

The Mediterranean to Come Costas Douzinas

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How different does Europe look today from ten years ago? In 2000, influential commentators hailed the dawn of the 'new European century' to replace the atrocious 'American' twentieth century. Europe was on the way to becoming the model polity for the new world. The reunification of Germany, the successful introduction of the Euro and the expansion eastwards were ushering a new age of prosperity and freedom.

Jurgen Habermas and Ulrich Beck enthused about the European model and prophesised its exportation to the world. Many were the successes of the Union, they claimed. Old nationalisms and xenophobias had been left behind, and former enemies collaborated in peaceful competition creating the most successful economic region in the world. The European Union's principles of democracy, human rights and multiculturalism were a beacon of hope. Europe was the model for the future of humanity.

The reality is so different today. The European Union is no longer a model but a dysfunctional organisation that has betrayed its founding principles: economic stability and prosperity based on social solidarity and respect for human rights and justice. Recent attacks by economic and political elites and the European administrators on the Mediterranean people dismissively called PIGS (a degrading acronym for Portugal, Italy, Greece and Spain) show that the foundations of Europe are shaking.

Europe is at a crossroads; Europe is in crisis. But the idea of Europe at a crossroads or in crisis is not new or unprecedented. Europe is a crossroads. The name and idea of Europe were inventions of people in the eastern Mediterranean around the Aegean Sea. The etymological root of the word Europe is ereb, the darkness after the sun has gone down. The Greek Ionians, who lived in what we now call Asia Minor, were the first to call the lands on the western shores of the Aegean (Greece and further west), where the sun sets, Europe.

If we turn to mythology, Europa, the beautiful daughter of a Phoenician king, was born in the city of Tyre, now in the Lebanon. She was abducted and ravished by Zeus, the king of gods, metamorphosed into a bull, who took her to Crete. The origin of Europe's name is non-European, Phoenician. But not only the name. Europe was united politically for the first time in the Roman Empire and culturally through its Christianisation into a holy Roman Empire. The founder of Rome was Aeneas, a wandering exile from Troy. Jesus was a Jewish prophet. Europe is the creation of non-European travellers, wanderers and mystics. They all came from the Mediterranean, the *Mesogeios* in Greek, literally the centre of the earth, the sea surrounded by lands, the world's navel.

Jurgen Habermas, The Divided West, Cambridge: Polity, 2006, p. 43; Ulrich Beck, Cosmopolitan Vision, Cambridge: Polity, 2006.

The Mediterranean lands, a hospitable haven for immigrants, were also a place of departures. The European boats of discovery, conquest and colonisation departed from Mediterranean ports, on the Greco-Latino-Iberian shores. As Paul Valéry puts it, the same ships carried merchandise and goods, ideas and methods. The Mediterranean has been a machine for making and spreading commerce and civilisation. On the shores of the Mediterranean, spirit, culture and trade came together. In 1830, the philosopher Hegel called the Mediterranean the centre of world history. In 1960, the historian Fernand Braudel called it the 'radiant centre' of the entire globe, 'whose light grows less as one moves away from it, without one's being able to define the exact boundary between light and shade. If the Mediterranean is the *medius terra* (the middle of the earth), she is also the heart and begetter of Europe.

And yet, the European nations are sick, Europe itself in a critical condition. This is how the German philosopher Edmund Husserl opened his famous Vienna lecture entitled 'Philosophy and the Crisis of European Man' in 1935.<sup>5</sup> Husserl, a German Jew, had already been expelled from Freiburg University. His death, in 1939, spared him the experience of war and the Holocaust. But in his 1935 lecture, he diagnoses the present sickness as a temporary deviation from the idea of Europe.

For Husserl, the idea of Europe represents truth and the universal, what transcends local and parochial attachments and commitments. The purpose of European history, Husserl argues, is to seek truth behind appearances and opinions. Its spiritual birthplace was Greece. Greek philosophy and science created a disinterested view of the world and explored the universal unity of all beings. From Greece, a special type of humanity spread out, which, while living in a particular place, was oriented towards the infinity of the future in a constant spiritual renewal. Truth is the gift of Greeks to Europe and of Europeans to humanity.

The idea and project of Europe is to abandon local, parochial, ethnic or religious differences and construct a genuinely universal humanity. Philosophy erupted in Greece against *doxa* (the commonsense) as the call to explore and live according to universal ideas. When truth becomes a practical task, it leads to democracy and the demand to give reasons (*logon didona*) for our beliefs and actions, to be responsible to others and publicly accountable.

The spiritual task of European 'man' is to create himself and his history freely under the guidance of reason. Europe means the infinite task of self-creation and the continuous improvement of nations and individuals. Europe promises to help humanity become itself. Europe is therefore not just the name of a landmass but an ideal, a 'spiritual geography'. Humanity will be reached when the idea of Europe becomes global. Europe is the *telos* of humanity. We, Europeans, the functionaries of the human spirit.

What is the role of non-Europeans, outsiders and aliens in Europe's task of infinite self-creativity? The universal vocation of truth, philosophy and science does not belong to any particular nation. They are open to all. And yet, the Greek birth and European heritage are quite unique in their universality. No similar idea or vocation worthy of the name 'philosophy' has emerged in India or China, Husserl claims. 'Therein lies something unique, which all other human groups, too, feel with regard to us, something that apart from all considerations of expediency, becomes a motivation for them – despite their determination to retain their spiritual autonomy – constantly to Europeanise themselves, whereas we, if we understand ourselves properly, will never, for example, Indianise ourselves.' If Europe designates, the unity of spiritual life and creative activity, the Eskimos or Indians of the country fairs or the constantly wandering Gypsies do not belong to it.<sup>6</sup>

Move from Husserl 1935 to 2010. On 13 September, a European commissioner called the French deportation of 1,000 Roma a disgrace and likened it to Vichy France's treatment of Jews. Pierre Lellouche, a French minister, responded in kind. France is 'the mother of human rights... not the naughty pupil of the class whom the teacher tells off and we are not the criminal before the prosecutor'. If France is the mother of human rights, if human rights are today noblest normative universal, if the universal is the future task of humanity, France is humanity. This is a position France has claimed at least since Napoleon for whom what is good for France is good for the whole of humanity. Hegel agreed. Hearing the sound and fury of the Jena battle, he wrote that Napoleon was spirit on horseback, freedom and modernity spreading through the barrel of a gun. Spanish prisoners of war met inspecting French officers with banners declaring 'Down with Freedom'. Our contemporary humanitarian emissaries, soldiers and NGO operatives are similarly met in parts of the world with the cry 'down with your human rights'.

The French deportation of the Roma is an exemplification of Europe's and humanity's history. Racism, xenophobia and deportation are as part of Europe as are humanity and human rights. Husserl and Mr Lellouche point to a secret at the heart of Europe and perhaps of humanity. Fear and hatred of the foreigner is both an integral part and the greatest

<sup>2.</sup> Paul Valéry, 'Notes on the Greatness and Decline of Europe', in History and Politics, NY: Bollinger, 1962, p. 196.

<sup>3.</sup> Georg Hegel, The Philosophy of History, p 86.

<sup>4.</sup> Fernand Braudel, *The Mediterranean*, quoted in Anthony Pagden, 'Europe: conceptualizing a continent', in Pagden (ed.), *The Idea of Europe*, Cambridge, 2002, p 37.

Edmund Husserl, 'Philosophy and the Crisis of European Man'.
 At http://www.users.cloud9.net/~bradmcc/husserl\_philcris.html

<sup>6.</sup> ibid., at fn 12 and 15.

<sup>7.</sup> Lizzy Davies, 'France Defends Roma expulsion policy', *The Guardian*, 15 September 2010. At: http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2010/sep/15/france-defends-roma-crackdown

enemy of universal Europe. Greece and Europe came from elsewhere themselves, from Asia and the East. We are heirs of this history, children of Europa, our primordial mother. Her journey from Tyre to Crete introduced her to other people, civilisations and cultures. So did the voyages of Mediterranean seafarers. Greece, the Mediterranean, Europe represent separation and movement, being cut off from your proper and leaving your property behind. Departure from hearth, home and the homely can be voluntary or violent, emigration or deportation.

De-**portation**, departing or expelled from the port (Pireas, Porto, Paris or Paros) is the fate of the Mediterranean and by extension the European. Sophocles described Greek man as *pantoporos aporos*, sailing everywhere but nowhere at home. The voyage can be cyclical Ulysses-like or nomadic Abraham-like. But in both cases, uprootedness, the Mediterranean fate makes the exile or migrant always glance into the distance, into the darkness of the West, the gaze always ahead of itself, in touch with the other at or beyond the horizon. This original uprootedness, this separation from the homely, this passage to what is not and is always to come captures the idea of Mediterranean and Europe. And yet today our sea has become a wall, a controlled and policed borderline, where migrants, following the winds that sailed Europa or Aeneas or the numberless generations of Mediterranean sailors, are left to drown by our border guards and governments.

It was exposure to different laws, customs and gods that triggered the Greek vocation to transcend the local and parochial towards what is universal and common to all. It also taught the voyagers that there are different vocations and truths, different ways to the universal. From the very beginning the Greeks questioned their identity, disrupted by the Egyptian other and the wholly other. Greek philosophy introduced otherness into the reason of logos. Sailing into foreign lands leads to self-estrangement. Philosophy the way of the sea.

European identity is always established in relation to its other, the non-European. Europe means exposure to the other, the foreigner and stranger and to what is other within self. We are responsible for our identity, for the universal and infinite task of imagining humanity. We are also responsible, however, for our repeated atrocities, in the New World, in the Asian and African colonies, in our genocides and holocausts, in our expulsion of the Roma. Kidnapped Europa's journey from the Phoenicians to the Greeks symbolises Europe's mobility. But perhaps it signifies something darker. We have been in mourning for the abduction and rape of Europa, our primordial mother. We have interiorised this original crime, like Freud's parricidal band of brothers. They killed the father and created law, we purify and revenge the mother, by visiting her atrocious fate upon others.

This is how the inner paradox in Husserl's celebration of universality and truth, which is however exclusively credited to the Greeks and Europeans, can be explained. If the Europeans are the functionaries of humanity, if their rationality gives them superior power, they have the obligation to raise to humanity those lesser souls who have not developed ways of thinking the universal. Europe represents the universal vocation, the infinite task to lead humanity home, to humanise humanity. Historically, however, humanity has been consistently used as a strategy of ontological separation and ordering into a full humanity, a lesser humanity and those excluded from humanity. The infinite task of humanity to reshape itself, what used to be called in part 'the civilising mission', has always been accompanied by a history of conquest, domination, extermination and colonialism.

But let us return to Husserl's diagnosis of the European crisis in 1935 and link it to our present woes. For Husserl, the crisis with its countless symptoms of corruption is not an inescapable result of fate but of a mistaken turn in Enlightenment rationalism. The scientific and technological triumphs, the perfection of mathematics and geometry have made us approach nature and spirit, object and subject, as if they are the same thing. We use the same type of instrumental rationality and method to examine both the natural and the human world. The sciences have been formalised and mathematised but they have lost their relationship to universal truth and are unable to understand humanity.

The crisis lies therefore not in the collapse of reason but in the imperialism of one type of reason for which man is a natural object. The essence of the human world however is not material but spiritual. Man has intentions and creates meanings, he is not the result of physical or chemical causes. Universal truth exists because there is one world, one horizon that encompasses all local and partial human worlds. It is built out of the incessant critique of everything particular; out of continuous departing, sailing away deported from our natural belonging and becoming strangers to ourselves. It is an infinite process of self-creation through self-alienation. Psychologists and other policemen of the soul on the other hand have naturalised the human spirit and examine it as if it was an inert material entity.

The Greek idea of universality must therefore be rediscovered. Husserl believes and only his transcendental can understand a rationality specific to human consciousness. But Husserl's idiosyncratic approach reopens the question of a universal freed from its arrogant Eurocentric version.

We find clear parallels in the contemporary crisis of Europe. The idea of Europe, the universal vocation of spirit for Husserl, is being undermined, corrupted to use his term, by the orthodoxies of the European Union. The underlying cause is the same, the instrumentalisation of reason, in this case of practical reason. Let us go back again to Greece, Husserl's birthplace of Europe and truth, to examine its other great invention: politics and democracy.

If the invention of philosophy introduced truth and the universal into the heart of Europe, what did the invention of democracy achieve? Democracy means, the *kratos* power of the *demos*, the power of those who have no qualification, no knowledge, skill or wealth, to exercise power. The *demos* is a group without a fixed place in the social edifice. It became a group when it demanded to be included, to be heard on an equal footing with the rulers and to be recognised as partners in decision making.

Following Jacques Ranciere, the *demos* is not the people or a political body. It is the surplus community, those who have no business in ruling and did not rule in the past. It includes everybody and whoever. When the *demos* protested its exclusion from decision-making and forced a change in the Athenian polity, it presented itself as the embodiment of the whole community in its universality, against the particular interests of rulers.

Politics proper is a short circuit between universal and particular. It takes place when a singular body of excluded (the demos, women, workers, immigrants, the Roma, unemployed youth) puts itself forward as stand-in for the Universal. We the nobodies, who count for nothing, they declare, are All against those who stand only for particular interests. Proper politics is what destabilises the natural order with its groups, parties and interests, which routinely follow the hierarchies of wealth, knowledge and power. Democracy is the disagreement and conflict between the structured social body, where each part has its place, and the part of no participation. The *demos* unsettle the order by adding a new part to the social edifice by proclaiming the principle of equality of everybody and whoever. This is universality in politics.

Of course, the Athenian *demos* excluded slaves, women and *metics*. The axiom of equality of everyone and anyone was strictly limited. It was Christianity, this other stranger to Europe, which universalised equality and introduced it to the idea of Europe. St Paul's statement that there is no Greek or Jew, man or woman, free man or slave (Epistle to the Galatians, 3:28) removed restrictions and introduced universalism and equality into Western civilisation. This was of course a spiritual equality, accompanied by strict political hierarchies. All people are equally part of humanity; they can be saved in God's plan of salvation. But only if they accept the faith, since non-Christians have no place in the providential plan. This radical divide and exclusion founded the ecumenical mission of Church and Empire. Christ's law of love turned into a battle cry: let us bring the pagans to the grace of God, let us impose the message of truth and love upon the whole world. The road from spiritual to political equality was also the way of imperialism colonialism and genocide, the normative universal always accompanied by the brutally parochial.

If universal truth is the task of humanity, it can be only guaranteed by politics, by incessant disagreement and conflict. Political antagonism results from the tension between the structured social body, where every group has its role, function and place, and those radically excluded from the social order. Politics proper erupts when an excluded part demands to be included and must change the rules of inclusion to achieve that. When they succeed, a new political subject is constituted, in excess to the hierarchised and visible group of groups and a division is put in the 'common sense'. At this point, the local is transcended by the universal.

Here we reach the contemporary crisis of Europe. In late capitalism, politics has been trumped by the supposed objective knowledge of economists, managers and accountants, disagreement by fake consensus, argument by the diktat of experts. Politics is made to resemble the marketplace: Propertied individuals and groups in employment accept the overall socio-economic balance, despite its huge inequalities, and pursue marginal improvements of their income and status. Governance has become the administration of economics according to neoliberal recipes.

Neo-liberalism pronounces conflict finished, passé, impossible, and, at the same time, tries to disavow and foreclose it. Its replacement by a collaboration of 'truth-telling' experts, modernising bureaucrats and patriotic media turns the state into policeman for the priorities of the market. Conflict does not disappear – the neo-liberal recipes increase inequality, fuel antagonism and direct popular anger against immigrants and the undeserving poor.

Here we find Husserl's contemporary relevance. Neoliberal mathematised financial models, based on rational expectations and objective calculations, are presented by national and European elites as an exact science. They can allegedly predict and control human behaviour leading with mathematical precision to growth and prosperity despite the huge inequalities they create. The economy has been naturalised, the rationality of physics and mathematics applies to social relations and human behaviour. Managed consensus replaces conflict, the formulae of economists the disagreements of democracy, obscene inequalities the egalitarian idea of Europe. Politics should not interfere with science, it should act as the simple administration of economic prescriptions, a kind of extensive PR enterprise to persuade citizens that their destroyed life-chances are a necessary and inescapable.

The 2008 meltdown was the result of the financial bubble created by greedy and immoral gamblers following 'infallible' models. The banks bail out revealed the fundamental bankruptcy and immorality of neoliberalism. While ordinary people are daily subjected to the 'discipline' of the market, losing homes, jobs and hope, the banks had their enormous losses socialised. This is socialism for the rich, capitalism for the poor. If an unemployed fiddles her social security benefits she goes to prison; if a banker bankrupts a bank he gets huge bonuses.

<sup>9.</sup> Jacques Rancière, Disagreement, Minnesota University Press, 1999, pp. 1-42.

In 2009, Jean-Claude Trichet, the president of the ECB, gave a lecture on European culture. 
The lecture consisted in a long series of clichéd and unrelated quotes about the greatness and diversity of Europe. They ranged from Aquinas, to Valery, Husserl and Derrida. Their incoherent arrangement indicates that they were perhaps unearthed and compiled by unfortunate assistants. The concluding part is entitled 'the aspiration of European culture to universality'. Trichet quotes Renan's well-known essay on a nation's identity: '...in the past [the nation] was a heritage of glory and regrets to share together; but in the future it will be the same programme (*un meme programme*) to be realised. To the banker, Europe can now be compared, if it has not replaced the nation. Europe's future lies in its 'meme programme'. But what is the European 'same programme'? Despite references to Husserl and Derrida, it is 'the single currency... the essential part of this programme to be realised'. We shall continue to offer the euro, he concludes, as a 'unique and irreplaceable anchor'. Monetary union is the new European universal, exchange value has replaced the idea of Europe. This is a sad remnant of Europe's aspiration to universality.

We should not be surprised therefore when, after neoli beral policies and capitalist greed had led to the financial and economic crises, the medicine prescribed by the IMF and EU and accepted by our elites is worse than the disease. This is what happening to the Mediterranean people today. In the Greek case, a 30% public expenditure cuts, reduction of salaries and pensions of civil servants of up to 40%, a huge increase in indirect taxes and privatisation of the few remaining public utilities and assets. Extended to the private sector, these measures are leading to 18 months of economic decline and a predicted end of year growth of -5%. Unemployment amongst 18–25 years olds is around 40%. In Spain and Greece, a whole generation is being decimated. How could such catastrophic measures become acceptable to the people?

The strategy used by governments and media is to present this most controversial matter as a question of scientific objectivity. The neoliberal recipe of radically reducing public spending and debt is the only available 'truth'. The crisis is an act of god, a force of nature that could not be prevented or averted. Greece is like the Titanic, the 'markets' are an unforgiving iceberg and the EU/IMF demands a sudden volcanic eruption. If the economic crisis is a natural catastrophe, politics should be kept out of it as in earthquake relief. For Husserl, in 1935, the inappropriate naturalisation of the spirit infected universalism and brought Europe to its near destruction. Today, the naturalisation of economics is the end of politics and of the idea of Europe as the universalism of equality.

For Husserl, universality presupposes a common world of meaning and value, a common horizon that encompasses our different worlds. The answer to the European crisis lays in the transcendental community, the subjectivity of a universal **we** for which Europe is the name and mission. Jacques Derrida, on the other hand, the Jewish Algerian French philosopher, introduces a different axiom: what is proper to a culture is not to be identical with itself. Europe is double. <sup>12</sup> We Europeans must take responsibility both for the heritage of humanity and the atrocious acts of Europe. I cannot say I or we, without at the same time identifying with the other. Our culture and identity has always been created in a self-relation with the other. We must learn again what it means to be at home with the other.

The Europe of the French deportations and capitalist fanaticism, much worse than any religious fundamentalism, represents the lack of common world, the imperialism and empiricism of a culture that claims the mantle of the universal. We must remain vigilant against the Stoic, Roman, and Eurocentric filiations with their patriarchal and colonial legacies. But we should not give up the universalising impetus of the imaginary, the *cosmos* that uproots every polis, disturbs every filiation, contests all sovereignty and hegemony. We must invent or discover in the European genealogy of universalism whatever goes beyond and against itself, the principle of its excess. This means going back to the beginning, the Mediterranean and its ports of departure.

The idea of Europe must go back to the future as the Mediterranean to come. Europe will be Mediterranean or it will die. The Mediterranean to come is the return to an ontology of singular equality and to a culture of hospitality and openness. Our Mediterranean, the navel of the earth, will be again a bridge for bringing people and cultures together rather than a place of drowning and death, a floating cemetery for the wretched of the earth.

Dissatisfaction with nation, state and European institutions comes from a bond between singularities, which cannot be turned either into community, state or Union and cannot be contained in traditional concepts of community or cosmos or of polis or state. The Mediterranean to come is a bond between singularities, the world of each unique one, of whoever and anyone, those infinite encounters of singular worlds creating a cosmos.<sup>13</sup> But each world is penetrated by the world of the other, the other in me, myself in the other.

What binds me to a Roma, a Palestinian or a Greek or Spanish unemployed youth is not membership of state, Europe or humanity but a protest against European citizenship, against fake economic orthodoxy, against the false ethnic mono-culturalism. It was resistance to commonsense and the diktats of power that allowed the Greeks to imagine

Jean-Claude Trichet, 'Europe – cultural identity – cultural diversity', Presidential Lecture, Center for Financial Studies, Frankfurt am Main, 16 March 2009. At http://www.bis.org/review/r090317a.pdf
 ibid., p. 9.

<sup>12.</sup> Jacques Derrida, The Other Heading, Indiana University Press, 1992, pp. 9-16.

<sup>13.</sup> Costas Douzinas, Human Rights and Empire, Routledge, 2007, chapter 12.

a universal truth beyond custom and to entrust it to everyone and whoever. This vocation of truth and equality calls us to resistance today against the oppression of contemporary commonsense and the commands of power.

This Mediterranean to come is not some future utopia; it is happening here and now in cities and villages, in Greece and France and Spain, where we tired old Europeans link back again to our beginning and birthplace, to a universalism that was never one and can never become a tool for the powerful. This is our responsibility today, as Europeans, to the name and idea of Europe, Europe as a universal created always in a self-relation with the other, the other in self and the self in other.

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Costas has written extensively in legal and political philosophy, human rights, aesthetics and critical theory. His books include *Postmodern Jurisprudence*; *Justice Miscarried*; *Law and Psychoanalysis*; *The End of Human Rights*; *Law and the Image*; *Critical Jurisprudence*; *Nomos and Aesthetics*; *Human Rights and Empire*; *Adieu Derrida*; *The Idea of Communism* (edited with Slavoj Zizek). His *New Critical Legal Studies and The Philosophy of Human Rights* will appear in 2011. His books have been translated in ten languages.

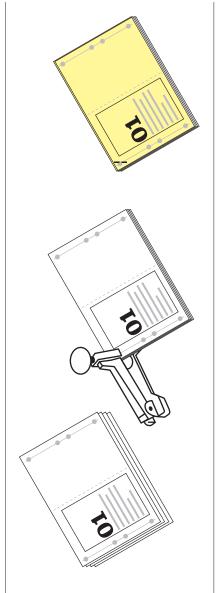
In 2010, Costas Douzinas was invited to give a lecture at MACBA in the context of the course *The Next Mediterranean: shore-to-shore dialogues on art, economy and society*. This lecture was entitled 'The Mediterranean to come'.

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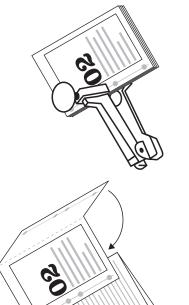


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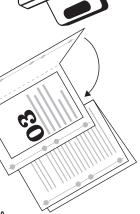


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