

# Crisis, interregnum and symbolic violence

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*And standing I remained once again with a burnt hand here  
On this edge of the world where the calamities thrust me  
To fight the "Non" and the "Impossible" of this world.  
Odysseus Elytis*

## **I. Preamble: Where the word is unspoken/ We will build with new speech [T.S. Eliot]**

The present article seeks to explore the modern oscillation between despair and hope within the specific locus of Hellenic territory seen through national and international challenges. This rather rough exploration intends to discuss no rhetorical or futuristic inquiries but a structured situation already on us. As the author is vivid part of the situation discussed, the offered discourse is a firmly situated observation and wishes to be seen as such. If this inquiry does have any value, it consists exactly in the projection of an internal time-sense, of a personal- and yet as narrative objective- experience of the changing beat in the rhythms of perception within the geography of the so called Greek crisis. The ascription of tragic sentiments to certain events of the current crisis is not an exaggeration but the metaphor of Greek Tragedy shall be avoided in this context, mostly because every ancient Greek Tragedy implies a *catharsis*,<sup>1</sup> an emotional resolution, and this is not yet the case with this modern situation and secondarily because the terms

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<sup>1</sup> Aristotle, Poetics.

imply a generalization that is not valid in the current state of affairs. Each one of us carries an individualized life-scenario while on the ladder of public existence. The theater of crisis intensifies our cultural idiolect, our vulnerability to the eye of an external beholder, or our defiance toward an 'external, alien law'. In this theater, these of us who are privileged, less privileged or at loss of any hope for the future or in constant fear, stay together to live through the same self-divisive process: we are simultaneously actors and spectators of the drama of our life. This implies a post-modern condition and is far from ancient tragedy. If despite this self-awareness some have the courage to push further and become the exceptional personages of this ascribed unfairly collective negativity, they become individual heroes. They connect occasionally the net of societal cohesion. There is momentarily a bit of collective joy, laughter and light time. But everyday tragic experience of loss, sadness and anguish for survival offers other scripts of heroism. They are the narratives of the mundane heroism of the small occasions, or these that entail cutting across pain and moving forward. One needs to scratch the surface of passing time to read this stuff that lurks beneath. Even beneath the laughter that mimics or realizes the joy of life which is emphatically still here.

A tragedy implies a central event or a series of interconnected events while the present economic crisis implies a multiplication of second-order events (i.e. events following or caused by the implementation of structural austerity) that remain invisible or uncharted. Because of the complexity of the problems and the length of chains of effect, assignment of causes and consequences is not achievable with any degree of reliability.

Tragedy re-named: Even if for the rest of the spectators the current situation seems like a tragedy, for us it should be named and experienced otherwise. It should be a new chance. We know because we share a precedent: When around 493BCE one of the very first works of tragedy 'The Fall of Miletus' by the tragic poet Phrynichus was staged in Athens-in fact two years after the events with which it dealt actually occurred- the Athenians were so unsettled by what they saw that they

were reduced to weeping.<sup>2</sup> Herodotus provides the following account of their reaction to that performance:

“The Athenians...showed their profound distress at the loss of the Miletus in a number of ways, but in none so clearly than in their reception of Phrynichus’ play; for when Phrynichus produced his *Fall of Miletus*, the audience in the theater burst into tears, and the author was fined a thousand drachmae for reminding them of a disaster that was theirs (*hos anamnesanta oikeia kaka*). A law was subsequently passed forbidding anybody ever to put the play on stage again”.<sup>3</sup>

Beyond a few exemptions the tragic poets did not use actual historical events within living memory on stage again. Likewise, in modern Athens or in Thessaloniki, the period we pass through is probably a period of shared remembrance we shall cut across to the best of each one’s abilities, a period then to forget and forgive and not to recall although we shall permit its artistic reproduction.

It is now a time when one after another almost every certainty of the past is showing signs of weakness both on national and international level. The implications of the Great Global Recession in 2008 as well as the various challenges to established modes of representative democracy are two seemingly divergent and yet intertwined loci of public anxiety in many parts of the world. Yet within the territory of our national dialectic of despair and hope there are certain idiosyncratic elements, some of which shall be sketched in the present analysis. The inference ‘idiosyncratic’ refers to culturally distinctive traits of modern public discourse either actual or imaginary.

Time’s pace is always emotionally charged. It does influence certain emotional flows through expectations, desires or fears and is especially influenced by certain emotions. Joy quickens the pace of felt time. Sadness slows down time’s race or at least feels to do so. Denial pins time down to nothingness only to start pacing step by step again. Crisis of

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<sup>2</sup> P. A. Kottman, *Memory, Mimesis, Tragedy: The Scene Before Philosophy*, *Theatre Journal*, 55, 2003, 81-97, 83.

<sup>3</sup> *Ib.* translation of Herodotus’ text slightly changed.

any kind either accelerates the pace of urgent time or, again, slows down time's steps. It depends upon the position of the observer. Yet there is another way around the clock: It does suggest running ahead of the felt pace of time no matter what. It is like writing in perfect verse a "Waste Land" over the head of a disaster.

## II. Crisis and its perpetuation: The burnt-out ends of smoky days [T. S. Eliot]

"Crisis. From the Greek word κρίσις, 'Judgement', 'result of a trial', 'turning point', selection, decision (according to Thucydides), but also 'contention' or 'quarrel' (according to Plato), a standard, from which to derive *criterion*, 'means for judging', but also ability to discern, and *critical*, 'suitable to judge', 'crucial', 'decisive' as well as pertaining to the art of judgement".<sup>4</sup> All of the above meanings are subsumed in the use of a single word to describe economic recession: economic crisis.

A general discourse on crisis offered by Edgar Morin, suggests that a crisis is an event [in our case a set of events] that reveals: it reveals what usually remains invisible; It urges us to realize what we do not wish to realize. The crisis reveals elements that are inherent to the real and are not merely accidents. It represents a moment of truth. Simultaneously, a crisis is an event that has an effect: on the one hand the crisis sets in motion not only forces of decomposition, disorganization, and destruction, but also forces of re-construction, innovation, invention. A crisis shows that what worked had its limitations, its drawbacks, its counter-effects.<sup>5</sup> There appears the need and the incentive to invent something new, both at the micro-level and the macro-level.<sup>6</sup> Yet that incentive is imperative and in need of actualization in a very particular context, in which emotions, passions, and fears tend to pervert reason.

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<sup>4</sup> C. Bordoni in Z. Bauman and C. Bordoni, *State of Crisis*, Cambridge, Polity Press, 2014, 1.

<sup>5</sup> E. Morin, *Pour une théorie de la crise*, in E. Morin, *Sociologie*, Paris, Fayard, 1984, 139-153, 144-145.

<sup>6</sup> *Ib.*, 140-141.

Passions run high and do not always permit the endeavor to overcome the crisis by rational means.

Economic crisis is a phase of instability because of the lack of investments, a decrease in production, an increase in unemployment, a situation, in other words, that implies a societal turmoil, a vicious circle of cause and effect. "Any adverse event, especially concerning the economic sector, is 'blamed on the crisis'. It is an attribution of responsibility absolutely depersonalized, which frees individuals from any involvement and refers to an abstract entity sounding vaguely sinister".<sup>7</sup>

In order to get a glimpse of the kind of economic crisis that clouds our hopes, it is important to read carefully those with expertise on the issue: "In 2010", assert Ghellab and Papadakis, "while global recovery was still fragile and unemployment remained high or was still rising, governments in several European countries became increasingly alarmed by mounting fiscal deficits and public debt ratios, and abruptly shifted the focus of public policy from the stimulation of the economy to cutting public spending in order to restore fiscal balance. Most of these governments, in particular those in southern Europe, have come under strong pressure from financial markets to start reducing deficits sharply and immediately".<sup>8</sup> When the severity of the crisis was realized in Greece it led to an emergency stabilization of a financial system on the edge of collapse. In fact it did happen something that was inconceivable before it actually occurred. An announcement came from the then P.M. which urgently suggested that Greece would be *temporarily* in need of financial support from IMF. Both EU and IMF came to the rescue of the country offering a tremendous amount of money. The situation was described as bleak. Nevertheless, it was asserted, time and again, both at home and internationally, that after the implementation of a carefully planned set of structural adjustments the situation would return (at least gradually) to a post-crisis normality.

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<sup>7</sup> *Ib.*, 2.

<sup>8</sup> Y. Ghellab and K. Papadakis, *The Politics of Economic Adjustment in Europe: State Unilateralism or Social Dialogue?* In *The Global Crisis, Causes, Responses and Challenges*, International Labour Office, Geneva, 2011, 81-91, 82-83.

Instead of this, the period of austerity has been extended ever since. The country passes year in and year out from one structural adjustment to the next while its debt increases and its social cohesion becomes dissolved.<sup>9</sup> During this period opens up the space which will be called Interregnum. By this term, it is meant the period of time between two normal periods, the one prior to the current crisis and the prospective one, the aftermath of crisis, hoping that there will be any-time soon such an aftermath.

Continuing the reading of the same text we learn that “since the eruption of the financial crisis in 2008, two technical terms, ‘spreads’ (the extra interest rate required when investments are seen as risky) and CDS (Credit Default Swaps: the price to insure against default on the sovereign debt), two indicators used by large investment banks, suddenly became the indicators most watched when it came to assessing the health of national economies and deciding additional measures of austerity. The shift of the main focus of public policy-makers away from traditional macroeconomic indicators to indicators measuring financial risk, denotes a *de facto* departure from a ‘political economy’ crisis-response approach towards a ‘financial-market-driven’ approach, a trend related to the financialization of the real economy and workers’ personal income—a major systemic transformation of the capitalist economy”.<sup>10</sup>

The present analysis will not offer an evaluation of the social impact of structural adjustment measures, or the specific needs for reformation in certain areas. The adjustment imposed aimed at the reduction of

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<sup>9</sup> M. Castells, J. Caraça and G. Cardoso, *AFTERMATH, The Cultures of the Economic Crisis*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2012, 4, W. Streeck, *The Crisis in Context: Democratic Capitalism and its Contradictions*, in A. Schäfer and W. Streeck (eds.), *Politics in the Age of Austerity*, Cambridge, Polity Press, 2013, 262-286, J. E. Stiglitz and Daniel Heyman (Eds.), *Life after Debt, The Origins and Resolutions of Debt Crisis*, IEA, Conference Volume 152, New York, Palgrave Macmillan, 2014, G. Christodoulakis (ed.), *Making Risks in the European Periphery Debt Crisis*, New York, Palgrave Macmillan, 2015.

<sup>10</sup> *Ib.*

fiscal deficits especially by lowering public expenditure, gradually eliminating various subsidies, raising prices of utilities, freezing or reducing public sector pay, capping pension payments and increasing retirement age. For those not knowing what the whole situation entailed these measures appeared as a necessary condition, a *pharmacon*,<sup>11</sup> that would save the country. Yet it became soon intelligible that the enterprise of saving the country had its own logic outside public discussion, common rationalization and human needs.<sup>12</sup> In addition to that, probably for the first time, this enterprise implied a huge blame-game that affected every single citizen of the country. Every now and then, and especially before every evaluation process (review), certain European periodicals offered precious pieces of analysis that created a brute fact of causality. What was offered as a help (in fact a lot of money which was not known were it was going) was deemed a loss because it was given to a people not worthy of it. The depicted reality implied that the money goes straight to people's pockets. These people of the country appeared as responsible for the whole situation, individually and collectively. Such a scenario, though, reflects a clear deviation from what is known from other analogous situations. This was not certainly the case with any other country despite the fact that the geographical indications North/South in Europe turned out to imply a binary opposition with the South taking the bad part of it.

Balibar depicts and judges the situation as follows: "The first immediate effect of the 'remedy' applied to the Greek crisis was the angry protest of the Greek population. It is debated whether this should be seen as a cowardly denial of the population's responsibility or a normal rejection of an unjust collective punishment. Leaving aside the criminal elements that have interfered, it seems to me that the Greek protest was fully justified, for at least three reasons." It is the first of these reasons that interests us for the present analysis and this asserts:

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<sup>11</sup> *Pharmacon* is a 'medicine' that acts as both remedy and poison [when taken in excess]. See J. Derrida, *Plato's Pharmacy*, transl. B. Johnson, The University of Chicago Press, 1968.

<sup>12</sup> The rhetoric turned out as 'rescuing the European currency'.

“we have been witnessing a completely insane denunciation of the whole Greek people: the corruption and the lies of the politicians were blamed on the people as such, indiscriminately”.<sup>13</sup> This is, of course, a wonderful fallacy with direct and indirect effects. Because of this, [and beyond the fact that not every former Greek politician was corrupt], the eye of the beholder on international level is directed against each specific performance of each one of the people of the country contrasted against an (unknown) ideal performance. The structural adjustment measures became invisible and took the shape of ‘money given for’, while it appeared as if individual human effort was enough to overcome structural austerity. If this was not the case, then the blame was put on an individual’s shoulder for dysfunctional adaptation. These insults spoken or written against a whole country and its politicians reflect what Bourdieu names a magical attempt at categorization: *kategoroin*, in Greek, from which our word category comes, originally means to accuse publicly.<sup>14</sup> Through this act of speech one tries to set new symbolic boundaries, or to organize forms of classification.<sup>15</sup>

It is well discussed by many scholars that collective responsibility [and subsequently collective punishment as just deserts] is a pre-modern phenomenon that has been transformed through modern law.<sup>16</sup> It was an integral part of vendetta, the customary law that implied private revenge measured through the rule of talio [eye for an eye: And if any mischief follow, then thou shalt give life for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot, burning for burning,

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<sup>13</sup> E. Balibar, *Europe: Final Crisis? Some Theses*, in *Theory and Event*, 2010, 13. 2.

<sup>14</sup> P. Bourdieu, *Social Space and Symbolic Power*, *Sociological Theory*, 7, 1, 1989, 14-25, 21.

<sup>15</sup> P. Bourdieu, *Symbolic Power*, *Critique of Anthropology*, 1979, 4, 77-85, 77.

<sup>16</sup> W. I. Miller, *Bloodtaking and Peacemaking, Feud, Law and Society in Saga Iceland*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1997, M. Archimandritou, *Vendetta and the Law*, (in Greek), Athens-Thessaloniki, Sakkoulas, 2007.

wound for wound, stripe for stripe. Exodus 21.23-25].<sup>17</sup> Collective responsibility did decline and eventually eclipsed when ancient and modern law introduced the question on the mental attitude of the actor of a criminal act with regard to it: i.e. premeditation. Prior to this transformation, accidental killing, mistaken killing and pre-meditated killing were treated exactly the same way, providing the same response: a new killing. In Ancient Greek history Draco was the first legislator who introduced an elaboration of the issue of premeditation in his law (621 B.C.). Aristotle discusses in two different works-Eudemian Ethics II 6-9 and Nicomachean Ethics III 1-the (causal) responsibility and correlative lack of responsibility of agents for their actions.<sup>18</sup> To make a very long and complicated story short it should be added that a second wave of blood feud customary laws came down from medieval European people to persist for some centuries over Rome itself and were eventually eliminated by early modern laws that created the public interest for resolving conflicts [personified as the interest of a Prince, initially], over the private interests of small collectivities connected by blood ties [families], territorial ties [neighborhoods] or different kinds of medieval European dependencies. In those contexts collective responsibility means a. the active responsibility of a collectivity being it a family, a neighborhood or a group of dependants of a prince to take revenge for an injury caused to one of them and b. the passive responsibility of all of the members of such a collectivity [and the acceptance of blame and diminished honor] for an injurious act caused by one of them. Hyams in his excellent 'Rancor and Reconciliation in Medieval England' infers that the instrumental emotion in feuding societies is, of course, hatred.<sup>19</sup> There we find societal relationships organized around the bipo-

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<sup>17</sup> W.I.Miller, *Eye for an Eye*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2006.

<sup>18</sup> J. -P. Vernant, *Intimations of the Will in Greek Tragedy*, in, J.-P. Vernant, P. Vidal-Naquet, *Myth and Tragedy in Ancient Greece*, transl. J. Cloye, New York, Zone Books, 1990, 49-84, M.A. Formicelli, *Aristotle's Theory of Proairesis and its Significance for accounts of human action and practical reasoning*, Boston College Thesis, Boston, 2009.

<sup>19</sup> P. Hyams, *Rancor and Reconciliation in Medieval England*, Ithaca, Cornell

lar antithesis friend/enemy. One last but not least element of the pre-modern processes of conflict resolution is the fact that in those shame and honor societies, the criterion of measuring honor, which means the evaluation of somebody's public value, rests on the view of the beholder and is never static but restless and dynamic.<sup>20</sup>

All of the above analysis of causal collective responsibility in pre-modern times presupposes a prior injurious act the consequences of which fall upon the shoulders of a whole group. Therefore, accusations against anyone without rightful implications formally established through the judicial system, negative evaluations that are based only on the fact that someone is a member of a certain group, represent a relic of older times surpassed by Enlightened Modernity. Rumors that reproduce stereotypes are again part of the polemical situation of energized hatred in blood-feud societies. It is therefore necessary to deconstruct our pre-judgments, pre-conceptions and prejudices each time we face a person and his/her potential, a people and their potential.<sup>21</sup> At an individual level this would be a necessary cognitive exercise. Things are pretty much more difficult when we have to deconstruct ideological clouds. Because, "there is no solid ground on which to stand whilst applying the lever of ideological analysis".<sup>22</sup> It is suggested though that this can probably be overcome by the simple application of robust pragmatism.<sup>23</sup>

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University Press, 2003.

<sup>20</sup> For a preliminary discussion see E. R. Dodds, *The Greek and the Irrational*, Berkeley, University of California Press, 1962.

<sup>21</sup> T. Reuter, *Medieval Politics and Modern Mentalities*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2006.

<sup>22</sup> C. Geertz, *Ideology as a Cultural System*, in his *The Interpretation of Cultures*, New York, Basic Books, 1973, 193-233, 194.

<sup>23</sup> T. Reuter, *ib.*, 107.

### **III. Interregnum and Symbolic Violence: Because I know that time is always time [T. S. Eliot]**

Interregnum, besides anything else, means that a close fabric of human life is temporarily set out of line. One of the most provocative statements on the current state of our globalized human societies has been given by Keith Tester. Tester suggests that the various crises that dominate social life at the dawn of the twentieth century can be best captured by the idea that we are presently experiencing a period of interregnum.<sup>24</sup> Interregnum in Latin history was used for the first time to describe the interval of time between the death of Romulus and the appointment of Numa Pompilius as the next King of Rome.<sup>25</sup> Gramsci re-energizes the old concept by asserting that “the crisis consists precisely in the fact that the old is dying and the new cannot be born”.<sup>26</sup> Bauman is fascinated by the flexible concept and describes it in such a way that it goes far beyond the routine process of transferring hereditary power and is instead sociologically useful in helping to capture those seminal moments when an entire social order starts to fragment and to lose its grip at a time when there is no new social order to take its place.<sup>27</sup> Carlo Bordoni discusses Bauman’s *Liquid Modernity* and attributes to the concept of Interregnum a similar meaning: “Translated into today’s terms this principle may still be valid if we substitute the figure of the sovereign [in the archaic version of interregnum] with the rules of civilization imposed by modernity [liberty, equality, fraternity]. Once these rules fall short, there is no substitute to fill the void of the interregnum”.<sup>28</sup> Gramsci attached the concept of interregnum to ex-

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<sup>24</sup> K. Tester, *Pleasure, Reality, The novel and Pathology*, *Journal of Anthropological Psychology* 21, 2009, 23-26, 25.

<sup>25</sup> Titus Livius, I. 17.

<sup>26</sup> A. Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, London, Lawrence and Wishart, 1971, 276.

<sup>27</sup> Z. Bauman, *Interregnum*, in *44 Letters from the Liquid Modern World*, Cambridge, Polity Press, 2010, 120.

<sup>28</sup> C. Bordoni, *Interregnum Beyond Liquid Modernity*, Bielefeld, Transcript,

traordinary situations and therefore he would have named the Greek economic crisis as an Interregnum par excellence.<sup>29</sup>

Bauman recognizes three aspects of living in the world of interregnum: First of all we are all haunted by ignorance. We do not know what to do, how to do it. The other aspect very closely lettered to ignorance is the feeling of impotence, that we do not know how to do it. The third aspect is the loss of self-confidence and the feeling of humiliation, we are inadequate, nothing really happens despite all self-sacrifice nothing really changes.<sup>30</sup> Interregnum looms like an abyss. Some have learned early to walk the void. Others simply enter it. And still others take it personally. This last feels like Kafka's guilt for an act he did not commit. A suicide note in my region a couple of months ago had the following content: 'I feel worthless. I cannot manage to support my family...'

Beside the general modern interregnum, the modern Greek interregnum, is a rather specific version of it: it appears as the time between two different kinds of normality [a prior-pre and a post], and signifies a time of huge sacrifice on the part of the Greek people that rests, according to the legitimizing it rhetoric, on an axiomatic principle in western civilization, that of sacrificing present time to the chance of future prosperity. Opposing to this is the principle that suggests the enjoyment of life to its fullest every moment, every day as if it were the last day of one's life. Despite the fact that it is thought provoking, in this analysis there will be not discussed the attitude of these who do prefer to burn the moment for the sake of enjoying the beauty of the flames. With regard to the first axiomatic principle there can be traced several quite divergent human attitudes during the current crisis. One state of mind that appears absorbed in pure despair is suggesting that all this [austerity measures] is done in vain because it is known 'che del futuro fia chiusa la porta' [Dante, *Inferno*, 10]. If the future has its door

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2016, 18.

<sup>29</sup> *Ib.*

<sup>30</sup> Z. Bauman, *Interregnum*, p. 10

closed, then inequality and poverty shall be the rule of the day. And the day shall not bring news at all, because the perpetuity of crisis turns out murmurs into silences and various steps into a uniformity of marching ahead. This entails that the most desirable fluid modernity is transforming itself into a crude solid modernity.<sup>31</sup> Yet according to this view in Shakespearean terms [King Lear] we might be reminded that: 'the worst is not/ so long as we can say "This is the worst"'.

There can be found still another attitude, at the opposite side of the spectrum, according to which some view things pragmatically and yet live with an emotionally charged quality of hope.<sup>32</sup> Expectations of progress, of individual and communal enfranchisement are still and always alert. In between these two opposite poles there can be seen all the colors of an open horizon depending on the position of the beholder. Because in such a crisis the most apparent, the most tangible consequence is that each one becomes happily or tragically individualized according to his or hers means and chances.<sup>33</sup> Yet there are always those who can cut across walls and make chances for themselves where chances there are not. Furthermore, there are culturally inscribed ways of dealing with difficulty that are recognized in divergent individualized and collective stances: still enjoying life to its fullest by available means.

One very interesting attitude though is the privileged state of mind of some who neither despair in the prospect of a better future nor aspire for it: they are in a state of psychic denial. Stanley Cohen has meticulously elaborated on the issue and has provided us with five ways

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<sup>31</sup> Z. Bauman, *Liquid Modernity*, Cambridge, Polity Press, 2000.

<sup>32</sup> E. Bloch, *The Principle of Hope*, Cambridge MA, MIT Press, 1995 [1954].

<sup>33</sup> Tragic Individualization is described by Ulrich Beck in *Living in the world risk society*, *Economy and Society*, 35, 3, 2006, 329-345, 336: 'As a consequence everyday life in world risk society is characterized by a new variant of individualization. The individual must cope with the uncertainty of the global world by him-or herself. Here individualization is a default outcome of a failure of expert systems to manage risks'.

to deny real life's information.<sup>34</sup> The first is called Reality-Knowledge denial. According to this the truth claim of a statement may be denied: 'there is no economic crisis'. Or the existence of the reality is not contested but there is a denial with regard to someone's knowledge of it. Denying the facts and denying your awareness of the facts are different issues. Asserting that a statement about factual reality is untrue is literal (total, complete, factual, or flat) denial. The second is called Interpretive Denial and concedes that something is happening. But this 'something' must be seen in a different light from what is alleged, or does not really belong to this designated class of events.<sup>35</sup> The third in line Implicatory Denial concedes the facts of the matter and even their conventional interpretations, but does not recognize their expected implications. The fourth is a bipolar denial: Truth and Deception stand at the opposite poles of it. At one extreme, statements that deny either that something exists or is known about may be true and made in good faith. At the other extreme, there is deliberate deception, blatant lies offered cynically and in bad faith.<sup>36</sup> The fifth category of denial is again bipolar: Conscious and Unconscious. Conscious is the denial of matters of fact one obviously knows and, nevertheless refuses to admit. The most complicated denial is the unconscious one. This is so because such a denial is described as a defense mechanism. Uncomfortable truths that are too threatening to know are banished to some inaccessible zone of the mind.<sup>37</sup>

Cohen asserts that three of the standard four components of human action fit naturally: cognition (knowing): you deny the facts or your knowledge of them. Emotion (feeling): you deny your feelings. Morality (judging): you approve of what was done or profess not to have any judgement. The fourth component, action (behaviour) applies to denial in a less obvious way. It may entail ignorance of the facts, indifference,

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<sup>34</sup> S. Cohen, *States of Denial, Knowing about Atrocities and Suffering*, Cambridge, Polity Press, 2001, 21.

<sup>35</sup> *Ib.*, 22.

<sup>36</sup> *Ib.*

<sup>37</sup> *Ib.*, 23.

apathy, passive by-standing. All these may be explained better by political beliefs, cowardice, laziness, selfishness or sheer amorality rather than seen as pure states of psychic denial.<sup>38</sup>

In a similar fashion Ulrich Beck adopts the three basic possible responses to global risks (sketched by Hannah Arendt): denial, fatalism and new beginnings. He asserts that 'those three responses are also strategies for action and in order to study the strategies of new beginnings we have also to study the strategies of denial and fatalism. We have to understand the dialectics between, on the one hand, denial and fatalism and, on the other hand, making the unimaginable imaginable, the impossible, possible. Fatalism and denial are only perceptions. The power of new beginnings consists of more than perception, namely a package of three components: knowledge, vision, action'.<sup>39</sup> Between fatalism and making the impossible possible there is not a social vacuum: One could detect grades of inaction and action. A very interesting stance is one that expresses what could be called creative pessimism: despite the fact that one is pessimist about the future he or she tries his or her best in order to move forward. Humor shall be left aside because it would require a very specific analysis. Yet it does play a huge role in dealing with the current crisis in Greece.

One way to avoid the turmoil of bad memories during the current interregnum is to exercise what Nietzsche describes as therapeutic amnesia.<sup>40</sup> Yet within the solid structures of economic strain one finds examples of time irreparable, events irreversible and most painfully people lost. This is a social trauma that requires time and huge effort to heal. In addition to all this one should count the fact that there exists a structural connection between despair (apognoisis) and violence. Violence directed towards others and violence against oneself. Cases of

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<sup>38</sup> *Ib.*

<sup>39</sup> U. Beck, *Risk, Class, Crisis, Hazards and Cosmopolitan Solidarity/Risk Community-Conceptual and Methodological Clarifications*, FMSH-WP-2013-21, April 2013, 1-11, 8.

<sup>40</sup> F. Nietzsche, *Vom Nutzen und Nachteil der Historie für das Leben*, Zürich, Diogenes, 1984 [1874].

suicide because of economic strain, is a matter of fact that each one of us knows firsthand.<sup>41</sup> Aggressiveness because of despair is much more difficult to be proven. Yet one recognizes it in spasmodic violent outbursts that depict through recognizable gestures their real cause.<sup>42</sup> For some people time passes mechanically. For others it does run dramatically. Yet there are always these who create beyond the morbid stuff of human degradation a garden of hope.

Modernity promised a new world full of aspiration: there is the promise of equality among human beings, the promise of a close relationship with nature, that of social security, the promise of work first and work ethic next, and, last but not least, the promise of the belief in progress through solidarity. Yet most of these promises become time and again allegories of speech within the context of constant austerity. Additionally, 'modern society has become a risk society in the sense that it is increasingly occupied with debating, preventing and managing risks that it itself has produced'.<sup>43</sup> Xenophobia, racism, populism, search for scapegoats and all kinds of extremisms are the major risks to deal with. Yet in the milieu of structured austerity the distinction between risk and catastrophe tends to eclipse. "The concept of crisis" asserts Beck, "blurs the distinction between the (staged) risk as the future-in-the-present and catastrophe as the present-in-the-future (of which we can ultimately know nothing)."<sup>44</sup> It is though well known that risk does not mean catastrophe. Risk means the anticipation of catas-

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<sup>41</sup> Z. Bauman and C. Bordoni, *State of Crisis*, 5.

<sup>42</sup> For a detailed view on crime in the epoch of crisis see *Crime and Penal Repression during the Time of Crisis (in Greek)*, Essays in honor of Professor Dr. Nestor Courakis, ed. Dr. M. Gasparinatou, Athens, A. Sakkoulas, 2016.

<sup>43</sup> U. Beck, *Living in the world risk society*, *Economy and Society*, 35, 3, 2006, 329-345, 332.

<sup>44</sup> Beck rejects also the common nostalgia of returning to normalcy by saying "The use of 'crisis' deceives us into imagining that by overcoming the crisis today we shall be able to revert to a pre-crisis state of affairs. In contrast, 'risk' exposes the 'secular difference' between the impending global threat and the responses to it available to us in the framework of national policies", in U. Beck, *Risk, Class, Crisis*, 6/11.

trophe. Risks exist in a permanent state of virtuality, and become topical only to the extent that they are anticipated.<sup>45</sup> On the other hand, probably temporarily, we witness a by-polarization of the public discourse on risks. Risk assessments centre of course around the critical issue of debt service while risks with the regard to costs in human life, resources, and normal societal functioning are sometimes treated as collateral damages. A continuum of social sacrifice is thus legitimized despite the fact that it is exactly this continuum that is producing a second-order events that lead to negative evaluations. Reduced numbers of teachers in the public sector [due to austerity measures] becomes, of course, an evaluating factor of a less promising educational process. Another tendency that unfolds corollary to this implies that in matters like education arithmetic measures instead of or in addition to qualitative evaluations become the predominant modes of evaluating results and reaching conclusive arguments. Yet Beck criticized early enough the 'mathematicized morality' of expert thinking and public discourse on 'risk profiling'.<sup>46</sup> Human beings cannot and should not be reduced to plain numbers. Every human being is somebody much more than what he or she possesses. Every human being is even much more or more complex than all the social attributions (labels-formal and informal) actual for him or her at a certain time.<sup>47</sup> This is what I mean when I say to my students that each one of them is somebody more complex and more promising than the aggregate of all the grades he or she has received throughout his or her lives. Numbers (and even established evaluations) with regard to individual human agency measure only a certain aspect of the past and leave untouched most of the capital of (the unknown) human potential, the positive opposite of negativity measured in risk profiling.

Within the context of structured austerity there is another hidden

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<sup>45</sup> U. Beck, *Living in the world*, 332.

<sup>46</sup> *Ib.*, 333, and U. Beck, *The Risk Society: Towards a New Modernity*, London, Sage, 1992.

<sup>47</sup> M. Nussbaum, *Hiding from Humanity, Disgust, Shame and the Law*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 2004.

epidemic: structures are forms of hidden persuasion which employ that everyone gets what one deserves through them. The fact that such structures are seen as normal forms of societal living is a matter of misrecognition that leads to undeserved inequality. If these structures are conceived as given, if the world is taken for granted, if societal construction is seen as natural then symbolic violence will take, as in many cases takes, its course to be exercised upon agents with their complicity.<sup>48</sup> This happens because, as Bourdieu asserts “their mind is constructed according to cognitive structures that are issued out of the very structures of the world”.<sup>49</sup> What is understood by misrecognition, according to the same author, does not fall under the category of influence. It is not the logic of ‘communicative interaction’ where some make propaganda aimed at others that is operative here. It is, Bourdieu asserts, more powerful and insidious than that: being born in a social world, we accept a whole range of postulates, axioms, which go without saying and require no inculcating.

“Any symbolic domination presupposes on the part of those who are subjected to it a free adherence to values...The specificity of symbolic violence resides precisely in the fact that it requires of the person who undergoes it an attitude which defies the ordinary alternative between freedom and constraint”.<sup>50</sup> Thus, the analysis of the unquestioned acceptance of the world, due to immediate agreement of objective structures and cognitive structures, represents the true foundation of a realistic theory of domination and politics. It is therefore said that of all the forms of ‘hidden persuasion’, the most implacable is the one exerted, quite simply, by the *order of things*.<sup>51</sup>

What is the picture of this *order of things* that should be taken care of? If Ulrich Beck is correct in his current analysis about the future of

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<sup>48</sup> P. Bourdieu, *The Force of Law: Toward a Sociology of the Juridical Field*, *Hastings Journal of Law*, 38, 1987, 209-248, 233-234.

<sup>49</sup> *Ib.*

<sup>50</sup> P. Bourdieu, *Ce que parler veut dire. L'économie des échanges linguistiques*, Paris, Arthène Fayard, 1982, 36.

<sup>51</sup> P. Bourdieu, *Sur le pouvoir symbolique*, *Annales*, no. 3, 1977, 405-411.

Europe then there must be 'an idea of a two-speed Europe that has been suddenly revived, bypassing questions of its democratic legitimacy. The meaning of European cooperation and integration has become fundamentally ambiguous, and it is above all the new underclass that is suffering from this ambiguity. Its fate is uncertain: in the best case, it will be federalism, in the worst, neo-colonialism'. In order to deal with the new situation Beck schematizes four principles that work to build trust in Europe: '*The principle of fairness*. The expansion of Europe also leads to new dependencies and obligations. What is crucial is that the methods adopted as well as the results achieved should be perceived as fair and just by all participating parties. *The principle of equalization*. The question of how the large, powerful members of the Union treat the smaller states will decide whether Europeans will get along together in the future-and indeed whether Europe can survive as an entity. [...]. *The principle of reconciliation*. Since it is entirely normal for there to be inequalities and anomalies in such a complex mosaic of countries, economies, cultures and democracies, a policy of reconciliation is needed between stronger and weaker partners. Disagreements ought not to be exacerbated by put-downs and accusations. *The principle of non-exploitation*. Finally, safety mechanisms must be built into the political architecture of Europe to prevent the powerful countries from exploiting the weaker partners for their own profit'.

Beck in fact suggests that Europe needs a European structural adjustment that will lead to its further democratization. History will judge the truth of his assertions. For the time being the key issue in the southern part of the continent is the functioning of austerity. With regard to this it is asserted that "the austerity model corresponds to a questioning of the European social model, both in geopolitical terms as a standard reference for political and economic development, and from an internal European perspective as the downsizing of the aspirations and democratic expectations of many European citizens".<sup>52</sup> "Auster-

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<sup>52</sup> A. C. Ferreira, *The Politics of Austerity as Politics of Law*, Onati Socio-legal Series, 6, 3, 496-519, 517. Available from: <http://ssrn.com/abstract=2831995>.

ity”, concludes Blyth, “has been tried and will keep being tried, at least in the Eurozone until it’s either abandoned or voted out. It doesn’t work. In fact, as we have repeatedly seen, it makes the debt bigger and not smaller. So the debt is there and it needs to be paid off, or forgiven. Given that forgiveness outside the confessional is unlikely, and the other options, inflation and default, are even worse, it is pretty much inevitable that over the next few years financial repression and higher taxes on top earners will become a part of the landscape... This is how we are going to deal with our debts-through taxes and not through austerity. Not because austerity is unfair, which it is, not because there are more debtors than creditors, which there are, and not because democracy has an inflationary bias, which it doesn’t, but because austerity simply doesn’t work”.<sup>53</sup> Here we are.

#### IV. Epilogue: History has many cunning passages [T. S. Eliot]

With regard to austerity, the crucial question for a legal scholar would be that of Juvenal: *Sed quis custodiet ipsos custodes?*<sup>54</sup> Where, in other words one finds an accountability principle that sets safeguards regarding the taken action? Where stands the measure and the utmost limit of such an action? The questions are, of course, rhetoric.<sup>55</sup>

With respect to a more European Europe: If, according to Frazer, the most general meaning of justice is parity of participation, and this was

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<sup>53</sup> M. Blyth, *Austerity: The history of a dangerous idea*, New York, Oxford University Press, 2013.

<sup>54</sup> J. Juvenalis, *Liber Secundus*, *Satura VI*, lines, 347-348. Juvenal suggested by posing the famous question that wives cannot be trusted, and keeping them under guard is not a solution-because the guards cannot be trusted either. For a critique of the question with respect to economic analysis see Leonid Hurwicz, *But who will Guard the Guardians*, Nobel Prize Lecture, December 8, 2007.

<sup>55</sup> My thoughts are shaped by penal theory and the discussion on ‘Garantismo Giuridico’ by I. Manoledakis, *The Legal Good*, Athens-Thessaloniki, Sakkoulas, 1998 and L. Ferrajoli, *Diritto e Ragione. Theoria del Garantismo Penale*, Bari, Laterza, 1990. Therefore, it is hard to understand modern processes with so serious consequences for people’s lives without a charted territory of permitted action.

the core meaning of democratic justice in ancient Greece, according to this genuine democratic interpretation of the principle of equal moral worth, justice requires social arrangements that permit all to participate as peers in social life. Overcoming injustice means dismantling institutionalized obstacles that prevent some people from participating on a par with others, as full partners in social interaction.<sup>56</sup> Equality, Dignity and Social Justice for all is the horizon of our thoughts. The economic capital available for this may be at the present time slim. Yet the cultural capital that underwrites our realities permits nothing less as an aspiration. Our pace is set from the beginning by the Poet: *Alle Menschen werden Brüder. Sisters and Brothers we shall eventually be.*

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<sup>56</sup> N. Frazer, *Reframing Justice in a globalizing world*, in N. Frazer and Pierre Bourdieu, *(Mis)recognition, Social Inequality and Social Justice*, London-New York, Routledge, 2007, 17-35, 20.

