

## EDITORIAL

*European Societies would like to solemnly thank its reviewers for their great anonymous work.*

*Despite increasing workload in the Academia, the colleagues who accept our invitations to review allow us to have our submitted articles examined by specialists of the exact theme from all over the world. This is the cornerstone of a high quality journal and we hope that our requests will continue to be accepted in 2016.*

### Love ‘dispensed with’

There is no motivation like fear. The most recent proof is that eight young men can terrorize an entire continent. And by doing so, they can affect the destinies of the thousands who flee violence and the millions who will hopefully still accept to receive them.

Things would have been different if Europe were not plunged in uncertainty and insecurity for decades. Political regimes of all kinds strive to stem the nationalist tide by maintaining the illusion of imminent full employment, but the great majority of Europeans has understood that even the sacred economic growth can no longer deliver jobs. Something fundamental must change.

In the meantime, Europe’s peripheral subjects are increasingly alienated and divisive lines are being drawn via the most ancient proxies: divinities. This is the point when some young men will ask themselves the fundamental Machiavellian question:

[ ... ] whether it be better to be loved than feared or feared than loved? It may be answered that one should wish to be both, but, because it is difficult to unite them in one person, is much safer to be feared than loved, when, of the two, either must be dispensed with.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Niccolò Machiavelli, *The Prince*, (c. 1505) translated by W. K. Marriott, J. M. Dent, London, 1908.

The thirst for respect cannot be quenched any longer via the old European tools: education, social mobility, redistribution, welfare transfers. Love is dispensed with and some will opt for the obvious terrifying alternative. Which takes us to Paris – where I am writing from – its cafés and concert halls and its distance from geopolitical disasters. But distance, just like proximity, is not what it used to be and sociologists have now a new urgent task in their hands. They try to clarify the differences between explaining and excusing the recent attacks<sup>2</sup> for the benefit of angry Prime Ministers in search of a larger electoral base. This is where parties like the French National Front or the Greek Golden Dawn enter the scene as tempting alternatives.

Fear and helplessness permeate Europe via the phenomenon universally acknowledged as ‘the crisis’, a discursive construction for too little political change and too much *langue de bois*. It is certainly not surprising that economic conditions affect trust in political institutions (Jakobsen, Kroknes, Grønning), particularly since these keep pretending that all either is, or will soon be well. Few among us are inclined to trust people and institutions that try to persuade us both that there are no political and economic alternatives, and that if there were, the very same people and institutions would be the best to invent and implement them. Distrust of institutions also affects self-confidence, particularly in areas where systemic trends are imposed as individual weaknesses. Nowhere is this felt as acutely as in obtaining employment, possibly the only path to self-worth in postindustrial societies. Stress and anxiety are undermining self-identities across Europe where ‘perceived employability’ (Wallinder & Berglund) is crucially weakened by unemployment despite the eagerness of public policies to rush forward and do ‘more of the same’. Adjustment to the ‘crisis’ has now become a standard part of European existence and those who will not adjust willingly will face their destiny in the form of indebtedness and banning from ‘the markets’. Once again, fear is to govern as ‘reforms’ make almost 60% of young Greeks unemployed (Zambarloukou) and discourses – across the political spectrum – allow the beneficiaries of social inequality to present themselves as victims of the crisis along with the standard low-class sufferers. Worse still, a form of ‘welfare chauvinism’ emerges (Goldschmidt) which seems to have some link to ethnic prejudice. Then what is it that can still bring all of us together? Perhaps, *panem et circenses* is the eternal recipe of fusion in a globalised world. Or is it? There is interesting news here as well since we seem to become ‘transnational patriots’, that is, interested in success wherever we can find it, with a clear preference for national success. But there is no

<sup>2</sup>La sociologie, ce n’est pas la culture de l’excuse!, Association des sociologues enseignant-e-s du supérieur, *Le Monde*, 14 December 2015.

ambiguity, globalisation is a dynamics of concentration and we prefer winning foreigners to losing natives, at least in sports (Mutz). At the same time, no historical dynamics is homogeneous and unidirectional. Liberalisation does not necessarily lead to inequality and there is serious analysis to support the plausibility of an 'egalitarian capitalism' (Krings, book review). The reassuring dimension of the possible varieties of capitalism is that they are deeply political. They can – thus, they should! – be collectively decided upon and there is nothing to say that we are unable to orient them towards love rather than fear. Particularly, since it becomes increasingly clear that when love is dispensed with, justice is next in line.

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