit of reproduction of national social capital. The emerging reactionary movement attacks everything that is falsely presented as the cause of its members’ misery and impoverishment: immigrants/refugees, enemies of the nation, religion and traditional gender roles who “take their money from the NGOs” and support the “global elites” and the “New World Order”, the “parasites that make up the political elite of the country“, and so on and so forth. The struggle against the State and its far-right pseudo-opponent must be unified. As we have noted in the past, the new far-right current is “a manufactured enemy” of the state, “not in the strict sense that the state created this movement from scratch and conspired to promote it [...] but in the specific sense that it has been strengthened by the authoritarianism, opacity and systematic absurdity”⁵ of the State’s policies in addressing actual human needs.

In the following pages we will highlight the **essential unity** and **complementarity** between neoliberalism and the new far-right current, against, on the one hand, the attempt of the defenders of capitalist democracy to present it as something alien to the “democratic arc” and, on the other hand, against the attempt of the members of this reactionary current to present themselves as “anti-systemic”.

It is important to note that as a social movement, this current presents itself as beyond party affiliations, transcending the left-right divide. However, the issues it has raised so far are clearly rooted in pre-existing far-right and reactionary themes, such as the attack on “woke ideologues” and “rightsists”, fear-mongering about an alleged “invasion” of immigrants and impending “climate lockdowns”, and the creation of moral panic around vaccines that will

⁵ Antithesi / Cognord, “The reality of denial and the denial of reality”. Available at: <https://curedquailjournal.wordpress.com/2021/12/09/the-reality-of-denial-and-the-denial-of-reality/>.

supposedly alter “our children’s bodies” or “our national DNA”, etc. Despite these themes, the current’s supposed anti-systemic nature makes it essential for it to present itself –and perceive itself– as a break from established politics, claiming to go beyond the traditional left-right opposition. This is why the participation of prominent self-identified “progressives”, leftists and anti-authoritarians is so crucial for its formation.

Based on our study and research, we identified eight main dimensions of the theoretical and historical basis of the new far-right current (among which there are of course overlaps):

1. Populism
2. Nationalism
3. Elitism
4. Individualism
5. Social Darwinism / Ideology of Death
6. Irrationalism (appeal to the “natural order of things”, conspiracism)
7. Attack on struggles for social rights (“anti-woke” ideology, attack on "transhumanism", etc.)
8. Invocation of the “freedom of speech”

The fact that not all organisations and individuals of this current share exactly the same set of positions on the above dimensions does not invalidate its existence as a distinct tendency. After all, according to Robert Paxton’s classic monograph, *The Anatomy of Fascism* (Cedar, 2006), even historical fascism was “a compound, a powerful amalgam of different but marriageable conservative, national-socialist and radical Right ingredients, bonded together by common enemies and common passions for a regenerated, energized, and purified nation [...] The precise proportions of the mixture are the result of processes: choices, alliances, compromises, rivalries. Fascism in action looks much more like a network of relationships than a fixed essence”.

The process of the formation of the new far-right current through the convergence of far-right elements, left nationalists and anti-authoritarians leads us to the use of the adjective “red-brown”. Correspondingly, in the case of historical fascism there was a similar drift of left nationalists and anti-authoritarians towards fascism as a reactionary form of opposition to capitalist “decadence” and crisis, which produced economic and social insecurity and anxiety.⁶ Due to the historical specificity of each phenomenon, we cannot use the term “fascism” for the contemporary far-right current, as historical fascism imposed one-party dictatorship, abolishing almost all democratic “freedoms”, conducting internal purges, physically exterminating Jews and “anti-social elements,” organizing production corporatistically,

⁶ It is worth noting that many leading figures of fascism in Europe during the interwar period came from the left. Apart from Mussolini in Italy, in France Jacques Doriot, leader of the fascist French People’s Party (PPF) and founder of the French Volunteer Legion of the Wehrmacht, was a former member of the Presidium of the Executive Committee of the Comintern, while in Great Britain John Beckett, a leading member of the left-wing Independent Labour Party, later joined the leadership of the British Union of Fascists, the party of Oswald Mosley.

implementing extensive public investment programs in infrastructure and the war industry, and waging expansionist wars –elements that have not yet appeared in countries where modern far-right parties have governed.

But we can follow the Hungarian Marxist Gaspar Miklos Tamás⁷ and use the term *post-fascism*, i.e. a form of politics that combines elements of neoliberalism, nationalism, petty-bourgeois/libertarian individualism (opposing the state’s encroachment on private property) and modern democracy (in the sense that it does not abolish parliamentarianism and the institutions of representative democracy), while simultaneously excluding from citizenship the surplus proletariat, the consolidated surplus population, i.e. the population which cannot even sell its labour power to be exploited and which constitutes the majority of people in the poorest countries and a significant part of the population in the developed countries, who survive through “humanitarian” aid and the “informal” economy. Post-fascism, as a political regime, also contains a strong populist dimension in so far as a significant portion of the local proletarians, which has been materially and culturally impoverished, becomes the fiercest enemy of outcast migrants and refugees (and of marginalised citizens such as the Roma). This segment adopts reactionary ideologies of various kinds as a response to the perceived threat allegedly posed by potential competition for meagre state benefits and low-paid jobs, such as the conspiracy theory of the “great replacement” engineered supposedly by the “globalists” and the NGOs of George Soros and Bill Gates.⁸

We extend and modify the concept of post-fascism based on the eight dimensions mentioned above, emphasizing the convergence between far-right groups, left-wing nationalists, and anti-authoritarians, drawing on the historical experience accumulated since

⁷ G. M. Tamás, On Post-Fascism, *Boston Review*, 1/6/2001, <https://www.bostonreview.net/articles/g-m-tamas-post-fascism/>

⁸ Beyond their significant differences, the key common element between fascism and post-fascism, which justifies the second component in the latter term, is the dual form of the state. On the one hand, there is the “normative state” (*Normenstaat*), where the rule of law is maintained for those who belong to the political community, and on the other hand, there is the “prerogative state” (*Maßnahmenstaat*), where the treatment of those excluded from the political community becomes arbitrary and outside the law (Ernst Fraenkel, *The Dual State: A Contribution to the Theory of Dictatorship*, Oxford University Press, 1941). In today’s era, those primarily excluded from the guarantees of the rule of law are migrants and refugees who are redundant to capitalist production. However, the dividing line that determines which part of the population falls under the jurisdiction of the “normative state” and which under the jurisdiction of the “prerogative state” can shift to include segments of the local proletariat. At this point, caution is required because the far-right rhetoric of “techno-fascism”, “health apartheid”, etc., attempts inappropriate and invalid comparisons between real exclusions (such as those of refugees from Asia and Africa or Jews in Nazi Europe) and non-existent ones (such as those of anti-vaxxers, “white Christians”, etc.). Beyond its propaganda value in attracting followers, this tactic serves a more fundamental goal of post-fascists: the relativization and erosion of the very concepts of “apartheid”, “Holocaust”, “fascism”, and so on.

the publication of Tamás' relevant text. In the following sections, we analyze these dimensions.

1. Populism

According to the classic definition, (modern) populism refers to a set of ideas and political practices that claim to defend the “common man” and the “people” against the “elites”. The very concepts of “people” and “common man” used by populist ideologies and political practices conceal the class relations of exploitation and domination within capitalism, while simultaneously serving as the forms through which these relations appear and are imposed. The conflict between the proletariat and capital disappears and is replaced by the conflict between the people and the elites. The concept of “the people”, however, is not merely cross-class; it inevitably refers to the national political community, excluding migrants and those who may potentially be expelled as “anti-national elements”. The same function is served by the homogenizing figure of the “common man.” On the other hand, the concept of the elites is not defined in class terms or based on the capitalist relations of production but in moral terms: it refers to “corrupt,” “greedy,” “malicious” sharks and schemers who parasitize on “national wealth” and “popular prosperity” aiming to control both the state and the people. For this reason, the elites are often equated with “supranational capital,” banks, large multinational technology and pharmaceutical companies (“big pharma” and “big tech”), and so on –foreign powers conspiring against the nation in collaboration with their local agents. This narrative directly echoes the clichés of anti-Semitism, as the impersonal figure of the corrupt, greedy, and scheming individual is often and easily personified as the Jew. Obviously, based on such a moralistic definition, a portion of the national capital can, of course, be absolved as “productive” and “pro-people” thereby excluded from the corrupt elites (for example, it is seriously argued that Trump, as a “self-made” billionaire, does not belong to the elites). At the same time, social conflict is shifted from a challenge to class power relations and the national political community itself, aiming at revolutionary overthrow and transformation, toward the elimination of parasites belonging to the “elites” – a process that may be later extended to those declared “enemies of the people / the nation”.

In the past, the distinction between left and right within the political systems of European countries corresponded to the representation of the working class and capitalists within the state and the integration of the former into capitalist political institutions. The social question became politicized and nationalized. The deep crisis of capitalist relations of (re)production from the 1970s onwards gradually led to the collapse of this distinction, as the policies of left-wing and right-wing governments converged on cuts and restructuring of the welfare state, as well as the deregulation of labor relations, all aimed at increasing the degree of exploitation as a counteracting influence to the crisis of overaccumulation. The historical process called “neoliberalism” was not a linear decline of capitalist production, as there were periods of medium-term growth (e.g., in Greece from the mid-1990s until 2008), during

which the atomization of the working class and what the ordoliberalists called *deproletarianization* were solidified. This meant the consolidation of bourgeois values, with workers no longer seeing themselves as proletarians subjected to exploitation, but as “rising” entrepreneurs, self-determined “human capital,” to use the favorite expression of Röpke, Becker, and Foucault. One of the methods of deproletarianization was the acquisition of private housing through borrowing. When the subsequent recessions of capital and labor devaluation occurred, the recomposition of the proletariat as a historical subject became much more difficult. Thus, the **crisis of legitimation and political representation** that emerged led, on the one hand, to the strengthening of populist political forces opposing the established political “order” and, on the other hand, to the rise of a corresponding cross-class social subject in many of the movements that historically erupted, particularly after the Great Recession of 2008 (Arab Spring, Square Movements, Yellow Vests, etc.).⁹ However, as we noted above, most of these movements actively involved a minority proletarian, anti-capitalist tendency that attempted to break with populism and national identity, albeit unsuccessfully.

We can see this more clearly in Greece during the period of the imposition of the memoranda. The deep crisis of 2010-15 led to the collapse of PASOK and the weakening of New Democracy. SYRIZA emerged as a new left-wing force that would follow a social democratic policy and negotiate the memoranda, managing to establish itself as the electoral solution after the defeat of the cycle of struggles between 2010 and 2013. On the other hand, the weakening of New Democracy’s electoral power was immediately reflected in the emergence of far-right populist political formations, the largest being the Independent Greeks, and the entry of the openly Nazi Golden Dawn into Parliament. As the alternative of the SYRIZA-ANEL government was also quickly proven false after the farce of the referendum and the signing of a new memorandum, and with the departure of SYRIZA’s populist-nationalist factions (in addition to the social democratic ones that also left, like the members who later formed MeRA25), the social trend towards populism was further strengthened. At this point, it should be noted that SYRIZA’s central and dominant political line was not populist and did not question membership in the EU or even the Eurozone. At the same time, however, SYRIZA’s leadership tolerated the existence of populist tendencies within the party, which left open the possibility of exiting the euro, imposing protectionist measures, and turning towards Russia’s geopolitical sphere of influence, as it sought to absorb the populist discontent that was the dominant element in the preceding movement.¹⁰

⁹ A peculiarity of the populist phenomenon is that forces that denounce political games and institutions as corrupt and rotten enter into them.

¹⁰ During the recent leadership change in SYRIZA, the hardline neoliberal faction (around Tsipras) collaborated with the populist faction (around Polakis) to nominate and elect S. Kasselakis as the new president against the faction of the party that continued to invoke a thin form of social democracy. As a persona, Kasselakis embodies the epitome of neoliberal populism. He combines nationalism, direct appeals to the “common man” and the people, rhetoric against corruption and the “incompetence” of the government and Mitsotakis –after all, “anti-Mitsotakism” had been the main line of the opposition

The mobilisations against immigrants and refugees that were organised both on the islands of the North-East and on the islands of the North-East. Aegean and in areas of mainland Greece from 2016 onwards and the demonstrations against the Prespes Agreement in 2018 and 2019 were the next two main events that contributed to the strengthening of populism as a social current. In this case, the New Democracy party apparatus participated massively in the mobilizations, despite the fact that as a party it systematically used the denunciation of populism to attack the left. Of particular importance is the period of February-March 2020 when the Mitsotakis government was spreading conspiracy theories about a “hybrid war” through the “invasion of immigrants” from Turkey, while supporting the fascist militias that were formed at the borders. These militias were reactivated in the fires that broke out in Evros in August 2023, when both Velopoulos (the leader of the Greek Solution far-right party) and Mitsotakis once again peddled conspiratorial scenarios that the fires were set by immigrants.

In an earlier article we wrote that we do not believe that there is “any direct link between the movement of the squares and the recent nationalist rallies for Macedonia”. The main differences we identified were that in the squares movement the body that was formed was indeed “constitutionally defined as national” but that it was “**not** constituted **negatively** towards non-citizens”. Additionally, we noted that “in the squares movement, the rise of nationalism did not indicate the absence of class struggle but its **defeat**, as ultimately the fetishized discourse on debt and direct democracy, which transforms the goal of satisfying needs into an alternative proposal for a **formally** differentiated reproduction of capitalist

in recent years due to the lack of substantial political differences between SYRIZA and New Democracy– along with a neoliberal stance in favor of entrepreneurship, a mercenary army, public-private partnerships in universities, and “equality of opportunity.” Particularly, the rhetoric about corrupt elites is a key ideological weapon and political method used by neoliberal populists worldwide to promote capitalist restructuring. It has been rightly noted that the rise of neoliberal populism simultaneously strengthens far-right populism, as the class composition of society is replaced, within political discourse, by the formless entity of the people, given the overlap of the majority of issues they raise. See also Norma Rossi’s article, “Populism without a people: neoliberal populism and the rise of the Italian far right”, *Journal of Political Ideologies*, 2023, which examines the case of Italy and the Five Star Movement.

As the author notes, the 5 Star Movement invokes “common sense” to defend the interests of “common people” against “corrupt elites”. In the case of immigration policy, this line has to their alignment with the League’s racist positions on the extreme tightening of immigration control and repression measures during the period when they co-ruled Italy. Both the 5 Star Movement and the Lega relied on a rhetoric that denounced the “immigration business” and those who “make profit from it to the detriment of the majority”. The alleged conflict between profiteers and the opponents of the “immigration business” expresses in new terms the populist trope of corrupt and greedy elites working against the interests of the people. The de-ideologization of politics expressed by the appeal to “common sense” is also found in the case of SYRIZA, as a basic position and political goal of the tendency that supports Kasselakis within SYRIZA.

social relations, prevailed. This, after all, is why there was also room for the active participation of tendencies that approached the issues from a proletarian, anti-capitalist perspective – something that which we cannot even imagine for the nationalism of the “Macedonian rallies”, since in these rallies the **absence** of class struggle and its displacement into a struggle between nations was a given fact from the very beginning.

As we see it today, a more accurate formulation would be that these mobilisations cannot be directly identified with each other but are **indirectly** linked in terms of the historical tendency towards the strengthening of populism in the previous decade and the establishment of political connections, initially between far-right formations and a segment of the patriotic left. Over time, there was a redefinition of the elites against which the people as a national subject were pitted. Initially, the elites were considered to be composed of the “German-collaborating cadres of PASOK and New Democracy who betray the homeland to the lenders and the banks”. However, after the “betrayal of SYRIZA in the referendum and with the Prespes Agreement”, the definition of the elites extended to include the “nationally traitorous left of the salons” and the “leftists with right-wing pockets”. With the pandemic and the discourse against the “corruption of the national body”, it also included the “rightsists”, as well as left-wing healthcare workers who supported collective protection measures and were accused of being stooges of the state and multinationals.

As a matter of fact, we realized that there were groups and individuals from the patriotic left and the anti-authoritarian milieu that supported the mobilizations against the Prespes Agreement¹¹ and expressed an open or covert discourse in favor of tough border security or even the revocation of international refugee law.¹²

¹¹ See. for example the numerous articles on the subject in the newspaper *Dromos tis Aristeras* such as the article by Rudy Rinaldi [leader of the Communist Organisation of Greece (KOE) which was part of SYRIZA until 2015] “Criteria, Perspectives and Instrumentalization of the Refugee Issue” where he writes that “Her (referring to Ingebor Begel, the Dutch journalist who confronted Mitsotakis during the press conference following his meeting with Dutch Prime Minister Mark Rutte on the refugee issue) position is not so radical: It follows the line of granting refugees and immigrants free entry to Europe. This is the general position of all globalists, with differences regarding the division of labour among them and their respective role”.

The *Pyrgitai* [Πυργίται] group, associated with the *Coalition of Anarchists* [Συσπείρωση Αναρχικών] and the newspaper *Route of Freedom* [Διαδρομή Ελευθερίας], in their text entitled “It is neither for their good nor for our good”, referring to the arrival of immigrants and refugees in Greece, raise the following question: “So what would not the state, but any community of free people residing in Evros or on the islands, do, given all that has happened in recent years?” Their answer is this: “Unfortunately these people are no longer refugees and migrants. They have become instruments of war, and the dirtiest kind of war: one that aims at the social disintegration of the opponent. When someone becomes involved in the purpose of a war machine, that is, when they become a ‘war agent’ of someone stronger or a ‘protector’, things turn very bad for them [...] For this reason we will repeat the point: From now on, not a single one must pass. *For their sake and for our sake.*” (<https://shorturl.at/atGJ8>).

A not so blatant, but for this very reason much more dangerous nationalist position on the issue of immigration and refugees was expressed by the anti-authoritarian collective *Underground Tunnel* [Υπόγεια Σήραγγα], a basic component of the *Assembly Against Biopower and Confinement*, as is evident from the latter's website, in the pamphlet published in 2017 entitled "Immigration: an opportunity (?) for capital". As they wrote, class solidarity "presupposes workers who reside in Greece either by choice or by necessity". On the contrary, "the social movements [...] advanced as a demand their free movement", which simultaneously "served the goals of the state". Although the "solidarity movement attempted to give class characteristics to solidarity actions [...] it nevertheless failed to take account of the fact that the subjects themselves, the immigrants, did not see themselves as workers but as individual travellers". In addition, "the immigrants themselves saw their stay in the camps as temporary and [...] did not see themselves as part of a unified community of interests consisting of all immigrants (of any nationality), let alone a community of local and immigrant proletarians", while the need for "free movement was satisfied in an individualistic and antagonistic way towards the others".

In other words, for the group *Underground Tunnel* the only way for immigrants to become part of the class subject is to remain in Greece, willingly or not, and to renounce their aspiration for their "freedom of movement". Freedom of movement as such is removed from class needs and becomes both an individualistic choice and a goal of the state! The needs of immigrants as a part of our class are completely devalued vis-à-vis the needs for "better living conditions and wages" in Greece, i.e. vis-à-vis exclusively the needs of the working class residing in Greece. The demands of the immigrants must, according to this conception, be subordinated to the demands of the domestic labour movement. This closes off the only path for the creation of a unified community of **class** interests, which is never given a priori. On the contrary, as Marx writes in *The Poverty of Philosophy*: "In the struggle [...] this mass [of workers] becomes united, and constitutes itself as a class for itself. The interests it defends become class interests".

Moreover, immigration is presented as an individualist choice (in the form of "immigration programmes" (!) according to the terminology of the *Underground Tunnel*) and the role of coercion due to war, poverty and the broader squalor of their living conditions in their place of origin is completely minimized. Whatever savings refugees and migrants may have had to "fulfil their desire" (sic) to migrate are presented as "economic capital" and a significant section of the immigrants themselves as "well-off people" who will nevertheless be "proletarianised in the process"! Consequently, their very proletarian status is called into question. The most basic trick that *Underground Tunnel* pulls to get its nationalist conception of class and class solidarity across is that it posits as a precondition for the development of class struggle that immigrants should see themselves as workers from the outset. But, in most cases, this is not true even for the struggles of local workers: class consciousness is the result of the struggle on the basis of its **content**, not a precondition!

Of course, in the context of their participation in the *Assembly against Biopower and Confinement*, the members of *Underground Tunnel* do not specify any conditions with regard to the nature of the "needs" of the anti-vaxxer workers in the health sector, blatantly denying that their content is clearly reactionary and declaring their mobilizations as the "most important workers struggle" of 2022, which must be supported "unconditionally", as they wrote in their pamphlets. This imperative to "unconditional support" means in practice that criticism against the irrationalist, individualist, conspiracist, bigoted, nationalist, far-right positions that dominated these mobilizations must be silenced. There is no contradiction: the crypto-nationalist position towards the subjectivity and struggles of immigrants and refugees goes hand in hand with the support for the nationalist and

The outbreak of the pandemic brought even larger parts of the left and the anti-authoritarian milieu into convergence with far-right populists. The hostile elites were now more precisely identified in the World Health Organization, the World Economic Forum, the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, the big-tech and big-pharma multinationals, who devised the plans for the “global coup”, as the basic document of this trend, the *Conspiracist Manifesto*, informs us.¹³

Both left and right populism misinterpret the contradictions and the crisis of capitalist accumulation as an attack on the body of the nation by the parasites of transnational capital. The nation is supposed to recover only if it regains control over its political organs. Both aim to channel popular anger against the bankers, who are portrayed as the embodiment of surplus/“unproductive” capital. Right-wing populism further targets immigrants and refugees as the embodiment of the “surplus proletariat”. Right-wing populists argue that excluding these groups would supposedly allow the welfare state to return to a better pre-crisis era by reducing “unnecessary spending”. At the same time, they promote racist nostalgia for a time when the political body was ethnically and culturally homogeneous. Their exploitation of the competition between local and immigrant proletarians, along with the promise of a better position under the sun for the locals, gives them an advantage over their left-wing populist opponents, as this narrative fits perfectly with the nationalist essence of populism. As left-wing populists realize this shortcoming and their inability to appeal to a potentially wider audience they end up adopting the racist positions of right-wing populists almost entirely.

A typical example is the former fraction of the Left Party (Die Linke) in Germany around Zara Wagenknecht, who as early as 2016 had expressed positions in favor of

reactionary content of the anti-vaxxer mobilizations, in the same way that political backing was generously offered to far-right groups such as the *Interdisciplinary Association for the Defence of Democracy and Bioethics*.

In the context of their extreme opportunism and amorality, *TPTG*, the heart of the reactionary sect *Assembly against Biopower and Confinement*, pretend not to remember that about ten years ago they were claiming the following: “the labour mobilizations of large or small communities of struggle formed on the basis of the satisfaction of immediate interests, needs and desires do not in themselves mean much. [...] The formation of communities of struggle and the circulation of these struggles only acquire their real meaning when they are placed against the background [...] of the aspirations of the political, trade unionist and popular collectives that support them”.

¹² See the text of the P.G. mentioned in note 1 for more information on this matter.

¹³ Of course, it was no coincidence that this book was published in Germany by the far-right publishing house Sodenkamp & Lenz. According to them, the publication was carried out in close cooperation with the French publisher Editions Seuil and the authors made certain additions for the German edition. The German publishers presented the book at the winter conference of the Institut für Staatspolitik, the think tank of AfD (<https://twitter.com/antifouchiste/status/1622568081301155842>). In 2023, the book was translated into English and published by semiotext(e)!

restricting immigration.¹⁴ In a debate with the former AfD leader Frauke Petry, she went even further, criticising him for supposedly being overly favourable towards the entry of “highly qualified people from poorer countries”.¹⁵

Wolfgang Streek, a left sociologist of the same tendency, has argued against the use of taxes to help immigrants and refugees, describing such taxation as “morally coercive expropriation”, and at the same time published a manifesto calling for a “responsible nationalism” against the rise of the “irresponsible nationalism” of the populist far right. Similarly, the French left populist Jean-Luc Mélenchon had referred during his speech in the European Parliament in 2016 to “the guest workers who are stealing the bread from the local workers’ tables”;¹⁶ although in the years that followed he abandoned the anti-immigration line. Left-wing populists adopt the ideology of the supposedly limited resources of the welfare state, and draw on this basis the conclusion that the “limited resources must be distributed to the citizens of the nation”. From this point they proceed to the line of “immigration control”, which ends up in open racism.

2. Nationalism

Populism is by definition nationalist in character, as we have shown earlier.¹⁷ However, nationalism is not specifically reserved for populists or fascists. Since its inception, the basic framework of liberalism has been national. Classical political economy did not simply ask the

¹⁴ At the end of October 2023, Zara Wagenknecht officially left *Die Linke* and announced the creation of a new populist party which, according to her, would seek to attract votes from both the left and the right in the upcoming European elections. Although this party presents itself as social democratic in economic terms, it in fact adopts the ordoliberal framework of the so-called “social market economy”, which aims to strengthen private enterprise through the imposition of a strict regulatory framework by the state. The focus of its critique on “finance capital”, immigration and climate change underlines its clearly right-wing character.

¹⁵ Quinn Slobodian και William Callison, Pop-Up Populism: The Failure of Left-Wing Nationalism in Germany, *Dissent*, Summer 2019, <https://www.dissentmagazine.org/article/pop-up-populism-the-failure-of-left-wing-nationalism-in-germany/>

¹⁶ Rachid Laïreche, Campagne Immigration: Mélenchon en mots troubles, *Liberation*, 8/9/2016, https://www.liberation.fr/france/2016/09/08/immigration-melenchon-en-mots-troubles_1490156/

¹⁷ We showed in footnote 11 that groupings belonging to the new reactionary current, which do not openly express nationalist rhetoric, are however backing its ethno-populist agenda and practices. We have already mentioned the *Assembly Against Biopower and Confinement*, but we must also mention *Contra Dystopia*. Beyond the stated positions and the history of its members that comrade P. Georgiadis has highlighted (*op.cit.*), this group has also published on its website a text by Fotis Terzakis. This text unleashes strong criticism against “rightsists” for providing support to “Turkish plans for Thrace” and explicitly takes a position in favor of imperialist Russia in the war that has erupted in Ukraine, where a “NATO invasion” has occurred (sic). Fotis Terzakis, “The Deadly Consents,” July 10, 2023, available at: https://contradystopia.blogspot.com/2023/07/blog-post_25.html [in Greek].

question of how individuals acquire wealth, but instead investigated the conditions and requirements for the creation of the wealth of nations (Adam Smith). Individuals and the pursuit of their self-interest are indeed seen as the driving force behind economic development, but this does not mean that the individual is an end in itself. This is because it is necessary to suppress workers' individualism when it comes into conflict with the discipline of capitalist production and the interests of the nation as a whole, i.e. total national capital. Moreover, nationalism was the basic political formula through which the social hegemony of the capitalist class was achieved. It was necessary to drive the masses away from the class movement through the overarching myth of the nation. On the supranational level, liberalism in 19th century Britain was tied to imperialism, i.e. the expansion of the power of its national capital abroad. John Stuart Mill's remark that the Second Opium War supported the freedom of trade is telling.

More specifically, as regards neoliberalism, contrary to what many left-wing nationalists claim, it is not in any way synonymous with support for participation in transnational organisations such as the European Union, which limit national sovereignty for the sake of imposing "free competition" and the free movement of capital.¹⁸ On the contrary, so-called Eurosceptic neoliberals (including the founding members of the German far-right AfD party, the far-right Austrian Freedom Party, the British UKIP and the Eurosceptic faction of the British Conservatives) see EU membership as carrying the risks of imposing restrictions on property rights through European environmental legislation; of reinforcing protectionist tendencies, as in the case of the *Common Agricultural Policy*; or even bolstering redistributive social democratic policies, which they see as heralded by references to "social convergence/unification" and the increase of the resources of EU's structural and regional funds.

For them, the sovereign national state is much more capable of imposing neoliberal policies, whereas the European project is inherently bureaucratic, statist and anti-liberal. The first neoliberal Eurosceptic think tank founded in 1989, called the Bruges Group, stated in its purposes and aims that "the freedom and safety of Europe relies upon strong –but not necessarily big– government for our defense and security, and this strength is, in our view, best preserved by the independent nation state and by the promotion of a healthy, natural patriotism that the citizen feels toward the state".¹⁹ It is precisely on this basis that neoliberal Eurosceptics have allied themselves with far-right racists and populists. The products of this alliance were the far-right populist-neoliberal parties mentioned above, which were

¹⁸ Although participation in transnational organisations may formally limit national sovereignty because of the obligation to respect, for example, specific treaties and laws, in practice it strengthens the capitalist state, both its domination over the working class and the potential for valorisation of national capital.

¹⁹ The Bruges Group, "A Campaign for a Europe of Sovereign States", quoted in Quinn Slobodian and Dieter Plehwe, "Neoliberals against Europe" in the edited volume by William Callison and Zachary Manfredi, *Mutant Neoliberalism*, 2020, Fordham.

particularly strengthened after the financial crisis of 2008.²⁰ In Great Britain, neoliberal Euroscepticism dominated the political scene during the previous years, resulting in the country's exit from the EU.

However, it should be stressed that the difference between the nationalism of Europeanist neoliberals and the nationalism of Eurosceptic neoliberals is not important. In the first case, it is considered more beneficial for the total national capital to participate in transnational capitalist formations such as the European Union. In the second case, it is considered more beneficial for national capital to impose protectionist measures or to leave the EU, as in the case of Brexit. In either case, both strive in favour of total national capital.²¹ Indeed, even the aforementioned difference often remains rhetorical, as in the case of the far-right populist party of Meloni's *Brothers of Italy*, which despite initially calling for an exit from the EU has subsequently abandoned this slogan as it would come in conflict with the interests of national capital. What usually remains of the populist version of nationalism when it comes to power is systematic racism against the non-citizen surplus proletarians and, sometimes, their universal exclusion –depending on the conjuncture of the needs of capitalist accumulation, as shown by the mass murder of refugees and migrants with push-backs and push-forwards in the Mediterranean, **jointly** implemented by nation states with Europeanist **and** populist governments in **close cooperation** with the EU's "transnational" immigration control and repression apparatus, such as the Frontex. In Greece, both the Victory and Greek

²⁰ Q. Slobodian and Z. Manfredi, *op. cit.* It is worth noting, among the many interesting facts this article discusses, that Detmar Doering, a member of the historically seminal neoliberal organization Mont Pelerin Society, published an article in 1999 that attempted to resurrect the concept of Social Darwinism, and that a key position of Eurosceptics is the denial of climate change.

²¹ The category of total national capital does not eliminate the fierce competition between its different parts (e.g. firms selling their products on the domestic market versus export-oriented companies and the tourist sector). However, capitalists are simultaneously unified on the basis of the formation of the average rate of profit. As Marx writes in *Capital Vol. Three*: "in each particular sphere of production the individual capitalist, as well as the capitalists as a whole, take direct part in the exploitation of the total working-class by the totality of capital and in the degree of that exploitation, not only out of general class sympathy, but also for direct economic reasons. For, assuming all other conditions — among them the value of the total advanced constant capital — to be given, the average rate of profit depends on the intensity of exploitation of the sum total of labour by the sum total of capital." (*Marx Engels Collected Works*, vol 37, p. 195) Capitalist competition can undermine the general interest of national capital and state policy strives towards its taming. Although this is the goal, it is not guaranteed. The state cannot always play successfully the role of the overseer of the overall process. Ordo-liberals attach great importance to the regulatory framework and the supposed "depoliticisation" of the state, because they believe that this will stop unnecessary conflicts between *particular* capitals and will prevent the imposition of the interests of a particular fraction of capital at the expense of the general interest, as we have defined it.

Solution far right parties are blatantly in favor of Greece remaining in the EU, as was Golden Dawn in the past.²²

This can of course change depending on the situation regarding imperialist antagonisms and the balance of power between nation-states. National wars usually require the takeover of power by populist-nationalist forces while states such as the US and Britain have the power to unilaterally abandon transnational alliances and treaties. In any case, the neoliberal logic of liberalizing competition is also unleashing centrifugal tendencies both within transnational formations such as the EU and within nation-states (such as in the case of Spain with the attempted secession of Catalunya).

We have focused on the far-right/Europeanist dialectic to show that despite the outcry of the former against the “globalists”, accusations of “high treason” by politicians and claims of the imposition of a “dictatorship in the name of the virus”²³ when the far-right comes to power, the interests of capital prevail. Thus, Eurosceptics are transformed into Europeanists who attempt to gain control of the European institutions and to formulate an environment of economic neoliberalism, combined with a return to conservative family values and a “European identity” that is defined against the supposed “Islamic threat” or, in a more extreme scenario, based on “white supremacy”.

We believe that the emergence of the new post-fascist current in Greece is part of the broader dynamic of the rise of a far-right form of neoliberalism as the dominant political line within the European Union. Its goal is to bind the local working class to the interests of the corresponding national capital (see, for example, the support of the British working class for Brexit).

3. Elitism

In the capitalist crisis, all collective interpretations of the world have collapsed. The petty bourgeois are running around like headless chickens. They put on anti-flu masks to express their rotten souls and wait for their state to tell them what to say and what to do. [...]

Nothing makes sense. Commodity discipline and brute state violence are the only things holding Greek society together.

Autonome Antifa, 17 March 2020

[Greek left sect]

²² P. Georgiadis, *op.cit.*

²³ Meloni had stated that the Conte government was committing “high treason” for accepting the activation of the ESM mechanism in April 2020 to obtain a €35 billion loan, while Matteo Salvini had spoken of imposing a “dictatorship in the name of the virus”. “Mes, Meloni e Salvini all’attacco: ‘Alto tradimento’, “dittatura in nome del virus”, *Liberio Quotidiano*, 10 April 2020.

A WEF clerk plays the role of an all-powerful dictator and 9 million zombies watch him impassively as he reduces them to ashes. Four nightmarish years and not even a rudimentary reaction from the majoritarian rabble on death row. Four years of systematic and orchestrated annihilation and still we hear clapping from the balconies. They sacrificed their very existence for a piece of bread. For a welfare check. For a market-pass. [...] Everyone gets what they deserve in the end.

The Slaves [Οι Δούλοι] , “Anarchocapitalist” (=alt-right) facebook page, 29 July 2022

So they [...] continue to spout [...] the “non-existence of the movement” supposedly due to some previous “defeat”, and not to the fact that millions of disciplined masses ultimately **choose** [!!!] to sit at home, work, shop and simply survive. [Emphasis in the original, exclamation marks ours].

Assembly against Biopower and Confinement, 23 January 2021

Slightly paraphrasing something we wrote two years ago in the text “The Reality of Denial and the Denial of Reality”,²⁴ it is clear that when the representatives and supporters of the post-fascist current accuse those who recognize the reality of the different forms of the capitalist crisis (pandemic, climate catastrophe, etc.) –and openly oppose the state/capitalist management of these crises– as “submissive”, “stay-at-home-ists”, “Mitsotakis lackeys”, “collaborators of the state”, “obedient”, and other similar slanders, they are doing nothing more than expressing an arrogant and elitist position, presenting themselves as the embodiment of the “rebellious Greek subject” or even the “rebellious proletarian subject”. The words used make little difference, since, in the absence of a proletarian revolt, the “movement” they refer to and participate in actually constitutes the rallying of the most reactionary elements in favor of the nation and the individual freedom of **commodity** and **capital**, and against the “foreign elements” that are infecting the individual and national body. At the same time, behind the denunciation of the “submissive populations”, one can easily discern the contempt for the working class and its needs, no matter what pseudonym is used: “petty bourgeois”, “rabble”, “disciplined masses”, “slaves”, or “zombies”.

It may seem contradictory that the dimensions of the theoretical and historical basis of the new far right current include both populism and elitism. However, this contradiction is lessened when we consider that elitism in historical fascism was not directed against every sense of a collective subject, in this case the *People*, but against the masses that were considered to have fallen into decadence. For historical fascism, the masses, that is, the working class, must be nationalized and reunited with their masters, to form the *Volksgemeinschaft* under the iron boot of their charismatic leaders. A superior collectivity is set against the decadent masses. A similar logic applies within the post-fascist current, even

²⁴ Antithesi / Cognord, *op.cit.*

when this superior collectivity participating in the reactionary mobilisations is not referred to as the “Proud People” but pseudonymously as the “working class”, the “working class youth” (let us recall the slogan “Long live the EPAL” reproduced by the group “Autonome Antifa” in favour of the fascist “working class youth” which attacked members of the Communist Party youth in high schools of Thessaloniki back in 2021) and so on and so forth.

4. Individualism

The discourse around “individual self-determination” and, even more so, the discourse around “bodily autonomy” is usually considered to belong to the liberal democratic tradition, or even to express a justified resistance against state intervention in people’s affairs – a form of anti-statism. It seems paradoxical that this discourse was dominant in the reactionary post-fascist bloc, especially during the rise of the movement that denied the pandemic and vaccines. It seems even more paradoxical to the extent that fascism is typically associated with the obliteration of the individual vis-a-vis the state

However, this ostensible contradiction characterizes both historical fascism and contemporary post-fascist tendencies. As Ishay Landa notes, the notion of the unique personality was a hallowed tenet for most fascists (Hitler, Pirandello, etc.) vis-à-vis the abstract individual, a mere number rushing herd-like to the ballots. Thus, liberalism was attacked in the name of *genuine individualism* and democracy was identified with the loss of individuality, becoming one of the “voting cattle”, as Nietzsche contemptuously put it. Those who waved the banner of the individual against the masses thus found their way almost naturally into the fascist camp.²⁵ Nazi ideologues such as Alfred Baeumler and Martin Heidegger criticized parliamentary democracy as an expression of pseudo-individualism, where the personality abandons all self-assertion and resolve. Against the false community which is merely an aggregation of mere numbers –a mass, as they pejoratively called it– they opposed the Volksgemeinschaft as a meaningful, genuine bond between real individuals. “‘We!’—so speaks some anonymous crowd as well. ‘We!’ –so too shouts some rebelling mass, so too boasts the bowling club. ‘We!’ –so too conspires a gang of bandits [...] The ‘we,’ [...] even in the sense of the genuine community, does not simply and unconditionally take precedence [...] There are things that are essential and decisive for a community, and precisely these things arise not in the community, but in the self-controlled force and solitude of an individual”.²⁶

In a similar way, although lacking such a sophisticated philosophical justification, the post-fascist current combines the extreme individualism of libertarians –who prioritize the security and freedom of private property and economic activity– with a call for a strong state to guard both private property in particular and the borders and interests of national capital,

²⁵ Ishay Landa, *The Apprentice’s Sorcerer. Liberal Tradition and Fascism*, Brill, 2009, p. 262.

²⁶ M. Heidegger, *Gesamtausgabe. Band 38. Logik als die Frage nach dem Wesen der Sprache*, Klostermann, 1998 αναφέρεται στο Ishay Landa, ό.π.

i.e. national/collective capitalist property, in general. The demand for “bodily autonomy” they express should therefore be understood as a demand for the defense of private property. It is precisely in this context that the feminist slogan “my body my choice” was distorted and appropriated, even in relation to the use of masks or the normal operation of capitalist enterprises during the period of hundreds of thousands of deaths in the U.S. due to the pandemic (“my body, my choice to work”). It has rightly been noted that this protest is identical in content to the “right to work” claim made by the strike-breakers, who place their self-interest above any notion of workers’ solidarity. Beyond the pandemic context, similar slogans were also appropriated by the racist far right in the USA against immigration (“my borders my choice” and “no means no”). This was unfortunately possible because individual rights are inherently situated within the horizon of capitalist atomization and separation. Since they do not go beyond this horizon they can take on different meanings depending on the objectives of those invoking them. Obviously, the radical struggle of the feminist movement against the appropriation of women’s bodies by men and the state –even if the assertion of women’s control over their bodies does not conclusively solve the problem of the relations of male and capitalist domination– has nothing in common with the post-fascist mobilizations, which are characterized by a complete lack of social and class solidarity. For them, only the strong, healthy, and able-bodied are deemed worthy of life.

It should be noted here that from another point of view the constituent elements of post-fascism are not fundamentally different from those that define neoliberalism, but rather represent their radicalization. Aside from the obvious example of Pinochet’s Chile, Thatcherism in the UK was a right-wing ideology and practice that combined anti-statist discourse –through welfare cuts, the erosion of labour legislation and the deregulation of labour relations– with the tightening of criminal law and policing, an ideological appeal to “law and order” as the fundamental principles of social organisation and the use of racial and social racism against the surplus proletariat.

From the 1990s onwards, with the rise of social democratic governments to power, a social-liberal version of neoliberalism emerged, which was presented as more progressive due to its broader tolerance of minority practices and cultures and the granting of rights to minorities, without negating any of the other elements we have described (the so called “Third Way”). In this way, the political conflict between the right and the left has been almost entirely shifted to the cultural sphere, focusing on issues of diversity recognition and the rights of minorities and women, initiating the period of the so-called “culture wars”. Even when the neoliberal state shows greater tolerance towards minority identities and practices, this applies only to the part of the population integrated into capitalist production and consumption. It remains harshly disciplinary towards the surplus proletariat, particularly refugees/immigrants, especially regarding their access to welfare services such as health and education. On an ideological level, post-fascism replaces the “equal opportunities” and “social mobility” ideology of the “Third Way” neoliberalism with nationalism, racism, the invocation of family and traditional values and competition.

Foucault, neoliberalism and ...post-fascism

The fact that “anti-authoritarians” who invoke Foucault coexisted, collaborated, and were eventually assimilated into the post-fascist current should not surprise us, given the neoliberal character of post-fascism. We clarify our position immediately: first of all, for Foucault, neoliberalism is the: “...theme-program of a society in which there is an optimization of systems of difference... in which minority individuals and practices are tolerated, in which action is brought to bear on the rules of the game rather than on the players, and finally in which there is an environmental type of intervention instead of the internal subjugation of individuals”.²⁷ This program was set against the hitherto existing relationship between state and population which, according to Foucault, operated essentially in the form of a security pact: “as the state guarantees ‘security’, it also intervenes whenever the ‘weft of daily life [trame de la vie quotidienne]’ is perforated by unforeseeable events, which amounts to an ‘omnipresent solicitude’”.²⁸ The power of this “insurance society” is more skillful and refined than that of totalitarian states, and for this reason, according to Foucault, we must set aside the old struggles against nationalism and fascism and instead take as a starting point “the anxious relationship people have with these mechanisms of security’, that is with the ‘social security mechanisms, which surveil people day in and day out’”.²⁹

This is precisely the basis on which Foucault espouses the “negative tax on income”, i.e. the “minimum guaranteed income” and, more generally, neoliberalism per se. As he writes, in this way population will be assisted: “*in a very liberal and much less bureaucratic and disciplinary way than it is by a system focused on full employment which employs mechanisms like those of social security*”.³⁰ However, he did not stop there. As he noted in a panel discussion at the University of Paris 8 on 23 March 1979: under the conditions of the oil crisis of the 1970s “the state [...] can no longer be a welfare state”.³¹ In a 1983 interview with Robert Bono, the general secretary of the CFDT union federation (which later supported the neoliberal measures), he stated that the existing social guarantees are no longer viable for two reasons: first, because they have reached the economic limits set by the “rationality of modern societies”; second and most importantly, because this system is obsolete due, on the one hand, to its increasing “rigidity” and, on the other, to the “growth in dependence” of the population.³² Certainly, he also pointed out that he was not in favor of a wild liberalism

²⁷ M. Foucault, *The birth of biopolitics*, Palgrave Macmillan, 2008, p. 259-60.

²⁸ M. Foucault, *Dits et écrits III*, Paris: Gallimard, 2001, p. 385. Quoted in J. Rehmann, *Deconstructing Postmodernist Nietzscheanism*, Brill, 2022, p. 272.

²⁹ M. Foucault, *op.cit.*

³⁰ M. Foucault, *The birth of biopolitics*, Palgrave Macmillan, 2008, p. 206.

³¹ M. Foucault, «Le nouvel ordre intérieur», panel discussion in University of Paris-8, available online at: <http://www.archives-video.univ-paris8.fr/video.php?recordID=111> [accessed September 2023].

³² M. Foucault, «Social Security», in M. Foucault, *Politics, Philosophy. Interviews and other Writings 1977–1984*, 1988, p. 159-177.

providing coverage only for those with means and leaving the rest completely unprotected, but suggested an association of the concept of security with “more diverse and more flexible relations with oneself and with one’s environment” so that the individual will no longer be a subject in the sense of subjection, through the transformation of the “field of social institutions into a vast experimental field”. Of course, the class content of these neoliberal “experiments” quickly became apparent.

One could defend Foucault by arguing that the above positions are simply the product of a misjudgment of the content of neoliberal measures, which despite their tolerance of “minority practices” have continued to be strictly disciplinary towards surplus proletarians. However, this defense is nullified by Foucault’s critique of the collective right to health and well-being, which had also been attacked by mainstream neoliberal ideologues such as Hayek as “totalitarian in the fullest sense of the word”.³³ Foucault argues in the same interview with Bono that it is not possible “to lay down objectively a theoretical, practical threshold, valid for all, on the basis of which it might be said that health needs are entirely and definitively satisfied”. As he remarked, “good health does not derive from a ‘right’ [...] the question [...] whether society must try to satisfy by collective means individuals’ need for health [...] cannot be answered positively”, because “it is impossible to allow expenditure on health to increase at the rate seen in recent years”. In his view, “we will have to decide what illness, what type of suffering, will no longer receive coverage – a point at which, in certain cases, life itself will be at risk”, given the fact that regarding health issues “one is entering an order of values that gives rise to an absolute, infinite demand. The problem raised is, therefore, that of the relationship between an infinite demand and a finite system”.³⁴

At a certain point, when Bono senses the Social Darwinist implications of this approach to the triage of diseases and patients, he asks whether this means we are “go[ing] back on the very thing against which social security has struggled, namely a certain way of eliminating the most biologically weak individuals? Are we to allow the victory of the slogan ‘We must choose – let us choose the strongest?’” Foucault’s response is as follows: “Such choices are being made all the time, even though it is not being admitted. They are made in the logic of a certain rationality and are then justified in various ways”.³⁵ When he gets specific, the social-Darwinistic logic of his neoliberal conception becomes even more abhorrent: “Perhaps we are in a period when it is becoming possible to take the bull by the horns and move towards less coverage for the risks attached to alcoholism”.³⁶

³³ Quoted in J. Rehmman, *op.cit.*

³⁴ M. Foucault, «Social Security», *op.cit.*, p. 170-173.

³⁵ *Op.cit.*, p. 172.

³⁶ *Op.cit.*, p 175. Foucault also had a remarkably cynical view on epidemics, including the one that killed him. In 1981, when his friend, the novelist Edmund White, asked him what his view of AIDS was, he replied as follows: “This is some new piece of American Puritanism. You’ve dreamed up a disease that punishes only gays and blacks? Why don’t you throw in child molesters too?” Quoted in Jon Wiener,

What is important to note here is that Foucault's shift towards outright support for neoliberal cuts, the neoliberal ideology of economic limits on the provision of health services, and ultimately **Social Darwinism**, stems from the side of the post-'68 movement that focused on critiquing hierarchical power and authoritarianism, and prioritized freedom over security. As he pondered in the same interview, "Ought we not rather to be trying to think out a whole system of social coverage [the neoliberal one] that takes into account this demand for autonomy, so that these effects of dependence [from the welfare state] will disappear almost entirely?" Clearly, this dichotomy between freedom and security, on which contemporary Social Darwinists, such as the *Assembly Against Biopower and Confinement*, base all their politics, is an ideological expression of capitalist social separation, particularly in its neoliberal form.

The bourgeois concept of security, as is well known, refers to safeguarding the property of the **egoistic individual** and protecting him/her from the intrusions of competitors. This concept pertains to the defense of capitalist private interests and is, by definition, the antithesis of class solidarity, which can be expressed, for example, through precautionary measures during a pandemic or by caring for people in poor health. The fact that some neophyte Foucauldians equate such expressions of class solidarity with security simply confirms their eagerness to demonstrate, **secure**, and, above all, justify their **private property over their egoistic individuality**. Furthermore, the bourgeois concept of security is not the same as social security (pensions, unemployment and disability benefits, sick leave payments, health care, etc.), which Foucault and his neophyte followers criticize. Social security came into existence as a result of proletarian struggles and concerns the **collective** satisfaction of some basic needs (though proletarians do not overcome the reified condition of the **commodity** labour power). It was granted in response to the threat of revolution in order to maintain social peace.

Social security is not identical to what Foucault termed biopolitics, as functionalist ideologies suggest, i.e., the adaptation of the accumulation of people to the accumulation of capital through demographic policy, population control, public health, and so on, which is, by definition, exercised by the **state** (even if Foucault's definition of power denies this), though this remains its dominant aspect. The demands of capitalists constantly clash with the demands of the working class in the realm of social security (i.e., the **social wage**), both in terms of quantity (economic) and quality (the form and content of benefits, services, and the very concepts of health and life). The reproduction of capitalist social relations, including labor power, is a process of class struggle, although, of course, capital remains dominant until social revolution and the communist transformation of social relations.

The fact that the concept of "public health" is an abstraction that conceals the class division of society and the biopolitical nature of the welfare state is used by the neophyte followers of Foucault to undermine the very demand for the "health and well-being of the

working class”. They attack the very concepts of class and social solidarity, mocking them as “remote philanthropies” and reducing them to “not breathing in someone’s face”. Care for those around us is equated with “compliance with state mandates” justifying extreme partisanship and individualism during the pandemic, while criticism of capitalist science has been distorted and weaponized to justify denying the seriousness of the pandemic and the need for collective protective measures in workplaces and among those in the antagonistic movement itself.³⁷ In this way, we are almost effortlessly led to the next fundamental dimension of the post-fascist current: Social Darwinism.

5. Social Darwinism / Ideology of Death

Social Darwinism is an ideology that emerged in the late 19th century, distorting Darwin’s theory of natural selection, which posits that organisms better adapted to their environment survive (“survival of the fittest”). Social Darwinism transfers this concept from the realm of biology to society and the economy. Social Darwinists believe that the wealth and power of the most powerful should increase, while the wealth and power of the least powerful should diminish. A typical example of this is the position expressed in an 1893 “natural healing” magazine in Germany, which claimed that epidemics are a “natural phenomenon” serving the useful function of natural selection by eliminating “cowards, weaklings, or libertines from the better classes” and in the rest of the population kills only “people who already had death sitting at their shoulder, or who faced unavoidable, incurable, lingering poverty and sickness, and among whom many must certainly regard death as a release from evil”.³⁸

Social Darwinism found supporters both among liberal advocates of laissez-faire capitalism, who saw it as a justification for the idea that competition between individuals and firms is the optimal way to allocate resources, and among racists and nationalists, who focused on preserving the purity of the “superior and stronger race”, which they believed was at risk of degradation and contamination through racial intermarriage, particularly with Jews. The development of this second type of Social Darwinism in Germany can be explained by the fact that biological and medical research in Germany was conducted within university institutions under state sponsorship and control, unlike in Great Britain, where prominent scientists such as Darwin, Wallace, and Spencer, among others, carried out their research privately and independently of university institutions. This arrangement in Germany directly linked scientific production to questions of national politics and the corresponding nationalist ideology. As Paul Weindling writes in his classic book on health and race in Germany: “By the 1890s Darwinism reflected the shift away from individualism to corporate ideologies, emphasizing organic unity as opposed to class struggle and the fitness of national populations.

³⁷ The most outrageous example of this logic is found in the fourth appendix of issue 19-20 of *TPTG* magazine.

³⁸ Professor Dr G. Jäger, *Monatsblatt*, Máioç 1893, quoted in Richard J. Evans, *Death in Hamburg*, Penguin, 2005, p. 500.

There were attempts to make Darwinism the basis of national politics [...] There was growing concern in the state over the degeneration of the population as a result of industrialization [...] The social basis of German biology lay in the universities and among families anxious to gain academic status; its ideological basis lay in a distinctive organicist tradition and the agitation for national unification [...] German Darwinists developed historicist and organicist themes, employing the Goethean term “morphology” and the Pietist concept of Organismus, and priding themselves on a radical scientific tradition stretching back to Paracelsus as a popular healer and to the Reformation tradition of nature mysticism”.³⁹

In the early 20th century, Social Darwinism and antisemitism merged into the pseudo-scientific disciplines of eugenics and racial hygiene. Proponents of this movement condemned the increasing industrialization and urbanization of the modern world as pathological developments. They attacked medical progress and conventional medicine, viewing them as part of this modern, artificial world. Conventional medicine, they argued, contradicted the Darwinian notion of “natural selection”, which they believed was reflected in declining birth rates, fewer marriages, an increase in caesarean births, and the supposed lack of military fitness among young people. One can recognize here the identification with contemporary forms of reactionary “criticism” of science and technology, whether from the left or the right. Nature is pitted against science and technology, while this “criticism” paradoxically appropriates scientific findings in a distorted way.

In any case, the key point for interpreting and critiquing Social Darwinism is its appeal to nature, natural hierarchy, and the “natural state of things”, which it viewed as being threatened by harmful foreign elements. Social Darwinism was closely linked to the German anti-vaccination movement. Proto-fascist populists in Germany, such as members of the Antisemitic People’s Party (founded in 1890), and later the Nazis, were strongly opposed to compulsory vaccination. They believed it weakened the body’s natural defenses, which, in their view, were essential for distinguishing the strong from the weak through natural selection. Additionally, they saw the introduction of “foreign substances” into the body as contaminating “pure blood”, arguing that by equalizing natural defense mechanisms, the superiority of the “Aryan race” was also undermined.⁴⁰ The anti-vaccinationists primarily fought against (real or imagined) diseases and suffering caused by “civilization” and thus advocated the return to nature. Naturopathic “medicine” was promoted as a civilization-free

³⁹ Paul Weindling, *Health, Race and German Politics between National Unification and Nazism 1870-1945*, 1989, p. 27-28.

⁴⁰ J. Nebe, E. Schwanke and D. Groß, “The Influence of Epidemics on the Concept of the Bogeyman: Images, Ideological Origins, and Interdependencies of the Anti-Vaccination Movement; The Example of the Political Agitator Paul Arthur Förster (1844-1925)”, *Historical Social Research*, Supplement, 33, 2021, p.100-127. We should add here that when the Nazis came to power, they did not abolish compulsory vaccination, because of the opposition of high-ranking military officers who considered that such a move would damage the efficiency of the army, since recruits were compulsorily vaccinated. However, they were much more flexible in its implementation.

alternative to conventional medicine, and vegetarian and abstinent lifestyles were endorsed as an expression of a consistent “life reformist stance” However, the anti-vaccination movement and the “Lebensreform [life-reform]”⁴¹ movement were both rooted in a negative view of conventional scientific medicine, which was regarded as being “Jewish-influenced”. This was the basis for the later call for the “Germanization of medicine”.

About a century later, the outbreak of the COVID pandemic brought to the surface a similar ideological mixture of Social Darwinism within the reactionary movement of pandemic and vaccine denial that emerged. As we wrote two years ago, the post-fascist far-right supported “the full reopening of the economy and restarting the productive process at all costs” while eagerly adopting “narratives of herd immunity”. Alongside them were the libertarians “whose obsessive concern is precisely the unconditional defense of private property and the individual against any notion of collective interest and/or common good” as well as a “motley crew of Q-Anon freaks, mystic homeopaths or spiritually sensitive anti-rationalists, who found in the anti-lockdown, anti-mask and anti-vaccine mobilisations an opportunity to spread their new age superstitions, to sell alternative ‘healing’ recipes and to promote astrological mumbo-jumbo”.⁴²

We discerned that the convergence of the above categories of misanthropes is not accidental, though we did not analyze the precise nature of the thread that connects them within the same post-fascist current, which we attempt to do here. In that text, we argued for distinguishing the segment of the pandemic denial movement that came from the left and the anti-authoritarian milieu, and cautioned against equating it with the far-right, despite their shared positions. We were wrong, as has become evident from the public statements of a significant portion of this crowd over the past two years, their open or covert collaboration with far-right groups and figures, and their presence at activist venues. We will simply quote some passages that reveal the extent to which Social Darwinism has taken hold within these circles:

⁴¹ The “life reform” movement aimed at creating a “healthy society” in response to the decline supposedly caused by industrial development and was closely associated with various forms of “alternative medicine.” This “recovery” had both physical and cultural dimensions. Although the “life reform” movement was initially not aligned with any particular political party or affiliation, over time it adopted a “völkisch-national” stance. As Nebe et al. note: “The high affinity of the ‘life reform’ and anti-vaccination movements for racial hygiene and eugenics in the German Reich can be explained less by the political orientation of its main actors [...] and more by the ideological similarities of these concepts. Both aimed at a physical and cultural ‘recovery’ of humanity. The ‘reform of life’, therefore, meant ‘self-reform’ as a first step. In a second step, this model was to serve as the basis for change at the social level: a reform of the ‘Volkskörper’. German racial hygiene, therefore, followed the model of ‘life reform’ in its developmental phases” (*op.cit.*, p. 115). Actually, some of the earlier proponents and representatives of the “life reform” movement were pacifists or even anarchists. However, this turned out to be insignificant.

⁴² Antithesi / cognord, *op.cit.*

“The average age of terminal cases –even with the colossal overestimation– was around 78 years, while the life expectancy in our societies is 80 years. In other words, one could say that those who died were more or less those who would have been expected to die from other causes. These figures have not been challenged or revised at any point up to now. By all accounts, it was a moderately severe flu, and its severity sharply declined as the virus spread and mutated (which is evident today). So, why all this panic?”⁴³

“The side effects [of the vaccines] affect young people who would not be at significant risk from the coronavirus, and whose loss in life expectancy is overwhelmingly greater than that caused by the death of elderly people nearing the end of their life expectancy”.⁴⁴

“So, at the same time, the prestigious Johns Hopkins (one of the Meccas for vaccine worshippers around the world) comes forward and confirms what, for us non-experts, is simple common sense: that natural immunity is stronger than artificial immunity”.⁴⁵

“And even if we catch the virus, we should use it, like any other disease, as a means to demand e.g. holidays, less work, higher wages, higher health spending, we should not deal with it in a phobic and individualistic way; we should confront it as a collective weapon”.⁴⁶

“Generally, every 30 or 40 years, a new strain of a respiratory infection will emerge that, for a short period, will kill a lot of people until it follows the usual course of rapidly mutating respiratory infections and becomes relatively milder [...] There’s not much to do: you bolster hospitals, subsidize research into treatment protocols and drugs, vulnerable people take precautions, hypochondriacs stay at home, the quarantiniere complain ‘there is no state’, and the rest of us –the vast majority of humanity– get on with our lives”.⁴⁷

“The freedom we are talking about is the freedom of the whole. If one recognizes freedom (both individual and collective) as the highest good, rather than forcing everyone to be a centenarian, it follows that it is in the interest of the WHOLE to not impose compulsory measures, even if it means that a small minority of elderly people may die a year or two earlier than expected. This small minority must be sacrificed FOR THE GOOD OF THE WHOLE, to prevent a slide into dystopia. [...] For those of us who regard freedom, pleasure, and quality of life as supreme goods, the interest of the whole is that there should be the greatest possible freedom of movement and choice for each and every individual, even if it means that some

⁴³ F. Terzakis, “Confusion will be my epitaph”, *Neon Planodion* [Νέον Πλανόδιον], 2 October 2022 Available online: <https://dimobio.gr/?p=1581> [last accessed in September 2023]

⁴⁴ F. Terzakis, “Whom the gods would destroy, they first make mad” [Μωραίνει Κύριος ον βούλεται απωλέσαι], *ERT OPEN*, 9 July 2021. Reproduced in the web page of Contra Dystopia https://contradystopia.blogspot.com/2021/07/blog-post_5.html.

⁴⁵ Excerpt from a text of the *Assembly against Biopower and Confinement*. Natural immunity, of course, cannot be developed by immunocompromised patients...

⁴⁶ Excerpt from a text of the *Assembly against Biopower and Confinement*. This quote reveals a complete lack of empathy for the millions of proletarians who have fallen ill and died in hospitals. Their justified fear is presented as weakness and individualism!

⁴⁷ Diaries of Infection, “Scattered thoughts during the break for commercials” [Σκόρπιες σκέψεις στο διάλειμμα για διαφημίσεις] <https://shorturl.at/bkrJ9>

elderly people may die two or three years earlier than expected (and, in my view, even if it means that nine-tenths of the population may have to die)".⁴⁸

"The West ended up embracing a twilight existence and indefinitely prolonging the states of the living dead –patients for life, immunosuppressed individuals in remission from cancer and awaiting the next onset, comatose patients in vegetative states, interminable agonies– for the greater happiness of the medical profession, which expands its sovereign power all the more".⁴⁹

As can be seen from the above passages, the antithesis between individual freedom and what they call security is constantly recurring in the discourse of the left wing of the post-fascist current, reaching the point of idealizing death. In the context of this **ideology of death**, we have even seen the construction of martyrs heroized for their individual decision not to be vaccinated.

One of the most vulgar versions of this ideology of death is found in the positions expressed in the last issue of the magazine *TPTG*. We copy an indicative passage: "Another dimension of this irrationalism, which took the form of the rationality of the control of nature, was the attempt to deny the reality of death, something that Ivan Illich had already discussed in the 1970s when he spoke about the medicalization of society. The denial of the reality [of death], however, worsened to such an extent during the pandemic that even the death of very old people with underlying diseases –**something that had not been of particular concern to anyone until recently**– became a scandal, a scandal that required measures that resulted in even greater losses!" [our emphasis]⁵⁰

To make the shame of these positions even more shameful we will copy a longer passage from the book by Illich that they quote: "Medicalization constitutes a prolific bureaucratic program based on the denial of each man's need to deal with pain, sickness, and death. The modern medical enterprise represents an endeavor to do for people what their genetic and cultural heritage formerly equipped them to do for themselves. Medical

⁴⁸ Comment by D.M. in the discussion on our text "The irrational salto mortale of the pandemic deniers and why we should not tolerate it" (<https://antithesi.gr/?p=1107>) in Athens Indymedia (<https://athens.indymedia.org/post/1625304/>). The Administration Team of Athens Indymedia systematically allows the posting of such misanthropic, Socially Darwinist, far right positions.

⁴⁹ Anonymous, *Conspiracist Manifesto*, semiotext(e), 2023.

⁵⁰ "'Health' is the war waged by the state", *TPTG* vol. 19-20, p. 161. A few paragraphs later, they once again slander those of us who criticize the Social Darwinism that characterizes the entire post-fascist current by falsely accusing us of supporting the state's management of the pandemic. This accusation distorts our actual position, which is that vaccination is an obvious act of class solidarity and that people from the antagonistic movement should take protective measures in their activities –just as the vast majority did, based on a culture of mutual care and class solidarity. By reproducing all the lies and inaccuracies of pseudo-scientific denialism that have been thoroughly debunked –such as the alleged increase in deaths due to side effects from vaccines that were supposedly completely ineffective (!)– they are essentially claiming that there is no reason to take any health measures during a pandemic, such as Covid. This is a classic trope of all pandemic deniers.

civilization is planned and organized to kill pain, to eliminate sickness, and to abolish the need for an art of suffering and of dying. This progressive flattening out of personal, virtuous performance constitutes a new goal which has never before been a guideline for social life. Suffering, healing, and dying, which are essentially intransitive activities that culture taught each man, are now claimed by technocracy as new areas of policy-making and are treated as malfunctions from which populations ought to be institutionally relieved. The goals of metropolitan medical civilization are thus in opposition to every single cultural health program they encounter in the process of progressive colonization”.⁵¹ Although they falsely claim that the health measures caused greater losses, one thing is clear: for TPTG and their ilk, **the death of elderly people with underlying conditions is seen as a socially unimportant event**. On the contrary, as illustrated by the quote from Illich they cite in support of their views, humans must accept pain, illness, and death, as their “genetic and cultural heritage” has, after all, supposedly taught them...⁵²

It is worth summarizing here the excellent critique offered by Marcuse in his work *Eros and Civilization* against the ideology of death and its advocates, whether they are Christians, like Illich, or (post)fascists. According to Marcuse, the argument that death is an undeniable fact and possibly an ultimate necessity does not mean that we should accept it. On the contrary, human energy should be channelled into confronting it. Those who die when their deaths could have been avoided, in the midst of suffering, are the great indictment of civilization and highlight the unredeemable guilt of humanity. Social institutions and values serve to mitigate the collective guilt associated with these deaths. In this context, theology and philosophy exalt death as an existential category, perverting a biological fact into an ontological essence. In capitalist repressive civilization, death itself becomes an instrument of repression. Whether death is glorified or accepted as fate, the way societies teach people to consent to death introduces into life itself an element of surrender and submission. Thus, according to Marcuse, the pursuit of utopia is undermined.⁵³

In his text *The Ideology of Death*, where he discusses the issue more thoroughly, Marcuse notes: “man is free only if he has conquered his death; if he is able to determine his dying as the self-chosen end of his living; if his death is internally and externally linked with

⁵¹ Ivan Illich, *Limits to Medicine*, Penguin, 1990, p. 137-138.

⁵² A few pages further back, Ivan Illich becomes even more explicit: «[Professionally organized medicine] has thereby undermined the ability of individuals [...] to accept inevitable and often irremediable pain and –impairment, decline, and death.». Ivan Illich, *op.cit.*, p. 133. The expression of disagreement with this position on p. 35 of TPTG’s treatise is simply an attempt to mislead the reader. What they write about the pandemic highlights that they too deny “completely the positive aspects of modern medicine” and reject “any liberating use of modern technology”. Unsurprisingly, they have nothing to say against the **ideology and affirmation of death** that characterizes Illich, since they themselves are deeply immersed in it. At this point, we take the opportunity to offer our self-criticism for having expressed a positive assessment of Illich in the text we co-authored with Cognord, *op. cit.*, because we had not sufficiently studied his work.

⁵³ H. Marcuse, *Eros and Civilization*, Beacon Press, p. 235-237.

his life in the medium of freedom. As long as this is not the case, death remains mere nature, an unconquered limit to all life which is more than mere organic life, mere animal life. The poet may pray: *O Herr, gib jedem seinen eignen Tod*. The prayer is meaningless as long as man's life is not his own but a chain of pre-established and socially required performances at work and at leisure. Under these circumstances, the exhortation to make death "one's own" is hardly more than a premature reconciliation with unmastered natural forces. A brute biological fact, permeated with pain, horror, and despair, is transformed into an existential privilege. From the beginning to the end, philosophy has exhibited this strange masochism—and sadism, for the exaltation of one's own death involved the exaltation of the death of others".⁵⁴

6. Irrationalism (appeal to the "natural order of things", conspiracism)

In order to define what *irrationalism* means, we must first define what a **truly** rational theory of society is. In this regard, we will once again rely on Marcuse, who has addressed this issue with exceptional insight and depth in his text "The struggle against liberalism in the totalitarian view of the state".⁵⁵ According to Marcuse's view, a theory is judged to be truly rational when the practice that results from it is subject to the idea of autonomous reason, i.e. the human capacity to understand the true, the good and the right through thought. Every action, every goal and social organization as a whole must have rational justification. An event or an end is not accepted merely by its mere existence. They are accepted only when knowledge freely determines that they are in accord with reason. Therefore, the (truly) rational theory of society is essentially **critical**, subjecting society to the idea of theoretical and practical, positive and negative critique.

Critique has two guidelines: First, the given situation of human beings as rational organisms, that is, as organisms that have the ability to **freely** determine and shape their existence, guided by the process of **knowledge** and in relation to their worldly happiness. Secondly, the given level of development of productive forces and productive relations that indicates the **potentialities** that can be realized at any given moment of **rational self-organization** of society. The "autonomy of reason" does not mean that reason is posited as the absolute ground or essence of what is. Rather, to the extent that reason is seen as the reason of concrete individuals in their concrete social situation, the "material" conditions of that situation enter into the conditions of the rational practice required. But these conditions must be rationally understood and transformed on the basis of this understanding. In other words, reason is not something that exists above concrete people and operates behind their backs. Concrete people who participate in specific social relationships have to understand

⁵⁴ H. Marcuse, "The Ideology of death" in Douglas Kellner and Clayton Pierce eds., *Philosophy, Psychoanalysis and Emancipation*, Routledge, 2010.

⁵⁵ H. Marcuse, "The struggle against liberalism in the totalitarian view of the state", *Negations*, MayFlyBooks, 2009.

their situation through reason in order to change it in the direction of their happiness. Autonomy of reason is a situation where everything is subject to rational critique, and nothing is accepted simply as it is, on the basis of its supposed sanctity.

Naturalism

On the contrary, the irrational theory of society places the so-called irrational givens (“nature”, “blood and soil”, “nationality”, etc.) above the “autonomy of reason” as its limits **in principle** (and not merely in fact, because at a given moment all the givens are, for example, unknown) and reason is and remains causally, functionally and organically dependent on them. Placing reason and human beings as rational organisms in the service of irrational givens completely annihilates its power and effectiveness, as irrational givens become **normative** and reason is placed under the heteronomy of the irrational. The irrational theory is uncritical, essentially anti-materialist as it necessarily scorns worldly happiness, which cannot be realized except through a rational organization of society. It ethically idealizes **sacrifice**.

As in the case of nationalism and individualism discussed earlier, the contrast between liberalism and fascism on the question of rationality is only apparent. The rationalization that liberalism proclaims and implements in the field of ensuring the greatest possible economic efficiency and stability is **private**. It is supposed that the rationality of liberal practice will be demonstrated in the whole through the optimal allocation of resources by the market, but the whole itself is outside the scope of rationalization. It is supposed that the harmonization of general and private interest will be achieved **by itself** thanks to the uninterrupted course of private practice within the market. It is therefore inherently excluded from critique and no longer involves the rational organization of practice.

This **privatization of reason**, as Marcuse calls it, means that the rational construction of society does not involve the determination of its ends, which in this case is the perpetual accumulation of capital. As in fascist irrationalism, reason is put at the service of an end that functions normatively. It does not rationally determine the “generality” (of capitalist accumulation) in which the “happiness” of the individual is supposed to be realized (which is obviously not the case). The structure of the whole is ultimately left to irrational forces: to an accidental “harmony”/“**natural** equilibrium”.⁵⁶ The veneer of liberal rationality collapses when “general harmony” proves impossible due to the intensification of social conflicts and economic crises in the context of the crisis of reproduction of capital. At this point liberalism

⁵⁶ Lukács characteristically writes: “The capitalist process of rationalisation based on private economic calculation requires that every manifestation of life shall exhibit this very interaction between details which are subject to laws and a totality ruled by chance. It presupposes a society so structured. It produces and reproduces this structure in so far as it takes possession of society”. *History and Class Consciousness*, MIT Press, 1972, p. 102.

abandons rationality and passes too easily to “natural privileges and graces”, thanks to which one succeeds or perishes.

It appears, therefore, that there was probably an unbroken continuity in the evolution of social theory from liberalism to fascism, **which makes the modern hybrid form of post-fascism quite plausible.**

The invocation of the “natural order of things” against the modern “decadent” world and the construction of the figure of the “heroic man” against the subservient mass –to which we referred earlier as constituent elements of the post-fascist current– are part of a fundamentally irrationalist view of society. Against the “subservient” individuals of bourgeois society and their calculating spirit, a new type of human being is exalted. In historical fascism it is the man who is bound to the forces of blood and soil, who enlists mindlessly in obedience to these forces beyond rational ends. The philosophical justification of such a heroic type of man is found in *vitalism*. According to this, living organisms are generally distinguished from non-living ones by an element called “*élan vital*” (“vital force”, “vital spark”, “cosmic energy”, “soul”, “chi”, etc.). This concept of “life” is thus posited as an “original fact” beyond any rational foundation, on the basis of which “history is written”. It, thus, constitutes the basis for an anti-rational and anti-materialist conception of history. In this context, the historical-social process is presented as natural-organic. The real social and economic driving forces of history are replaced by the eternity of nature (blood and soil). Mythical nature is used as an opponent of responsible, autonomous, rational action. Nature as original is at once the healthy, the valuable and the sacred.

Conspiracism

In this section we will based on insights from the excellent critique of conspiracism entitled “Not even wrong”.⁵⁷ As pointed out there, conspiracism is not a view according to which ruling classes plan in secret, make decisions and try to implement them – extremely trivial actions that happen all the time. Conspiracism is an ideological conception of social reality, which has at its core the idea that **large-scale historical events are orchestrated** according to the secret designs of an elite which is aspiring to subjugate humanity. Contrary to what conspiracy theorists imagine, however, every historical event is the locus of conflicting interests of numerous acting subjects, which makes any one-sided explanation and the idea of a single organizing entity utterly untenable.

But what constitutes the reactionary character of conspiracism? As noted in the text, the very questions and issues raised by conspiracism are fundamentally flawed: “What drives conspiracy discourse is an unsatiable, incessant and compulsive desire to answer the question ‘*who is the master of money?*’ Who controls the current form of social wealth? [...] [W]hat acting subjects set the rules of the game we willingly or unwillingly play?”⁵⁸ Yet the very

⁵⁷ Coghnoti, “Not even wrong: Towards a Critique of Conspiracism”, *Cured Quail* 3, 2024.

⁵⁸ *Op. cit.*

architecture of the capitalist mode of production dictates that there is no master of money: “The money nexus cannot be placed under the conscious control of one group or another without severe unintended consequences”.⁵⁹ Therefore, this question cannot be answered, it is **structurally wrong** because it wishes to interpret our social reality and the course of history “as if hidden behind the impersonal, reified and abstract domination of capital were personal relations of domination. Confronted with the capitalist totality, it makes a parody out of it and represses its reality, presenting it as if it were subject to someone’s control. But those who seek, do find. One finds not only a substitute serving as a momentary scapegoat. What the conspiracy narrative ardently desires is ultimately a master—and sooner or later, it finds one”.⁶⁰ This penetrating critique does not characterize the question posed by conspiracism as irrational but as structurally wrong. But this is precisely what makes the answers given to this question irrational, since there is no valid reasoning upon which it can be answered.

Conspiracism is immanently produced by the dynamics of capital. “As long as humanity produces itself through the production of its fragmentation, as long as the coordination of human activity occurs blindly through the movement of value, along with commodities and money, the fantasy of the existence of *another hidden scene*, where the whole is orchestrated and planned, will remain in circulation as a socially necessary counterweight”.⁶¹ It is clear then that conspiracism abhors the possibility that humanity will be able to take its future in its own hands in order to consciously plan its affairs in a coordinated manner. As the text concludes, this constitutes the dual structural connection between conspiracy thinking and reactionary, post-fascist movements within capitalism, making conspiracism a distorted and irreparable form of anti-capitalism.

Conspiracism has historically existed as a component of both the right and the left – and even of the communist left. Apart from what we mentioned earlier, as far as the communist left was concerned, it was a product of the very weaknesses of the Leninist theory of monopoly and imperialism according to which the “anarchy of the market” is replaced in the imperialist era by the “conspiracy” of monopolies and finance capital. However, modern conspiracy thinking acquired unprecedented characteristics because of the exceptional character of the era of the coronavirus pandemic. As Naomi Klein notes in a recent and very interesting article (which announced her book entitled *Doppelgänger*), the pandemic was a global synchronised event. We were digitally connected, talking about the same thing for months and years on the same communication platforms. As a consequence, the right kind of clickbait content was instantly receiving many thousands or even millions of reads. So although conspiracy theories have always circulated more in times of crisis, this was the first time they became a thriving industry in their own right.⁶² Equally important is her

⁵⁹ *Op. cit.*

⁶⁰ *Op. cit.*

⁶¹ *Op. cit.*

⁶² Naomi Klein, “Naomi Klein on following her ‘doppelgänger’ down the conspiracy rabbit hole – and why millions of people have entered an alternative political reality”, *Guardian*, 26 August 2023.

observation, which complements Coghnoti's critique, that the culture of conspiracism is fuelled by deep unmet needs: the need for community, for purity, for insider knowledge, for answers that seem, however misleadingly, to explain a world gone mad.

Many different elements converge in modern conspiracism: the far-right QAnon conspiracy theory, alternative health subcultures that are usually associated with left-wing environmentalists but, as we have shown, were also a component of historical fascism, parental hysteria about things that happen in schools (masks, vaccinations, toilets for all genders), the "Great Reset" conspiracy theory, etc. The hidden agenda depending on the version of each conspiracy scenario is the imposition of a dictatorship by the communists/environmentalists/George Soros/border abolitionists/big pharma/genetically modified food companies/biometric implants/5G companies etc. which will be imposed through compulsory vaccination. All these conspiracy theories have been around for decades and some are directly linked to antisemitism and "blood libel". However, as Naomi Klein notes, there is something new: "the magnetic pull with which they are finding one another, self-assembling into [...] a 'conspiracy singularity'".⁶³

The spread of conspiracy theories that exploded after the outbreak of the coronavirus pandemic doesn't merely serve as a means of diverting attention and channeling discontent away from capitalist social relations, often directing anger against the weakest and most marginalized parts of our class. It is also weaponized by governments when they want to shift responsibility for their crisis management –which is utterly destructive to nature, the working class, and the social majority– onto conveniently chosen scapegoats. Mitsotakis did not hesitate to repeat and promote the conspiratorial, racist narrative that migrants/refugees were responsible for the unprecedented devastation caused by the fires in Evros in August 2023, even though official fire department announcements attribute the fire to lightning as part of the phenomenon of dry thunderstorms. At the same time, he provided political cover for the fascist militias operating at the borders, presenting the racist pogroms as acts of "vigilante justice" against non-existent arsonists, while completely suppressing the fact that these groups have been formed in close collaboration with local authorities, border guards, and the police. Another tactic of denialists, which the government appropriated and weaponized, is the accusation against scientists of being politically motivated. First, the Ministry of Environment attacked the European emergency monitoring service Copernicus (a service belonging to the European Commission, which they later formally approached for help with the floods – clearly, the "criticism" of politicization is aimed at the domestic audience), claiming that its assessment of the vast area destroyed by the fires was inaccurate because the satellite images have "low resolution." Subsequently, Voultepsi and Petsas, New Democracy MPs, attacked the National Observatory of Athens, accusing it of propaganda and political games due to the data it published on the mega-fires and the enormous increase in burned areas.

⁶³ N. Klein, *op. cit.*

7. Attack on the struggles for social rights (“anti-woke” ideology, criticism of “transhumanism”, etc.)

Another extremely important dimension of the post-fascist current is its attack on struggles for social rights, particularly the rights of LGBTQI individuals and the rights of migrants and refugees. For the wing of post-fascism originating from the far right, this attack is based on the illusion of defending the nation’s body (with particular emphasis on children) from the supposed threat of “woke propaganda”, which globalists are allegedly using to alter the nation’s composition through migratory flows and to impose sterilization of the population by undermining biological sexual functions. The ultimate goal is supposedly the “replacement of the population” (a conspiracy theory known as the “Great Replacement”) or even the construction of the “post-human” (or “transhuman”) being through the “alteration of its biological core” brought about by medical interventions that will make man a docile instrument. In this context, they even appropriate the discourse on “bodily autonomy” against the forces that supposedly seek to violate its natural, pure, authentic and immaculate status, e.g. the World Health Organization, the Soros and Rockefeller foundations, the Tavistock Institute, etc. These scumbags fantasize that in this way they will protect the “body of the nation” and the “national community” against “the assaults from the modern world” through its armoring and re-entrapment within patriarchal relations of personal domination.⁶⁴

We were certainly not surprised that a far-right rag like *Demokratia* published an article that stated the following: “Unfortunately, it appears that the American-imported ‘woke’ propaganda has aggressively arrived in our country, targeting even elementary school children – ages that have yet to form a ‘stable’ understanding of gender and sexuality, making them vulnerable to all sorts of influences. An incident of this coordinated effort to ‘initiate’ children into sexual behaviors, specifically of the LGBTQ approach, is troubling the 2nd Primary School of Corinth. There, as several parents and members of the parents’ association have complained, during maintenance and painting work on the school premises, the well-known ‘pride’ flag of enormous dimensions was painted for reasons still unknown in the outdoor area. [...] The identities [of the parents who made the complaint] are available to the newspaper, but they remain anonymous, fearing possible targeting by ‘ultra-progressive’ circles of rights advocates”.⁶⁵

We cannot say the same about the website *Diaries of Infection*, maintained by a person from the anti-authoritarian milieu, which republished Theofanis Raptis’s article titled: “The Murder of Epictetus and the Defeat of Humanity”. In the introduction, the *Diaries of Infection* editor reproduces the following excerpt from Aldous Huxley’s futurist speech at the Tavistock Group in California Medical School, as a “manual for reality” in relation to gender transition:

⁶⁴ Coghnoti, *op. cit.*

⁶⁵ Iasonas-Dimitris Tsetsos, “ Primary school in LGBTQ colours [Σε ΛΟΑΤΚΙ χρώματα δημοτικό σχολείο]”, *Demokratia*, 1/9/2023, <https://www.dimokratia.gr/ellada/566291/se-loatki-chromata-dimotiko-scholeio/>

“There will be, in the next generation or so, a pharmacological method of making people love their servitude, and producing dictatorship without tears, so to speak, producing a kind of painless concentration camp for entire societies, so that people will in fact have their liberties taken away from them, but will rather enjoy it, because they will be distracted from any desire to rebel by propaganda or brainwashing, or brainwashing enhanced by pharmacological methods”.

Raptis’s article itself becomes more explicit: “If we consider the struggle for LGBTQ++ rights as an example, it is increasingly revealed that it now unfolds as a war against grammar and, consequently, against meaning [...] This obsessive attachment to the need for modifying and mutating bodies has now been elevated to a symbolic form, the unspoken content of which points to something far deeper. It is essentially a radical challenge to ontological and biological existence, which, in reality, is merely in a preparatory phase and is emerging in many other areas as well [...] The mere fact that academics have mentioned [...] the potential need to accept some form of mutability of the human species as an inevitable consequence of further development, whether consciously or not, crossed an invisible Rubicon. For the first time, a deeper ontological and biological core is being questioned”.⁶⁶

Here we can clearly see the classic (post-)fascist motif of invoking the “natural” (and ontological) order of things, which is supposedly being disrupted. In the context of the so-called “Tavistock scandal” –allegations of unethical medical practices at the UK’s Tavistock gender transition clinic– there are indeed issues worth discussing (e.g., the age at which irreversible decisions about gender transition are made and the decision to no longer require sessions with a social worker or psychologist). However, the leap from these concerns to the formulation of conspiracy theories appealing to (unchangeable) “human nature: is vast. The necessary critique of the limits and contradictions of struggles for social rights and identity politics –from the perspective of critiquing capitalist social relations with the aim of communist transformation– has absolutely nothing to do with this kind of racist and chauvinistic nonsense.

If the appeal of such positions to segments of the working class and the petite bourgeoisie can be interpreted based on the social psychology we previously described, the question arises as to why they are being promoted by a significant portion of capitalists. Euroskeptic neoliberals in Europe and right-wing libertarians in the U.S. believe that the order of the free market is based on the dominance of conservative moral values. We will examine the example of the Euroskeptic think tank *Centre for the New Europe*, whose first general director was *Le Monde*’s chief economics editor, Paul Fabra. As part of its activities, this think tank published in 1995 the book *This Will Hurt: The Restoration of Virtue and Civic Order*, which argues that the relaxation of sexual restrictions and norms since the 1960s and onwards “had eroded the conditions for reproducing the free market order”.⁶⁷ In an interview

⁶⁶ Available at: <https://t.ly/FEBAT> [Shortened URL link accessed at 12/10/2024].

⁶⁷ Digby Anderson, *This Will Hurt: The Restoration of Virtue and Civic Order*, 1995. Mentioned in Quinn Slobodian and Dieter Plehwe, “Neoliberals against Europe”, *op. cit.*

given by the author of the book to the *International Herald Tribune* on August 28, 1995, he argued that it is necessary to reintroduce shame and stigma in society to reduce crime and antisocial behavior. He even suggested stigmatizing women who have children out of wedlock, as they cost taxpayers (i.e., capital) billions of pounds each year. He added that “bringing up children with one parent is associated with higher delinquency”.⁶⁸

As far as this capitalist faction is concerned, the denunciation of the “globalist elite” represents nothing more than a purely intra-capitalist conflict. The working class must confront both poles of this conflict. Moreover, as it has become evident, the shift in government policy from one pole to the other depending on the needs of the moment is something quite common.

8. Invocation of the “freedom of speech”

The condemnation of all critique as “cancel culture” and the invocation of “freedom of speech” constitute key weapons used by the post-fascist current against all those who wage the necessary polemics against it and attempt to block its expression in the public sphere, whether this polemic is motivated by demands for “social justice” and rights or from the standpoint of radical critique of capital and the state.

The accusation of silencing and exclusion is completely unfounded and merely reflects a demand that the reactionary propaganda of post-fascists and their collaborators be

⁶⁸ Interview of Digby Anderson by Barry James, *International Herald Tribune*, August 28, 1995. The interview was accessed via the link <https://www.nytimes.com/1995/08/28/IHT-q-a-restoring-virtue-and-order-the-argument-for-shame-and-stigma-in.html>. It may be of interest to provide some additional information we gathered from the article by Slobodian and Plehwe (op. cit.) regarding the evolution of reformist Euroskepticism into outright xenophobic nationalist positions. The Belgian lawyer Paul Belien, founder of the aforementioned think tank and husband of Alexandra Colen, a member of parliament for the far-right Flemish separatist party *Vlaams Blok*, had already published a polemic against abortion in 1992. Interestingly, the couple published a magazine between 2000 and 2005 dedicated to issues of “secession and direct democracy”, which was connected to anti-immigration organizations such as the *VDare* website. After 2006, this same lawyer led the racist think tank *Islamic Watch*, which promotes a clear Islamophobic agenda. Other members of the same think tank collaborated with members of the Bruges Group and the neoliberal European *Constitutional Group* in founding the magazine *Eigentümlich Frei* (loosely translated as *Free Unique Owner* echoing the title of the book by Max Stirner), which aimed to build an alliance between libertarians and the far-right, following the example of American far-right libertarians surrounding Murray Rothbard. These individuals promoted the agenda of “racial realism” (i.e., racism against Black people), “confederacy” (modeled after the American South), and closed borders to immigrants. This direction is also known as the “redneck strategy”, which inspired both the *AfD* and the *Freedom Party of Austria*. The magazine also promoted the re-legitimization of Social Darwinism and climate change denial, key elements of the post-fascist agenda. In Greece, the post-fascist anarcho-capitalist group *The Slaves* [Οι Δούλοι] is more aligned with this tendency.

disseminated without response, without criticism, and without consequences. Moreover, by portraying themselves as victims, they manage to occupy space in the public sphere and gain attention within the “attention economy” of social media. Against this backdrop, a debate is initiated around an abstract notion of “freedom of speech” that is supposedly under attack, which serves, among other things, to avoid addressing the real issue at hand. Accusations of “political correctness”, “thought policing”, “rightsism”, “cancel culture”, “collaboration with the state”, or “being paid by the secret services” are used to claim that opponents are speaking from a position of authority. This allows reactionary positions, which are also supported by a significant part of the state and capital, to be portrayed as persecuted due to their supposed “radicalism”. In fact, it is not even true that the freedom of speech of the post-fascists is being attacked. As we wrote in the text “The reality of denial and the denial of reality”: “open access to social networks (which they apparently prefer) has not only given a platform to such ‘alternative’ views, but has inflated them to an unthinkable degree”.⁶⁹ Moreover, protesting against public rallies with reactionary content, even to the point of disrupting or cancelling them, has been part of the classical repertoire of the practices of the class antagonist movement, at least since the time when proletarians in England attacked Mosley’s speeches in 1934.

Apart from this, the very concept of the freedom of speech in the conditions of the modern entrenched spectacular democracy can only be ideological. It reflects the fact that the economic organisation of society is based on free competition, which conceals relations of exploitation and domination. Truth cannot be approached through the competition of ideas in the capitalist mass media market. The conflict between different discourses is the expression of the conflict of different interests. Not all these discourses are true and therefore not all of them can be held in respect. There are policies, views, movements that promote the prospect of human freedom and the rational use of resources for the satisfaction of human needs, and there are others that do the exact opposite. As we wrote in 2022 in the text “The irrational salto mortale...”: “we must show absolutely no tolerance towards words and actions that perpetuate the status quo, that prevent people from being freed from disease and want and, consequently, from developing their potential for an active and creative life”.⁷⁰

In the United Kingdom, the post-fascist current’s condemnation of “cancel culture” has successfully been turned into state law. The “Higher Education (Freedom of Speech) Act” passed in May 2023 by the government of the far-right conservative Rishi Sunak made universities and student unions that fail in their duty to uphold free speech liable to investigation and fines by the so-called “free speech czar”, as well as to civil actions by anyone who believes they have suffered “adverse consequences” because of the “action or inaction” of a university or student union. As Professor Amia Srinivasan notes in her extremely interesting essay, this law can be applied when “a student union voting to no-platform fascists; a university failing to quash student protest at a visit from, say, a war criminal; a student group

⁶⁹ Antithesi and Cognord, *op. cit.*

⁷⁰ Antithesi, “The irrational salto mortale [Το ανορθολογικό σάλτο μορτάλε]”, *op. cit.*

putting out a statement condemning a professor for being transphobic; faculty changing a syllabus in response to student complaints about its racist content; students peacefully protesting outside a lecture; a geography department voting not to hire a climate change denier [...] ‘Adverse consequences’ is an extremely low bar: anyone who has been picketed or called names on Twitter might feel they have grounds to make a legal claim [...] These ambiguities serve a purpose. No university or student union wants to pay heavy fines or be dragged into court. The prudent course of action is to silence dissent before it happens. No doubt universities will start hiring free speech compliance officers – chosen perhaps from the network of conservative academics who helped draw up the new legislation – who will advise on which forms of speech and protest are now verboten. The result will be a chilling of speech: precisely what the Act’s architects and supporters claim they oppose”.⁷¹

Therefore, this so-called law on freedom of speech has resulted in the unrestricted expression of all kinds of reactionary views, while criminalizing any opposition to them. In other words, to be a bit ironic, only those who criticize and challenge post-fascists are accused of canceling and censoring; when post-fascists do the same things, they are simply exercising their right to free speech. As is evident, the real issue is always which positions and practices will prevail: those of emancipation from capitalist relations of domination, or those that work to preserve them, even when they present themselves as “anti-systemic”?

As we conclude this text, we must once again emphasize that we dedicate so much energy to our polemic against the post-fascist current because we consider it to be the main counter-revolutionary force on a global level, one that even presents itself as “anti-systemic”. As we have tried to emphatically demonstrate, despite its apparent opposition to the neoliberal “center”, it is, in reality, a mirror image of it. The struggle against the capitalist state necessarily includes the struggle against its false enemy –in this case, the post-fascist current– regardless of the disguise it wears (far-right, leftist, or even anti-authoritarian). As we mentioned in the introduction, several individuals and groups from the anti-authoritarian milieu have converged with this reactionary social movement, branding it as a “class movement”, as a “movement for individual freedoms”, or even a “patriotic movement against vaccination national unity” [!]. Regardless of the reasons for this approach and convergence –

⁷¹ Amia Srinivasan, «Cancelled», *London Review of Books*, vol. 45, no. 13, 29 June 2023. <https://www.lrb.co.uk/the-paper/v45/n13/amia-srinivasan/cancelled>. The New Democracy government is fully aligned with this logic. Former Deputy Minister of Education Angelos Syrigos was the prime instigator in prosecuting students for posting posters with critical content. One of the first laws of Mitsotakis’ government in 2019 was the abolition of the academic sanctuary. In its place, the following provision was introduced: “academic freedom, as well as the free expression and circulation of ideas, shall be protected in all areas of higher education institutions, against anyone who tries to abolish or limit them”, clearly targeting student protests.

whether opportunism, lack of theoretical tools, or sheer stupidity– and regardless of whether or not these groups and individuals ultimately merged politically with the post-fascist current, their responsibility for its continued strengthening cannot be erased.

Our critique of post-fascism has nothing to do with defending capitalist democracy, nor with cross-class antifascist popular fronts. The post-fascist current, like historical fascism, is not foreign to the capitalist democratic system but is a product and extension of it.

Antithesi

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