

The Dictatorship of Failure

On the Economics and Politics of Discipline

José Filipe Silva
Helsinki Collegium for Advanced Studies

Alejandro Lorite Escorihuela
American University of Cairo

When is it polite to let go someone's arm after you grab it?
(Carson 1998, 64)

The scholar and his science are incorporated into the apparatus of society; his achievements are a factor in the conservation and continuous renewal of the existing state of affairs, no matter what fine names he gives to what he does. (Horkheimer 1972, 196)

I

The Undiscipline of Democracy

The known adage according to which a crisis is a terrible thing to waste has been suggested as a possible perspective on the current European crisis. The exact meaning of the expression need not concern us here, except as an important reminder of the political opportunity the current European sovereign debt crisis presents. If we were able to introduce into the debate about the economic remedies to the crisis the question of the kind of society in which we want to live, then the crisis and its resolution would not necessarily look in the end like a complete waste and a terrible failure.

As it happens, the old political, social, and economic models of organization of European societies are increasingly being threatened by the failure of political agents to respond to the degradation of the economic environment - not to mention the failure of some economic agents to acknowledge the environment as also political. The need to contain costs continues to drain resources from traditional state supported functions, while at the same time these functions are increasingly

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subjected to private models of management, when they are not simply delegated to private corporations. The role of the citizenry in shaping those policies has been marginalized and any talk of public consultation is now quickly dismissed as obstructionist populism. All those functions are being reevaluated against a certain conception of state and state intervention, the basic economic premises of which are asserted above contestation: they are built into the *only* possible solution for the crisis.

In the context of addressing the unfolding economic effects of the Eurocrisis in Portugal, the current Portuguese prime minister recently declared: ‘we will only get out of this situation by becoming poorer’.¹ That statement sought to justify the implementation of so-called austerity measures agreed upon with the so-called Troika (the International Monetary Fund, the European Commission, and the European Central Bank) in order to make the Portuguese economy more competitive, while allowing for the hope that one day economic progress would return. That particular way of formulating an economic program in times of crisis has at least three compelling, if disturbing, aspects. First, there is the rhetorical use of ‘we’, which suggests that sacrifices are abstractly requested from all individuals as citizens, even though, as tradition has it and as specifically proposed financial measures have shown in Portugal and elsewhere, only segments of society are targeted, with a recurrent emphasis on civil servants, pensioners, and generally individuals and families relying of social welfare and security benefits. Large corporations, banks, and generally individuals and entities at higher levels of the socio-economic ladder, despite the fact that they played a major role in the development of the crisis, seem to largely escape the new austerity measures.² Not so ironically, proposed remedies to the crisis involve thus the impoverishment of the already precarious sectors of society in order to sustain the funding of bail-outs for failed financial institutions deemed too big, or too precious, to fail.

Along the same lines, a second element in that general picture consists then in demanding, in a rhetorical manner similar to that expected in times of war, extreme hardship from a few for the sake of the prosperity of all, and particularly future generations. Impoverishment means thus patriotic sacrifice on the part of the hypothesized demos of a political community under financial threat – a threat the origin of which is left mostly to be ascertained by recourse to further diversions and obfuscations of responsibility. And thirdly, the statement is notable for the economic model it offers. National poverty – as opposed to a seemingly more commonsensical, or more concrete focus on job creation or increased purchasing power – is the way to solve the problems for debilitated European economies in the

1 ‘Só vamos sair da crise empobrecendo’, *Expresso*, October 25, 2011, available at: <expresso.sapo.pt/passos-coelho-so-vamos-sair-da-crise-empobrecendo-video=f683176> (last accessed October 23, 2013).

2 M. Blyth argues forcefully that public debt was contracted by public attempts to save the financial system, but is now heralded as caused by public superfluity. See Blyth 2012.

long run.³ That in turn suggests a novel approach to economic ills, on the model of “creative destruction”, which takes economic misery not only as a problem but as part of the solution. Political speeches on the prospects of recovery thus sound at odds with the traditional outlook of recounting social and economic progress that has been achieved, and further prosperity that needs to be promised (Streeck 2013). In general terms, the statement by the Portuguese Prime Minister assumes poverty not to be a factual sign of errors to be corrected, but an acceptable and desirable way of existence of some in relation to the greater good of the collective. The political perspective behind the economic plan thus brackets very obviously the project of the Welfare State and points to other, radically different, conceptions of the role of the State in the economy.⁴

This way of enforcing the solution to the crisis gives rise to two terrible consequences in practice. On the one hand selective austerity measures effect a further breakdown of social cohesion at the national level: the measures included in the austerity packages affect in particular the young unemployed or precariously employed, retirees, those living on social entitlements, and civil servants. On the other hand, the economic policy of national sacrifice pressures the breach of solidarity between European partners, by raising the ultimately unanswered question: sacrifice for whom, and because of whom? The sovereign debt crisis has showed that the European Monetary Union has flaws in its design that, in good times allowed (or even promoted) the accumulation of debt and, in situations of crisis, punishes the weakest economies of the Euro zone (Ingham 2009; Lapavistas 2012). At the same time, some of the solutions to the crisis – such as debt forgiveness or a permanent mechanism of transfers – face stern opposition by the wealthy North. Unsurprisingly for Europe, entrenched, if not knee-jerk opposition to solution demanding tighter, rather than looser, solidarity and integration (Habermas 2013), are not the carefully thought-out result of political and economic deliberation, but is rather triggered by the permanent rhetoric of cultural prejudices and xenophobia. Economic orthodoxy seems therefore not only to favor some national economies over others – thus plausibly showing how it is motivated by ideological commitments – but also to constitute a serious obstacle in the advancement of Europe as a political unified entity. What strikes anyone who has been observing the unfolding of this process is how politically damaging such glorification of austerity as sacrifice can be. Even if – and one cannot but doubt it – European politicians manage to solve the financial crisis along the path they keep

3 That is to say, to promote a policy of deflation, gaining competitiveness in the economy by lowering labour costs via extra taxation and loss of consumption power. The framework for an obsessive focus on public deficit, inflation, and competitiveness, has been challenged many times among economists, but never defeated, leading some to suggest that its strength does not come from objective facts but, at best, from psychological factors such as collective self-delusion. See Krugman 2013.

4 The President of the European Central Bank Mario Draghi was quite explicit on this point, when he stated that ‘[t]he European social model has already gone.’ See B. Blackstone, M. Karnitsching & R. Thomson 2012.

obsessively favoring against all dissonant data, and purely as a crisis of finances and accounting, these two aspects will remain the perpetual source of resistance to the strengthening of a real European demos, an aim that is explicitly stated in the preamble to the European Treaty (Auer 2013).

We need to carefully consider these consequences because Europe is a fragile virtual entity, for which founding principles and objectives replace to a large extent the traditional aggregators of diversity that legitimate its constituent nation-states, whether rhetorically or practically: no common language, no cultural or religious identity, but instead a common history of disunity and war, both within and without, which the Union was set up to end for all times. Such diversity is not necessarily problematic because, precisely as the European treaties assert, what aggregates the political community is a set of common goals, ideals of peace, solidarity, equality, universal access to social rights, and respect for individual dignity (Beck 2012). The virtual unity is founded upon the notion that our real strength is the shared nature of those ideals, the notion that only as a union of diverse people around a common project can we hope to climb the ladder of prosperity and walk the path of peace: full employment, social progress, high level of social protection, eradication of poverty, promotion of sustainable development, and the advancement of solidarity against nationalist bigotry – those are the founding principles of the European Union. The notion that we will leave to our descendants a world that is better – fuller in terms of possibilities – than that which was left to us is a reference point to which we must still cling, and which we must strenuously defend. A society that promotes growth through highly selective scorched-earth economic policy is foreign to that received and unfolding ideal of Europe on all counts. As such, the economic policy of austerity is an assault on segments of European societies, and an active endeavor of political destabilization against what Europe promised to its peoples and to the world.

From the democratic perspective to which the European Union is constitutionally attached, these common goals are deeply intertwined with the nature of the procedures followed to pursue them: the complete transparency of decision making processes, a comprehensive accountability of decisions and decision-makers, and equal rights of participation for all citizens (Hadenius 1992; Holden 1974; and Held 2006). The failure to deal with the economic crisis in a way that involves European citizens beyond “experts” – both those doing the rescuing and those being rescued – has allowed quite naturally for the increased questioning of democracy itself as the ideal form of governance (Žižek 2013). Debate and disagreement are seen not as a source of progress, but as an obstacle to development. Some may remember the suggestion put forward by a former Portuguese Finance minister, who was also incidentally a candidate for Prime Minister: suspending democracy for six months, solving the problems of the country, and returning then to democracy.⁵

⁵ <www.publico.pt/politica/noticia/ferreira-leite-pergunta-se-nao-seria-bom-haver-seis-meses-sem-democracia-para-por-tudo-na-ordem-1350420> (last accessed October 31, 2013). See Jones 2012)

Although the suggestion may sound odd coming from an elected official, the fact is that the rhetoric has become recurrent in European politics, and not only at the supranational level, where nonelected bodies of governance already decide, without much public debate, on new political structures, as well as social and economic policies, which shape and reconfigure European societies, local and transnational, beyond recognition (Scharpf 2013).

The bluntness of that political vision finds echoes nowadays in a type of political rhetoric at work in many European countries facing the current continent-wide financial and political crisis. Beyond unhelpful, if alarming, comparisons between our times and the Weimar era, we think that such dramatic oratorical slips express in a particular way a wider picture of what is going on in Europe at the moment, when the possibility and the necessity of dictatorship seem to be pervading in increasingly explicit fashion mainstream political discourse at various levels of the European governance architecture. The apparent yearning for a dictatorial model comes in different guises, and is variously suggested or implied, if not openly discussed, as a desired suspension or paralysis of electoral legitimacy and the democratic process, sometimes imposed by extraneous factors and sometimes demanded as a voluntary abdication of democratic control – but always based on technocratic expertise assumed to be demanded by the force of complex circumstances and beyond popular deliberation. Democratically elected governments have been quite openly forced to resign (think Italy) or to dismiss forms of popular consultation about how to respond to the crisis (think Greece) by unelected European officials or heads of other European countries. In a similar vein, national sovereignty is being openly questioned or bypassed by “financial markets” now omnipresent as a reference for the trustworthiness of political programs. A notion of democracy’s inability to serve the demos in the face of economic trouble is prompting people throughout Europe to become confident enough to start toying with the idea of bracketing democracy, bypassing it or supplementing it with technocratic powers of a higher calling, with a view to restoring order in Europe, solving the financial crisis and possibly returning then to democracy. All of it is, however, openly pronounced to be for the general welfare and future of the “people”, that generally undefined “we” of a national or transnational nature that was already called upon to sacrifice its welfare to the cause of future prosperity.

The normalization of that type of discourse in Europe is sufficiently worrisome from a historical perspective. But what does this say more generally about Europe as a political project, about democracy as a form of government and about democracy as it is practiced in western European countries? Why, and on what grounds, have people become openly skeptical of how modern parliamentary democracies work, regardless of party lines? Is it because political parties seem to be unable to find middle paths between their respective practical or ideological commitments? Is it on the contrary because party politics has lost much of its appeal in becoming precisely devoid of contrasting ideological visions and programmatic innovations, while the democratic process is focused on short-term electoral schedules, political

scandals, and media sensationalism? On the one hand, it seems that many citizens of democratic states doubt the ability of their political representatives to find ways to solve serious crises in a plurality of voices (Müller, Bergman & Strom 2003), and respond to the seductive appeal of reverting instead to one voice above and beyond the polyphony of democracy. Sometimes, the commanding voice of technocratic reason seems to make as much sense as that of the ancestral nation calling upon its sons and daughters to preserve the motherland, in an environment of apparent political incompetence, ideological cacophony, and economic destruction. On the other hand, in a time when individuals are becoming more politically aware and involved, the technocratic elements of supranational organizations, backed by the general sense of economic emergency, are promoting practical restrictions on access to democratic government in the full sense. The tendency, especially within “debtor countries”, to replace party politics with a general recourse to supposedly neutral economic expertise seems to be a sign of that larger phenomenon.

The risk for Europe is that this democratic deficit may become associated with the breach of solidarity between European partners, fueled by the breakdown of social cohesion, and leading to a surge of Nationalism – and a certain sort of Nationalism. When the common good, which beckons from above and beyond the competing individual interests, is removed as the ultimate aim of politics, the risk we face is that, confronted with a perpetually non-working solution that prevents citizens to decide in any meaningful way the configuration of their societies, these citizens, or some of them, opt for other, and even more removed, forms of particularistic decision making. Or they may also opt for a complete indifference to politics.

The suspension of any normal democratic process, and the subtle questioning of democracy’s “efficiency” as a managerial model, seems to be a danger in itself, as the democratic temptation of suspending liberal rights in order to keep the very possibility of freedom has showed in recent and less recent times. The immediate backdrop to the current wave of democracy fatigue, as represented by the pervasive war-time rhetoric of national sacrifice while others decide and others prosper, is provided by the now normalized question as to whether we should temporarily soften the prohibition of torture in order to keep our democracies and liberal freedoms safe.⁶ The expanded version of that same logic comes today in the form of whether democratic legitimacy should not yield to a higher form of legitimacy, which justifies imposing selective sacrifices in the name of an abstract good and an abstract people, described in a discourse beyond political contestation, but also imbued with a form of populist nationalism that seeks allegiance across ideological fault lines. Symptomatic of that situation is the fact that to an increasingly shameless undemocratic discourse corresponds also a wave of extra-parliamentary political opposition and civil unrest that presents itself, among other things, as following

6 On the rhetorical mooring of torture advocacy in liberal democracies, and a critique thereof, see e.g. Luban 2005. See also Lukes 2005.

in the steps of protests that have been challenging and weakening dictatorships in the Arab world since early 2011. In other words, an open dictatorial ethos of national and supranational governance meets the perception of democracy as already perverted by forces that stand in the way of social and economic progress, thus converging in a dire picture of the current faith in parliamentary democracy. Among the most worrisome signs of an assumed decline or failure of democracy is the posture of pride and satisfaction of both political leaders and “financial markets” when governments are revamped to explicitly exclude “politicians” and replace them with “experts”. In other words, the crisis opens up the possibility not only to suspend democracy but, in the minds of some, including politicians themselves, to bracket politics and the sphere of the political themselves as essentially superfluous, or even noxious, elements of social and economic life.

It is therefore an imperative to demonstrate that what makes these procedures faulty is precisely the ideal of democratic governance, legitimate representation, and freedom to act and chose in the absence of external coercion at the heart of the European project.⁷ The European project is a political one, aimed at bringing about peace and freedom on the continent, and economic policies are just means to get there (Beck 2013). It is not the case of simply arguing that something is wrong in the way European leaders have been dealing with the crisis, but that they need to act in a way that respects European citizens and European ideals, given that both constitute the source of legitimacy for their exercise of political coercion over European masses, in the form of economic deprivation. The claim is not to argue for an abstract ideal, as the starting point for the discussion, but for a common practice that the dominant way of thinking out solutions is washing away. The essential part of any solution to the European crisis must be the insistence on more participatory democratic decision-making at all levels, and a more critical denial of all hegemonic solutions couched in implausible language of technical objectivity and political neutrality (Delors, Solana, Beck, Cohn-Bendit & others 2012). It used to be the way we get there that mattered, but listening to contemporary European political discourse it seems that the goal has become too narrow and the way to get there too simplistic, not to say criminally lazy.

Instead of promoting a public debate as wide and inclusive as possible, politicians, governmental agencies and supranational institutions justify the absence of public debate and consultation with something very analogous to a state of emergency. And the legitimization of the financial solution is done by appealing to the non-ideological objectivity of the state of “crisis”, implemented by economic experts driven by knowledge and not political agendas. This appeal to economic objectivity and expert governance aims at corrupting and destroying any shadow of disagreement and dissidence, any possibility for alternative critical and original thinking; and thus, as has become painfully obvious to millions of European

⁷ This does not mean of course that the assessment of those elements of liberal democratic health is uncontroversial or even easy. See e.g. Giannone 2010.

citizens and residents, postponing indefinitely the possibility of actually finding a true solution to the crisis.

II

These are trying days for Europe and for the world, and nothing makes them so more than the fact that we are allowing for the thought of a destruction, or temporary suspension, of the democratic ideal to enter the political discourse as a new given, in the same way as we seem to have accepted that our proudly proclaimed European model of society – with individual rights, family rights, social protection, and solidarity across difference – can be, and should be, junked in order to keep up with models of society that are more competitive because they prioritize their resources differently. It is of course problematic to promote and defend a European model of society in the abstract, since it such promotion quickly degenerates into Eurocentrism, if not Euronarcissism, while forgetting about the price extracted by Europe from the rest of the world to create its cherished way of life (Balibar 2004). But the issue lies precisely in the adoption of a political rhetoric by mainstream political actors, which questions the adoption of such a “model” not on the basis of its desirability or its pedigree, but rather its feasibility. Ideas of respect for the individual, gender equality, non discrimination along arbitrary lines, right of free expression and free movement, right to education, personal advancement, social and labor rights, all those advances of the human condition in Europe are now increasingly presented as a burden, especially if people take that model literally to mean a project for each and every member of the polity. The main questions posed in this context are therefore: in the name of what is this destruction being proposed, what makes it worth it, who is the imagined beneficiary of admitting the defeat of democracy, and what is imagined to be outside of the democratic ideal?

III

The Democratic Poverty of Disciplinarity

The creeping pervasiveness and legitimation of technocratically dictatorial discourses in public debate around the crisis appears in its most shameless form in the design and deployment of “solutions”, and particularly the pathological obsession with punishing measures of austerity. In that context, the economics of distributive pain and profits assert themselves as dictates of the ones in the know, and demand the sacrifices of those who cannot know better. Frustration and anger, reactions to the severity of the consequences and the seemingly blatant unfairness of measures, are themselves the object of control by expert discourses that forcefully mandate compliance from a perspective of resignation to the scientifically inevitable. Certainly, as is visible in the most fragile European communities, the

anti-social nature of economic measures generates a fear of excessive anti-social responses as chaos spreads, in forms of revolt and criminality that promise to become indistinguishable as deprivation rises while culpable financial institutions remain. The discourse of economic austerity contains thus strong elements of moralizing discipline, and is deployed with the support of a strong security apparatus.⁸ The articulation of this network of legitimating discourses around the imperative of discipline (past economic sins; present sacrifice, repentance, and submission; future prosperity) points to the notion that the manifest erosion of democratic structures and the normalization of political cynicism are signs of a particular understanding of what counts as a crisis, and what it is that is now facing a critical moment.⁹

The appeal to experts, the celebration of technocrats, and the disparagement of alternative thought or even political deal-making – as obstructionist idealism or sinful deviation – demonstrate that the dangers for the life of democratic legitimacy begin not in the formulation of the solutions, but in the articulation of the problems to which they are meant to respond. What kind of crisis is this? What is this crisis? What is a crisis? Moreover, when one questions the formulation of the problems more than the solutions, the issue becomes also one of imagining who or what is really in charge of formulating the problems. If one follows the above-mentioned impression that the courtship of dictatorship is legitimated by an implicit “state of exception” created for European polities by the financial crisis, one has to consider the types of discourses that frame both normalcy and exception. Solutions are presented as a natural derivation from the unfortunate state of the world, but those salutary measures are only as univocal and transparent as the problems and the world are made to appear. The meanings to be attached to crisis are clearly limited. First, there is a very limited consideration of the nature of the crisis, since public finance is presented to us as the center of the critical moment, with the variety of critical states radiating from there; the financial crisis triggers the economic crisis, which causes a crisis of the system of pensions or public health care. The story could be told differently. But then also, is the crisis properly so called? A crisis is a moment of decision, a moment of stark alternative, as we know from the uses of the word in medicine or physics. But then our present crisis, our moment of decision is precisely devoid of decisionism by the fact that mandatory rules are already determining the way out of the crisis. Hence the bizarre notion that, precisely at the most critical moment for the political community, political decision-makers must yield, not their position, but their function, to the non-political process of scientific reason.

8 The relations between the economic crisis and criminality are complex and subject to varied rationalizing narratives, with more or less explicit ideological bents. Moreover, criminality meets financial matters in the space of expert opinion, where it is similarly made the object of properly scientific understanding as against partisan public policy. For a helpful discussion of the facts, perceptions, and political uses of criminality in a crisis country, see Xenakis & Cheliotis 2013.

9 For a conceptual consideration of the notion of crisis in historical context, see Koselleck 2006.

As a prelude, therefore, the crisis has foregrounded, both in political practice and in academic exchange, a sharp division between experts and science, on the one hand, and politicians and political decision-making, on the other. More importantly, the crisis has entrenched the importance of a dialectic relation between the two. Politicians should step aside because of their subjective vulnerability to economically unreasonable influences, such as electoral pressures, not to mention forms of corrupt clientelism, as shown in their patchy record of financial management. But on the other hand, the crisis has also allowed for some critical consideration of the political responsibility of ivory-tower academics excessively enamoured of their disembodied economic equations, disconnected from the real-world impact of their experiments with other people's money.¹⁰ The division between technocrats, and particularly economic scholars and financial pundits, on the one hand, and politicians on the other, has reproduced in this context a settled sense of opposition. That opposition has been with us at least since its masterful elaboration by Max Weber in the context of differentiating the types of ethical responsibility applicable to science and politics as distinct vocations. That dichotomy is the frame for debates about legitimacy and the excesses of the democratic deficit in the pan-European context: too much power in Strasbourg and away from the masses, or else too much power in the hands of elected officials, all of them in over their heads in dealing with deficits and public debts.

With some critical distance, however, the dichotomy is fallacious as a matter of very pragmatic consideration (see e.g. Kennedy 2002, 2005). The criteria for circumscribing either science or the realm of the political are quickly elusive, and social sciences themselves have devoted a considerable amount of attention to all the ways in which science is framed at all time in political, economic, social and cultural processes (see e.g. Latour & Woolgar 1979). Science and politics, experts and politicians, should be seen as a mutually reinforcing couples of terms, which together enclose the debate, both political and academic, within the comfortable confines of enlightened Liberalism. What matters is that each is defined by the other. The back-and-forth between them in discussions about the fate of political life in the midst of crises is just another expression of the political straightjacket imposed by pervasive dualisms in Liberal political culture: public vs. private, international vs. national, state vs. market, politics vs. economics, citizens vs. foreigners, or Europe vs. the world. Of course, legitimation comes from opposition, and the sense of identity of each comes from exclusion of the other. Why should technocracy enter the fray? Because it is exactly what politics and politicking is not. Why is it a problem that experts are running the show? Because they are not politicians.¹¹

10 On the indictment of (certain) professional economists and (a certain strand of) economics, see e.g. the Academy-Award winning documentary *Inside Job*, Directed by Charles Ferguson (Sony Picture Classics, 2010).

11 See e.g. "Who, What, Why: What Can Technocrats Achieve that Politicians Can't?", BBC News Magazine, November 14, 2011, available at <www.bbc.co.uk/news/magazine-15720438> (accessed October 31, 2013).

What matters is the movement between the two poles, or rather, the limited space for maneuver and short distance between the two, as critical resistance becomes framed and limited by that opposition.

That opposition occurs in a common space or common framing of issues, within which it actually makes some sense for scholars – as opposed to poets, clowns, or cooks – to take the reigns of economic policy, not based on the legitimacy of election but on their own mechanism of legitimation by peer-review. In that broad cultural frame, science draws its legitimacy, including political legitimacy, from one form of representation (the representation of truth) while politics draws its own legitimacy from another form of representation (the representation of will). Representation constitutes the bridge between them and allows for legitimation to also be mutual and reciprocal – because all legitimation is representation. Science legitimates politics as the domain of implementing will based on truth or authenticity, while it is legitimated by the political realm in the form of exclusion. Science is a-political, independent, objective, and so on, and politics compromises on the bases of opinion and preferences, which are however ideally conveyed and considered in uncorrupted or undistorted fashion. The two never mix, but they support one another, in sharing the same ideal of transparency. Depending on the moment, one or the other form of legitimation is favored. The idea of a common universe in which expertise and politics live in our current moment is signaled by the notion that technocracy and democracy can, and indeed should, be balanced (see e.g. Derviş 2013).

As Žižek underscores it usefully, ideology is not located within a domain of politics where objective data and givens are concealed by a confusion of facts and values. Ideology is itself the modern assertion of an objective world out there that is subject to normatively unmediated access, and is thus possibly the object of experimental objective science, whether that science may be economics or racial phrenology (Žižek 2010, 46). From that perspective, the most perverse effect of a Manichean framing of science and politics, truth and ideology, is that it straightjackets critical analysis and resistance. Can anybody stand up against enlightening science in taking us out of a financial mess recurrently blamed on one form or another of human sin, be it greed, sloth, pride or lust? Attacking technocracy as an authoritarian, fatalistic curtailing of human possibilities happens at the same moment that science is also being challenged by the forces of reaction, as a reference point for policy-making in favor of our endangered global natural environment (Latour 2004, 225). The trick is in always positing a standpoint of objectivity, a standpoint for deresponsibilization, where facts do indeed speak for themselves, and from where one can also, paradoxically, criticize the technocrats for believing in science just as much as those technocrats criticize the politicians for ignoring the facts of the matter. It is a rhetorical trick.

In the context of the European crisis, the perversity of the dynamic of science and politics comes in the form of politics yielding completely to science, a science that is idealized from an ethereal viewpoint, and assumes the controls of state-

sponsored coercion based on a closer access to truth, rather than a closer access to people. Appointing technocrats makes the markets rejoice (see e.g. Barber 2011). It is not anymore that politics is supported by science and needs science for accuracy, it is rather that science supplants the political as the middle term between truth and public policy. Ministers as technocrats get their legitimacy as ministers from the fact that they are technocrats – the plebiscite is run therefore not among the electorate, or the demos, but among economic agents and rating agencies that participate in the same regime of truth.¹² Popular will is sidelined, because in any event it does not matter in the face of the crisis, which is a phenomenon beyond politics. The time for debate and opinion is over, in the sense that debate is pointless in the face of truth. Science presents itself then obviously as the horizon of politics, in the practical sense that the will of the people is replaced by the will of the market; that will is not determined by electoral campaigning, but by equations. In an attempt at explaining technocracy in the midst of an exponential use of the term, someone put it in the most candid of terms: “Technocrats make decisions based on specialized information rather than public opinion. For this reason they are sometimes called upon when there’s no popular or easy solution to a problem (like, for example, the European debt crisis)” (Wickman 2011). There is really too much to deal with in the ideological underpinnings of that simple statement.

The assertion of economic failure as the horizon of politics, which justifies replacing elected politicians with experts, including by non-electoral means, undermines politics, and democratic ideals in particular, with a particular twist. When politicians are disparaged and cheerfully replaced by technocrats, the confusion of representations (the representation of truth and the representation of will) highlights a disturbing closeness of liberal democratic institutions to the grounds of dictatorship – in its etymological and historical sense. The will of the people is legitimating only in the extraordinary circumstances of order and peace. Democracy is too clumsy to deal with crisis; that is, crisis as the moment of ultimate decision is beyond the reach of democratic decision-making. The argument is certainly familiar from other expression of the state-of-exception mindset. Democracy is too weak, too unreliable, to deal with serious threats. And so democracy should suspend itself, in the sense that one should suspend belief in the ultimate grounding of the power of coercion, i.e. the will of the people. Individuals are tortured without the people’s having delegated that power to state authorities; families are robbed of their pensions, savings, and social services by unelected experts in the name of financial health. For economic crises, closeness to the truth, closeness to the natural givens of the market, justify delegation to scholars and financial experts; for national security, closeness to the laws of violence and conflict demand delegation to the military and national security agencies.

The issue is not in the substance of the cruel economic measures that target the weakest segments of society; it lies in what the decision-making process that

¹² On liberalism, neoliberalism, and regimes of truth, see generally Foucault 2004.

led to those measures betrays about the state of liberal democracy. Democracy is yielding to experts because of their better source of legitimacy, because truth trumps will, and because ultimately, as technocratic governments have been significantly called, authority has to go to the “caretakers.” Democracy is yielding, essentially, to epistemocracy, the rule by those who know – which is really aristocracy for the modern times. And as such, when it leads to the rule by the better ones, the crisis shows, as a fundamental breach of normalcy, that order and peace, the realm of the political and debate, have always constituted the continuation of war by other means – i.e. the imposition of a particular regime of truth and truth making as part of the larger architecture of power and domination of some perspective over another (Foucault 2001, 1570 ff.; and 1997, 41). Progressively, as the responses to the crisis become more seemingly grotesque and obscene, one realizes that objective truth, a particular objective truth, will be enforced not against the will of the people, but against the notion that the will, or even the fate, of the people matters. In that sense, science, or a particularly totalitarian view of science and the world, once made into policy embodies the outer bounds of human agency, of history, and thus of messianic resignation.

IV

The crisis is such because it is also a crisis of appearances. Economic technocracy and democracy have walked hand in hand for a long time, if only through the patronizing management of developing economies by the Global North. The financial crisis has made more open in its causes and its consequences the long erosion of democratic governance by economic and financial forces. Of course, for the overwhelming majority of the planet, the financial and economic crisis is their normalcy. But for many in the North, deprivation, disenfranchisement, and overall precariousness of present and future circumstances has also been a way of life. Here also, the same logic appears as in the recent shocks triggered by liberal democratic deviations in the name of national security: why is Guantánamo so extraordinary, or Abu Ghraib so unacceptable, while so much ordinary cruelty and human degradation is acceptable in ordinary prisons everywhere all the time? The framing of the crisis by science itself, the science of markets and public finances, is the universalization of a particular point of view and particular priorities, meaning also of a particular set of political priorities. Even a massive world recession would not really change anything to a vast amount of people. That is why the production of problems is as important a starting point of reflection and questioning as the deployment of solutions.

The Weberian separation in terms of vocations foregrounds a personal ethical point of view, which always needs to be broadened and put in context, a context of power relations in which science operates, sometimes explicitly as part of

the deployment of physical violence, let alone structural violence.¹³ One needs similarly to entertain the thought that science itself is a regime of power, and that the exceptional moment of reversal when politics is sidelined, and science dictates, is simply a blunt and awkward display of the fact that the production of knowledge, and its implementation as a regime of truth, constitute in themselves world-forming violence (see generally Thorpe 2004). The operation of managerial science, in the name of iron laws of whatever kind, straddles the Foucauldian typology across contexts, but certainly, in the situation of the economic crisis, takes on in the form of technocracy the combined traits of discipline, biopower, and of course usurped sovereign power. Bypassing the regimes of excessively democratic representation in the name of knowledge against error, false consciousness or corruption is a replication of old tensions between liberalism and democracy: fears of tyranny by the misguided many on the enlightened minority, now commonly referred as a productive minority, whose freedoms should not be hampered for the sake of all – meaning essentially themselves. The framing within which technocracy therefore enters the domain of politics to transform the modes of legitimation is indeed a deeply ideological one.

A new mediatic commonsense is constituted by the constant referral to experts, who produce a voice over for world events such as the European economic crisis and other human disasters waiting to be captured in a simplifying narrative. The characteristic trait of that brand of commentators is the importance of pedigree. Standing is provided by the idea of expertise, which means in essence specialization – both inclusive and exclusive: individuals get authority from the fact that they know something very well, which also implies that they know other things less well, since other experts will be equally relevant for those other issues. That obvious state of affairs reflects the modern form of science as disciplinarity. Science is discipline, a set of disciplines, organized networks of traditions, methods, inside histories, persons, professional societies, publications, and other material or immaterial elements that ground the pursuit of knowledge in institutions and in society. Disciplines have had the effect of fragmenting science, around the fragmentation of the world into scientific objects, the way they are approached, and defined by the various, and proliferating domains of scientific inquiry. Specialization means ultimately affiliation and recognition by peers through processes that are as much sociological and cultural as they are seemingly a matter of methodological purity.

In a series of reflexive moves by knowledge itself, the anchoring of scientific pursuit in disciplines has led science to also question itself in its exclusivist definition against the rest of culture and society, against ideology and religion, most notoriously in its contemporary avatar by Science and Technology Studies.¹⁴ Such

¹³ Again, the relative transparency of liberal democracies has allowed for clear exposés of the enlistment of scientific experts in managing war-on-terror suspects. See Mayer 2005, 60 ff.

¹⁴ For an introduction, see e.g. Hackett *et al.* 2008.

a general perspective of science as, from the start, a social institution, or a set of social institutions, which can then be unpacked as chains of material and ideational factors, will allay the horror of science taking over the realm of the political, and science dictating public policy. Science is part of society and has been infecting politics as part of the project of modernity and certainly the Enlightenment. Fact and value have been entangled in their peculiar tango for a while. Science, the representation of truth, by its enlightened kinship with the representation of will, is behind the very notion of politics as a science.¹⁵ Science as the pursuit of truth beyond value is a natural partner of politics as the craft of pursuing, advancing, and of course compromising values. The issue is that science can take itself too seriously as a superior pole of legitimacy, that is, as the holder of truth beyond value, as opposed to a generator of truth according to a particular, and evolving, set of disciplinary values and traditions embodied in institutions.¹⁶

Interdisciplinarity, at least in the way it is projected and fantasized in academia today, is a notion that is born of that modern state of affairs. Disciplinarity leads, by its very trajectory, to partial knowledge, or incomplete results. The world and its phenomena are too complex to abide by professional conventions, whether in the natural sciences, the social sciences, or the humanities. Whether it is a problem of scale, which makes disciplinary specialization blind to either the bigger or the smaller picture, or else it is a problem of interrelations, which sets boundaries between methods and objects excessively abstract and arbitrary, interdisciplinarity calls upon scholarship to join scientific efforts. Large-scale phenomena, themselves seemingly constituted by interconnections and networks, demand almost by nature an interdisciplinary, or multi-disciplinary, or trans-disciplinary perspective. The financial and economic crisis certainly counts among them (see e.g. Schiek 2013). We could certainly also mention global climate change. The idea is intuitively appealing, and most of all, given the imperial presence of one science among others, namely economics, and within it the recurring dominance of one set of methods and traditions, namely, neoclassical economics, one will see immediately the benefits of thinking outside of a given box, or rather thinking across boxes.

This volume and the articles that it contains were born after a long process of gestation that began precisely with the encounter between the crisis and interdisciplinarity. The encounter took the form of informal dialogues between two friendly colleagues, landed from distant disciplinary horizons onto a common intellectual and institutional space, a space defined by the slogan of interdisciplinarity. The Helsinki Collegium for Advanced studies, the institution that hosts the journal *COLLeGIUM*, celebrates interdisciplinarity by gathering scholars of all disciplinary

15 For a discussion of the notion of “political science” at the birth of modern political science, see Mansfield 1981.

16 The history and philosophy of science are rich enough as disciplines of their own to account for the ideological nature of any foundational objectivist distinction between fact and value, which could then say anything about the social specificity of science. A canonical take on how science works, and especially how it evolves, is Kuhn 1996.

origins in the social and human sciences, and offering the prospect for those scientists to be scientists among other breeds of scientists, and exist intellectually and socially outside of their home disciplinary turf. Our own dialogue, reporting on the latest obscenity uttered by such and such European Finance Minister, or discussing the fate of our loved ones in our respective motherlands, turned quickly self-reflexive. How is it that political disputation of the turn to dictatorship and technocratic shamelessness was the matter of coffee breaks? How was it that the most dramatic current social phenomenon in Europe, a phenomenon that was concretely threatening the givens of higher education in Europe, was not the object of manifest academic endeavors under the rubric of the social mission of the University?

Our own casual consideration of the crisis was informed by our academic training and our scientific *habitus*, manifest in the smooth punctuating of sentences with Carl Schmitt, Milton Friedman, Ulrich Beck, or Slavoj Žižek. The received idea was of course that the economic crisis is about economics, and within the walls of the university, the crisis would be dealt with by economists. The issue of experts and expertise in politics appeared as a mutually reverberating set of mirrors. Expertise was as much an incitement to silence and withdrawal from society, as a tool for the pursuit of truth or the advancement of the good life. Scholars were to be political actors only as citizens – human beings thus functionally split over a metaphysical divide between scientific pursuit and ideological commitment, the representation of factual truth and the defense of contestable values.¹⁷ Here the crisis met the issue of disciplinarity in a critical way. How does the crisis become formulated as a crisis? How do we produce an image of the crisis that allows for various disciplinary traditions to plausibly converge and share ideas? Who is invited to the conversation? Why are we not invited? Interdisciplinarity needed visibly to be tackled as a problem, possibly more than a solution.

Given the many relations that disciplinarity entertains with the crisis, the question is how interdisciplinarity can be made to meet the crisis in an empowering way, that is, a way that acknowledges the social, ethical, and political responsibility of scholars and scholarship as embedded in social networks of power and violence. How is, in other words, interdisciplinarity given a critical dimension, a dimension - to follow Roland Barthes's apt definition of critique – that puts the crisis itself in crisis? (Barthes 1984, 384) As mentioned above, part of the staggering nature of political discourses around the crisis is that they rob it of its critical nature – a nature marked by decision, and decidability (Derrida 1990, 159). Famously, in *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, the term “crisis” is used by Thomas Kuhn to refer to the experience of instability of scientific paradigms faced with an

17 In this we echoed Max Horkheimer, who suggests the following in the essay already quoted in the epigraph: “The scholarly specialist ‘as’ scientist regards social reality and its products as extrinsic to him, and ‘as’ citizen exercises his interest in them through political articles, membership in political parties or social service organizations, and participation in elections. But he does not unify these two activities, and his other activities as well, except, at best, by psychological interpretation.” Horkheimer 1972, 209.

accumulation of failures in explanation or prediction. Crisis is that moment when the old system struggles to cope with what it cannot explain and awaits for a more explanatory system, a new paradigm. The European “crisis” is unfortunately, but quite significantly, not described as a crisis, given that the recipes are ready-made (if however proven wrong many times in the past), and the alternative is really no alternative at all, but rather the end of the world – while for many the world is ending rapidly already, or has really never existed beyond a daily state of nature. Interdisciplinarity as a slogan is not therefore per se critical in any way, since its vagueness leaves it open to be interpreted as simply a reinforcement of the givenness of disciplinarity, and therefore the authority of science as institutional pedigree. Interdisciplinarity, however, can serve the purpose of imagining the crisis as a crisis, as something that precisely does not fit in our mind frame since it is supposed to be a threat to the frame itself.

At a very basic level, one idea behind this volume is therefore to practically question the assumptions behind the opposition of politics and expertise. One way of doing so is to experiment in interdisciplinarity, to recapture the meaning and purpose of interdisciplinarity as a practice. The expertise that is mobilized to face the European crisis is a particular form of expertise, which constructs the crisis as a very specific type of event and problem, a form of expertise that is the product of the modern notion of science as disciplinarity or, as a disciplined and disciplining professional practice. For millions of people in Europe, and elsewhere obviously, the crisis has nothing to do with billions in public deficits, billions in public debt, and interest rates and credit rating, realities that have little reality as against the experience of hunger, anguish, despair, and rage in the face of the disappearance of all meaning. Governments have turned absurd, politics an incomprehensible farce, and the materiality of the world is found for some in the reemergence of physical violence as a meaningful response to the structural violence of circumstances. That is the experience of the crisis, and as such the crisis is precisely the disintegration of meaning.

Academics can contribute to the production of meaning for public debate by engaging in interdisciplinarity as a constrained political practice, as opposed to a quest for the better objective truth. Disciplinary specialization, followed by disciplinary alienation, followed by political disenfranchisement, can be offset by an effort at constructing a larger, more nuanced, and more far-reaching picture of what the crisis is, what it means, and what can come out of it. The goal is to reassert, especially against the crude, dictatorial, and unidirectional scientism of a particular economic thought (which, it bears repeating, has been disproved a many junctures for the past decades), that reality is forcefully constructed by some and endured by others. Interdisciplinarity in a critical sense, a sense adapted to the crisis as crisis, is a destabilizing and disturbing practice, which reveals the flaws and weaknesses of disciplinarity and disciplinary grounding. Interdisciplinarity thus practiced can upset the self-confidence of disciplinary knowledge, rather than entrenching it by the significantly economic metaphors of enrichment or borrowing. Interdisciplinarity

is an encounter between embodied disciplines, which manifest themselves only in such encounters, and thereby highlight the socially constructed nature of facts, and the concomitant social responsibility of scholars.¹⁸

Interdisciplinarity as an academic, but also political practice consists in the juxtaposition of disciplinary discourses around a theme – here, a particular questioning of a crisis that poses the problem of science’s claims on the political process and its legitimacy. Individuals, card-carriers of their disciplinary party, would react to it, from their own background, with their own projects. When the world of scholarship was thus asked to submit writing projects related to the dictatorship of failure, it turned out not only that many different disciplinary outlooks have something to say about the crisis, but most importantly that many variously situated scholars see their own work as related to the crisis – whether they are in anthropology, in economics, in history, or in visual arts. Bringing different aspects, and different takes on, the dimensions of what each one considered as the crisis, generates a particular artifact, a puzzle or a patchwork, constituted as much by the pieces as by the gaps, lines or stitches between them. In the cracks between those interventions and their respective contexts, the overlaps generated by common, if differently framed, objects of concern, and the contradictions generated by the collision of intellectual traditions, we aimed at locating elements for alternative discussions and proposals for redefining, reclaiming, and reappropriating the crisis from discourses that have operationalized it out of its human essence. The politics of the crisis consist ultimately in the fact that the overwhelming majority has been robbed not only of pensions and savings, but also of the crisis itself. As a political practice, therefore, interdisciplinarity, before anything else, could challenge the fatalism of a particular narrative about the crisis, operate a form of intervention against the viral circulation of that homogeneous picture of the crisis, and reopen the dialogue about what is possible, what is impossible, and what is desirable. At bottom, interdisciplinarity as a practice of reaching out of one’s professional enlistment, as this scholarly endeavor started, is also a way of reflecting on one’s discipline’s contribution to the reality and sense of crisis, and especially to the fact that the crisis as we are told about it is not a crisis at all.

The crisis therefore can be all that and more: a crisis of disciplinary power, a crisis of confidence in democracy, a crisis of meaning for many, or a crisis of political communication. Asked from within the academic world, the question of the nature of the crisis points back in all cases to the responsibility of scholarship as a social function, and more especially so in the context of Europe, where the crisis has not opened widely any kind of space for alternatives to the image of a common market, a common agricultural policy, and common borders to keep the

18 Scepticism about the fact-value distinction is a recurrent feature of critical interventions against the self-legitimizing authority of science. Following the above mentioned diagnosis, Horkheimer proceeds to say: “Critical thinking, on the contrary, is motivated today by the effort really to transcend the tension and to abolish the opposition between the individual’s purposefulness, spontaneity, and rationality, and those work-process relationships on which society is built.” Horkheimer 1972, 210.

Global South at arms length. That the fate of European peoples and communities is subject to the same dictatorial and patronizing regime of truth that for decades and centuries Europe had imposed on its colonies and postcolonies intimates, among other things, the need for a larger consideration of whether Europe is something to be salvaged. Or whether, to paraphrase Gandhi, we should rather consider that Europe would be a good idea - yet to be born, yet to be implemented. This volume is therefore an experiment in interdisciplinarity, as an object that comes out of the political project of counting on assemblages, collectives, and networks of discourses as the antidote to the poison of hegemonic naturalized ideology, which for decades has ravaged the developing world with Europe's blessing, and now is coming rightfully to claim its share of victims in the heart of the empire. That is where politics and science meet, rather than in the mere surface of technocracy competing with democracy as a mode of legitimating violence. What is critical about the current State of Europe? What is European about the crisis? Recapturing the various dimensions of those questions through the contrived encounter of heterogeneous discourses, we thought, would suggest points of departure to counter the dictatorial reign of macro-economic failure as the horizon of democracy in Europe.

V

The articles collected in this volume are organized by large themes, which we imagined to be common threads in political commentary outside of academia, and could be brought back to signal also academic interventions: legitimacy, finance, sacrifice, and the common good. Under these headings interveners from different disciplinary backgrounds react to the crisis and, both individually and by virtue of their contrived juxtaposition, speak (or are made to speak together by the editors) to the larger, framing theme. Many more themes and many more interventions were available, and we have not ruled out the possibility of reconvening this exercise at a later stage of European economic and political life to again experiment with the voice of interdisciplinary coexistence.

Under the heading of legitimacy, the interventions intersect in enlightening ways, as they consider in different ways the European crisis as a crisis affecting Europe, that is, various explicit and implicit understandings that one can attach to "Europe" when talking of the crisis. Fernando Losada opens the volume with a legal and political project that in many ways sails to the heart of our initial questioning. Legitimacy is the center of attention, and the problem of legitimacy is tracked down along the ramifications of European law and regulation as it sets up institutions that wield economic power over the continent, such as the European Central Bank. Losada examines in detail the governance mechanisms of the Economic and Monetary Union from the perspective of contrasting ideas of legitimacy, and what its various sources are. Mikkel Thorup takes the discussion outside of the current conversation about deficits and public debts to address again legitimacy,

as it is problematized by the European crisis, but as it is exemplified by alternative modes of legitimacy to the democratic privileging of popular sovereignty. He walks us through the historical debate about the critique of liberalism associated with the figure of Carl Schmitt, and examines the claim concerning the political weakness of liberalism as already a negation of political decision and political responsibility in particular historical instances involving the crisis of liberalism. Mirroring concerns over the legitimacy of the liberal understanding of politics, Zora Kovacic addresses the legitimacy of economic discourses as it is highlighted by the crisis. At stake is here not the institutions or the actors, but the failure of a conceptual structure to make sense of the world at a point in time, thus suggesting the necessity of imminent recalibration, or perhaps revolution, on the scientific side of things. Kovacic describes the factual elements of the world financial crisis in a deceptively linear narrative, followed by a critical consideration of the limitations inherent in neoclassical economics when it comes to addressing a phenomenon such as the financial crisis. Specifically, as the multiplicity of proposed expert explanations demonstrated, the crisis demanded an explanation across the blind spot of traditional economics, which is in her view the articulation of the micro and macro levels. As described, the legitimacy of each part of the discourse is grounded in different descriptive and normative premises, and she suggests therefore moving to alternative approaches to the economics of the crisis, away from premises that could be, and have been, repeatedly challenged. As such, the dialogue between those contributions showcases the multiplicity of issues posed by the language of legitimacy, as it contaminates the network of elements constituting the crisis and its severity: institutions, political commitments and ideology, as well as expert discourses in charge of explaining the crisis.

Three texts then address money and finance, suddenly therefore posited as one aspect of what the crisis could mean. Echoing Losada's understanding of economic governance as independent from the processes that grant democratic legitimacy, Klaus Tuori focuses on the life and functions of the ECB as an economic agent, against the situation of economic crisis, and particularly the intersection of politics and finance created by the sovereign debt crisis in Greece, Italy, and soon elsewhere. The question, as indicated in the title, is deceptively simple. We know what the ECB does, but why does it do it? How do we understand the ECB as a European institution? The two preceding papers in that section give depth to that questioning, by broadening the horizon of discussions about the public debts of States, and the proper disposition of external actors towards the State's failure to keep their credit healthy. Katarina Sehm-Patömaki addresses in a way a very simple presumption in framing the issue of debt recovery when dealing with sovereign States. While it is certain that debt, as well as debt recovery, must be sustainable, the issue is one of defining the method, and really the perspective, from which criteria of sustainability are drawn. In other words, what kind of discourses participate in the framing of sustainability as a concept in the negotiations over sovereign debt management? She proposes that the criteria are possibly one

sided, and possibly therefore unsustainable in a not so paradoxical way. After all, sustainability could encompass elements of the life of States that do not show up on the radar of public finance, such as the level of suffering of the state's population. In the broader context of examining from where the issues are framed and the problems defined, before the solutions are designed, the third text of the section, poses another seemingly obvious question. When one talks about economic or financial crisis, what exactly is it that one is imagining? What do we mean by "the economy" and what do we mean about "international financial markets"? To the lay people who are the victims of the austerity measures such nebulous notions will seem remote and metaphysical, but surely to the economic actors themselves, and to the scholarly observers who want to make sense of it, those reference points must be made intelligible. Jon Cloke engages here in a theoretical exploration of the contemporary capitalist mode of production, accumulation and circulation of goods, services, and money, to illustrate the general thesis that the contemporary economic universe and its logic overflow the frame of traditional understandings of the economy – against the notion that the issue is merely one of increasing speed, increasing breadth, or increasing risk. Possibly then, the crisis is a conceptual crisis before anything else. From the echoes among the three contributions, a series of questions arise with relation to the social and normative grounding of technical concepts and notions, that are then deployed as methodological tools for the management of economic prosperity, whether it is in crisis or it is not.

The third section is devoted to the theme of sacrifice, and gathers explorations of the subjects and objects of suffering in the crisis. Matteo Stocchetti approaches the crisis from the question of opposition, as illustrated first of all by the issue of blame. The anger and frustration of many as the crisis unfolds is directed towards a target. Who is to blame for the situation? There is a variety of responses to that, each one with its consequences, most notably for possibility of imagining solutions, or rectification, or more importantly for Stocchetti, means of resistance. He proposes against the background of Polanyi's *Great Transformation* the notion that under current conditions, new factors mitigate the mechanisms identified by Polanyi for the contexts in which, as he saw it, the unregulated self-sustained market threatens the dissolution of society. In thinking about the point of view of the victims of the crisis and then the austerity measures, the issue is that of the effect of "marketspeak" on the availability of vantage points for resistance, given its imperial exclusion of any other discourse's aspirations to authority. Patrizio Lo Presti echoes in peculiar ways this line of inquiry, by shifting sensibilities from the realm of political economy to psychological sensibilities. The point of departure, here again, is the presumed people, that is, the addressees of the mandate to sacrifice, who is then materialized in austerity. As a display of interdisciplinary confrontation, he stages a meeting between the economics of austerity measures, and the idea of a psychological attitude of the sufferers of austerity towards the conditions and context of austerity. Here also, we have echoes of questionings arising in other papers addressing other dimensions of the crisis, such as the

recurrent questioning around the framing of notions instrumental to the formulation of the crisis and its solutions come to life. Here, unpacking austerity as an idea generates the meeting of social psychology, philosophy and economics to clarify the very specific, and very slanted, logic that sustains austerity as referring to a particular bearer of sacrifices. Finally, in this collective consideration of the sociological basis of crisis and austerity, Golfo Maggini adds the contribution of the history of contemporary continental philosophy, by examining the European crisis in the context of a century-long reflection on the idea of crisis as associated with Europe. Maggini presents and defends Jan Patočka intimate phenomenological reflections around Europe and particularly Europe's critical relationships with war and technology in the twentieth-century, as a background to an examination of the current European crisis as both a crisis and European. One can experience an almost inescapable sense of loss of meaning when confronting, as she does, contemporary rhetoric about crisis and economic war, on the one hand, and Patočka's seemingly relentless attempt at grasping the nature of the crisis suffered by Europe's civilization, or super-civilization, in the course of the twentieth-century, in particular through the transformative experience of total war as itself the ultimate expression Europeanity.

The last section addresses elements of the crisis that points to future alternatives, be it in terms of political imagination or moral aspirations stimulated by the crumbling of hope in received structures of meaning and legitimacy. Beckoning to the question, and location, of morality in the narratives of the crisis, Kelly Grotke juxtaposes two languages seemingly foreign to one another: Mandeville's Fable of the Bees and the professional standards of accounting. The encounter, as should be expected, generates sets of questions not previously self-evident about accounting, an issue otherwise central to the mainstream account of the European crisis. How do different, and differently generated, codes of professional standards depict the social position of the profession through the values that they convey? What kind of virtues, in more literary terms, are conveyed by the codes? And based on that, what type of code, with what type of content and rules, should we prefer for a profession, depending on whether we attach importance to the distinction between private life and public sphere? Whereas we are talking about money and professional discipline, the intimations in that discussion point again to the question of legitimacy, and the reassuring yet obfuscating effect of strict oppositions, whether it is between public and private, or between politics and economics. Why not speak of the morality of accounting, and therefore discuss accounting as a moral practice itself? The final essay of this volume, by Thomas Wallgren, captures many of the themes at play in the rest of the pieces and in our initial reflection. A central proposition of Wallgren's is that there is indeed a variety of ways of constructing the crisis, explaining it, and then attempting to resolve it, but there is one dominant framing of the crisis, which needs to be critically assessed. Wallgren examines this standard view of the crisis from different angles: its presuppositions, its basic tenets, and then its consequences for both economic policy and the European project. He

suggests that the standard view is problematic, especially in the distracting effect of the recurrent narrative, supported especially by a segment of European liberal Left constituencies, of the democratic deficit. As Wallgren explains in historical and political terms, the democratic deficit is built into the European project that is now described as in a state of crisis. What did all these people mean when they were talking about democratic deficit? And similarly, is it not clear that the crisis is really not a crisis at all for certain people? Wallgren helpfully proceeds to critically engage with political narratives that have produced a frame for the explanation but also the experience of the crisis, with reference to overarching political objectives. Responding to our initial questioning, Wallgren asks in return: what crisis are we talking about? What Europe are you talking about? Who says that the crisis of Europe as we know it should be a bad thing? And why would anybody want to say that? Those questions then help clear the way for considerations of alternatives that will transcend the present contraction of the political space due to the narrow depiction of the crisis. Can saving Europe really justify austerity and sacrifice of the many for the few? Imagining the future may then mean that the people who are addressed as the bearers of national salvation and destiny will have to reclaim the crisis from the hands of the experts and make it their own.

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