

M I R R O R S

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Two social scientists and an artist juxtapose two different ways of speaking about society, science, and art. Sociologists **Nikos Panayotopoulos** and **Franz Schultheis**, and visual artist **Venia Dimitrakopoulou**, attempt, in their joint publication entitled *MIRRORS*, to make known and recognizable one of the major stakes of our times: that it is the *kairos* or moment of truth for the arts and the social sciences when they must combine their symbolic weapons in order to defend a social world shaken and deconstructed by new and bold international forms of domination.

With their concern focused on the Europe of today, which is moving further and further away from the realist utopia that originally often characterized it, all the while turning the political dreams of many of its citizens into a nightmare, the two sociologists studied both Greece and Germany in order to trace the deep contradictions of neoliberal capitalism. Placing side by side the findings of their research, they present the reader with a comparative tomography of two societies which, for all their apparently contrasting positions in a multi-speed and multi-power Europe, are essentially two sides of the same coin: they are both traversed by a powerful sociohistorical dynamics linked to the radicalized financial logic of globalized capitalism. In two complementary books, *The Economy of Misery* and *The Misery of Economy*, numerous women and men testify on their every day experience in an anomic social world and speak about their lives, for which the global crisis seems to have precluded any clear and realizable future.

In response to this research portfolio, the visual language of Venia Dimitrakopoulou explores such polarities of these human beings at both material and symbolic levels; by creating a visual work titled *MIRRORS*, published in the book *Dialogues*, which functions as an “instrument” of recuperation and emancipation, and so enabling the realization of the principal aim of her colleagues. To wit, offering to all “everyday people”, who experience the crumbling-down of their relations with the feasible, the probable and the permissible, an opportunity to escape from the darkness, to turn into *mirrors*, in which observers can recognize themselves and try to better understand their own social situation.



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1. Mirrors

Polyphonic narrations on a social world in crisis

2. The Drunken Boat

Passengers on the Titanic are dancing and dining, music is playing. A cosy carefree atmosphere reigns. Meanwhile the crew of the Medusa are sleeping soundly after an exhausting day's work. The ships follow their set course through the dark abyss of the Ocean. And the drunken boat of global, neo-liberal capitalism ploughs stoically towards an already foreseeable catastrophe.

3. Maelstrom

What a time! Whole societies falling into debt, their governments subjected to outside regulation, their citizens deprived of their democratic sovereignty, exposed to dramatic material and ethical deprivation under the reign of an insane economic logic.

Although capitalism, from its beginnings two centuries ago, has truly created a world in a permanent state of crisis, in the last few years we have found ourselves faced with a radical worsening and acceleration of its destructive powers and the social ills which accompany it.

The crisis we are experiencing is really global, if not to say total, concerning not only the economic dis-order of a deregulated neoliberal capitalist world, but also the political institutions, their role and legitimacy, questions of enormous and still growing social inequalities and material precarity of ever increasing populations even in the so called "developed countries". We have to do especially with problems of social exclusion of young generations less and less able to enter the job market and to find a legitimate place in society. It is at the same time a crisis concerning confidence and trust in the given political and social order and in the traditional values and norms which not so long ago sustained a sort of more or less collectively shared belief in what seemed to be taken for granted and simply common sense. This sort of tacit consensus concerning the foundations of a social world we already seem to have lost is going to be replaced by a more and more collectively shared disenchantment and a new feeling of discontent (malaise) in the global capitalist civilization.

And last but not least: it is a crisis of a huge political, societal and economic project under construction: Europe.

What was conceived at the beginning as a road towards a democratic and mutually supportive social unity formed by equal, fellow members sharing a common vision for a better future is looking more and more like a chimera. The distribution of wealth is following the laws of the most powerful, and for the rest the dream is descending into a nightmare, in which they end up stigmatized by these international relations of symbolic domination as "under-developed" and are downgraded in practical terms, as in the case of Greece, to the status of a "colonized" people.

4. The Sirens of Charybdis

And yet, the self-appointed High Priests of the Religion of The Market continue to turn the prayer-wheels and chant their familiar euphemistic and repugnant words about irrevocable cheques and the "one best way" which regards any alternative as senseless.

How can one stand up against such a dominating ideology, a sort of negative and cynical utopianism presenting the universal domination of a radical commercial and neo-Darwinian logic as the inevitable, teleological fate for humanity? How can one oppose a vision of the world based on the findings of a powerful science, that of economics, which has always had the credibility of a legitimate leader and an infallible power despite the undisputed social catastrophes and human suffering caused in its name.

5. Cassandra muzzled

Very often- too often!- we do not manage to recognize and understand critical historical moments and decisive turns in the evolution of the social world until their dramatic consequences are plain for all to see and we are confronted with *faits accomplis*.

Those who speak up and point out the threats always run the risk of being dismissed as Cassandras who paint the world – which, despite everything, is as good as can be expected, as they continually tell us – in apocalyptic colors, using narratives that are no more than baseless scare-mongering inventions with no verifiable truth.

However, let us have the courage to say, and to repeat loudly: we have already entered a profound, long-term, global crisis, no matter how much the guardians of the existing economic regime would like us to believe that it is of a passing nature and that the few negative consequences being observed are simply unavoidable “collateral” damage.

According to them, we only have to be a little patient and soon we shall be able to see the light at the end of the tunnel. Let us search for antidotes in the hope of neutralizing the paralyzing consequences of this dominating ideology; and let us dare to pose radical questions commensurate with the threats endangering the achievements of our democratic cultures and destabilizing our entire existence, both social and individual.

6. Kairos

When, if not now?

Sometimes for the better, sometimes for the worse, pivotal moments arrive, when one is called upon to choose between the two sides of a coin – the two shades of a color conveyed by the word “crisis”: that is, the “danger” and the “opportunity”. A crisis like the one we are experiencing today may indeed paralyze us, but when there is nothing significant left for us to lose, we may note this as a turning point in history and endeavor to bring about a development radically different from the one presented as being, by the laws of nature, inescapable. The time has come for collective action and solidarity, to defend the historical achievements which our European cultures, after a long apprenticeship, have to preserve, before those dreams of a democratic and united Europe are turned into a nightmare by a regime of technocrats who have placed themselves in the service of a universal deification of The Market.

7. Athens

Where, if not here?

The structural contradictions which characterize neo-liberal capitalism, and its disastrous consequences for those populations subjected to it, are shown up in the most blatant fashion in the case of the vulnerable community of the *Third World*; or those in the newly emerging continent, which we might analogously call the *Third Europe*, which is generally the Mediterranean region and its most typical example, Greece. All the symptoms of social ills referred to above are present here in a wholesale way, as clearly visible as they might appear through a magnifying glass. It is not by chance that Greece has already become an example for the major political and social questions of our time in the eyes of Europe’s Left, which has turned its attention to this so marginal but, at the same time, symbolically so decisively important, small country. Where should fundamental questions be asked if not here, where they arise and are asserted in the most striking way?

8. Questions

When nothing can be taken for granted anymore, one has to start asking questions in a radical way:

- In what sort of society are we living?
- In what sort of society do we wish to live?
- What paths can we take to arrive there?

9. Dialogues

This small book which we present to the public is the product of a dialogue between art and sociology. On both sides, this dialogue has grown out of a common desire to avoid the limitations imposed by being self-referential and frequently inward-looking - restrictions that characterize the types of accounts given by specialists and those of the familiar academic fields to which we belong.

But what is the reason for our abandoning the familiar and secure frameworks of our artistic and scientific work to put ourselves at risk in a territory so little classified and acknowledged, in search of a common language, a type of meta-narrative which has not yet been invented? Indeed, convinced of the need to enlist new, symbolic weapons, to bring in effective protective walls and defense strategies beyond the well-worn political path, to think about a new society liberated from a dominating ideology, what we need to do is create new alliances with different forms of action, equipped with special tools and abilities to deal with conceptions and diagnoses about the social world.

10. Public sociology

Thanks to this critical moment in our history, we have discovered selective affinities between our respective views of the social world and a common desire to give a public efficacy to our representations and accounts of a social world full of outrageous contradictions.

For the sociology that we are defending, there are no other options under such dramatic circumstances apart from becoming truly “performative” in the form of a “public sociology”, and to leave the ivory tower of academia in order to voice these deliberations on a social world in danger. Following in the footsteps of Pierre Bourdieu, we are doing our best to practice an intelligible sociology and grass roots socio-analysis, listening to ordinary men and women, reformulating by theoretical and methodological means the testimonies of their lives at this time of crisis, within the framework of a sociological diagnosis of today’s world. However, with the prospect of its being viewed and heard in public, this sociology needs to be retranslated into a powerful symbolic language, engaging with the present time and the sensitivity of people, and going beyond the constraining rationality and linearity of conventional scientific speech.

11. Public art

Similarly, at such a time of crisis, the question poses itself regarding art, society’s mission and its operation: can it close itself off in its refuge, from which it justifiably stands up for its autonomy, under ever-more difficult conditions, and claim existence for itself and on its own terms? The doctrine of “Art for art’s sake”, a sort of declaration of independence and sovereignty “without God and Master”, which might lead to a refusal to fulfill specific social and political roles and might resist the demand that art puts itself at the service of public interest: should it not defer this stance, temporarily at least, from the moment when we are confronted with a new dynamics, harmful not only for the co-existence of us all within society, but, more precisely and singularly, for art itself, for which autonomy, and thus its reason to exist, seems now to have been subjected to the disastrous consequences of a powerful process of economization and commercialization in all spheres of social, cultural and political life?

12. Art's capital

For sociology, art presents itself as a sort of sensitive seismograph precociously capturing signs of the times at their birth, and capable of dressing up and reinterpreting them in symbolic language in a continuous act of creation. Art, which offers itself to us as a partner bestowing on us its so rich means of expression, allows sociologists to liberate themselves, at least for a short time, from the constraints of their over-disciplined discipline, allowing them to become truly performative. Even when using data produced in another field, with other criteria concerning pertinence, the quality and legitimacy of representations, the artist who has entered this game of mirrors with us has kept her autonomy intact and on her own terms according to her own choice of empirical materials united with those searching to reinterpret their sociological discourse in her way. She, the artist, has worked in her own way, in her own familiar surroundings, her studio, in her accustomed style and has thus delivered to the two sociologists her own "version" of things said, reinterpreted into a visual language.

13. The capital of sociology

At the same time, sociology, as a "science of crisis" (Krisenwissenschaft), a task it has had since its beginnings in the 19th century, may also offer its partner, Art, sustenance in the form of methodically refined empirical data, theoretical perspectives and a critical reflexivity that are toolboxes full of concepts and devices for analysis and diagnosis, which have proved their value through the work of whole generations of sociologists and through the plethora of their research studies on social life.

It seems that sociology is indeed able to offer art the sustenance of a grounding, or, more precisely, an "embeddedness" in a social reality, detected and gauged to a considerable degree – and this not only through empirical objectivity and solid research data, but also through a coherent theoretical projection of representations of social realities, and a systematic reduction of their complexity: the essential ingredients of the sociologist's work.

14. Free exchange

The result of this cooperation, a narration in dialogue form about an aimless social world and its disoriented inhabitants, is not simply a mechanical juxtaposition, a sum of elements of heterogeneous provenance forming a sort of assemblage of bits and pieces, but on the contrary represents, in our eyes, more than the sum of its parts. Through her art, long known and admired by the two sociologists, the artist has developed a sort of visual language, a symbolic code, suitable for reinterpreting what she calls an interior "chaos", in search of structures, a sort of transformational grammar allowing the giving of an aesthetic form, and has mastered an overflowing stream of consciousness. She has used narrations produced by her colleagues to apply that symbolic language, which has no need of language to spell out things as they are, to the words gathered through sociological research from women and men testifying to their everyday experiences in an impersonal, social world, talking about their lives, of which the crisis appears to have stolen all possibility for a viable and predictable future. If the sociologists try, with their theoretical approach to the social world, to expose its two-facedness as a fusion of objective structures (institutions, laws, forces of order or inequalities of life opportunities, etc.) and subjective structures (mental dispositions, aesthetics or morals incorporated by individuals in the form of *habitus*), the artist takes up again this idea of a double-faced Janus of society with a symbolic reinterpretation of striking and unequal simplicity: the structures of the social world which often strike and harm individuals become pillars of naked iron – solid, imposing and frightening; the words of individuals testify to their aimless lives, which on the other hand become in the artistic imagination sheets of fragile ephemeral parchment, exposed to the wind blowing through them.

15. Elective affinities

At the same time, these words, “in the spirit of the times” require iron supports to prevent them disappearing into the void.

Her installation project reinterprets the paradoxical ingredients of human existence and experience in the social world: the co-existence of the fragile and the solid, of the ephemeral and the durable, of levity and seriousness, of the organic and the mechanical, and the unchanging and the passing. Put together these pillared supports of words form a sort of dense forest whose massive, imposing and cold presence obliges us to be alert and prudent in order to avoid collisions and wounds, as we walk there in spite of its unwelcoming character. At the same time, she asks that we be respectful of the fragility and precariousness, both material and symbolic, of words suspended like the cries for help of the victims of a shipwreck.

Of course, sociologists, too, could perhaps have recourse to such a metaphor, but how poor and pale it would have sounded from them in the sober and abstract phrases of their academic writings.

Through artistic imagination and the power of language peculiar to it, she transforms what is said by the interlocutor-sociologist into short prose-poems, respectfully giving a dignity and authenticity to the words of ordinary people, who in general have almost no right to public speech or visibility. Her visual language becomes a weapon of rehabilitation and emancipation of great symbolic power and helps the sociologists to the realization of their principle aim: to show and understand why the testimonies of ordinary people say what they say in one particular way and not another, why they live their lives under certain conditions and not otherwise. In this way, art permits them to come out of the shadows, gives them a visibility and makes mirrors in which observers can recognize themselves and better reflect their own situation and state of mind. In short, we are convinced that our respective narratives on the social world have gained in effectiveness and pertinence through forming alliances and conversing, and we would therefore like, against the background of this first experience, to prolong, intensify and broaden this work by inviting others from the most diverse artistic fields to join with us so as to transform this type of “dialogical” narration and representation into a polyphonic initiative, given that it will be an extremely enriching and innovative dialogue for both parties, developed under free and equal exchange conditions and never conceived as an end in itself. On the contrary, it has served to test and experiment with possibilities of a greater and more ambitious project, if not somewhat utopian, in the sense of a “realistic utopia”.

16. How to talk about society?

There are innumerable ways of looking, representing and talking of society, among which arts as well as social sciences seem to play a privileged role. Arts are mirrors of reality, not in the sense of a one to one positivist reproduction of what exists, but on the contrary as defamiliarizing and alienating, voluntarily and strategically “deforming” what is commonly taken as “real”. On the other hand, social sciences systematically and methodically produce representations of a social world beyond common sense and its spontaneous and mostly preconceived and stereotypical schemes. Both of them seem particularly useful if not to say necessary in times of crisis and chaos, offering alternative views, looking beneath the surface of what is generally taken as normal. Each of the different arts and scientific disciplines has created its own approaches and forms of symbolic language when talking of society during a long process of historical emergency, forming step by step an autonomous field of its own and defining the criteria of quality and legitimacy concerning the narratives, pictures and discourses produced by its members. This process of differentiation into a multitude of coexisting languages and symbolic orders has been enriching the social world in the way of offering a sort of polyphonic background, as we would say in the words of Bakhtine. But, generally, this polyphony is not productive in the sense of an “orchestra” or chorus, where each of the instruments and voices can communicate, respond to the others, inspire them and reciprocally receive their messages. The potential richness of all those mirrors reflecting the social world needs to be organized collectively in order to be able to face its complexity, especially when it seems to be entering chaos.

The time has come to imagine and realize an open space for a variety of approaches to and engagement with the burning social questions of the profound and durable crisis of global capitalism we live in: "What kind of a world are we living in?", "What kind of a world do we want to live in?" and "How can we get there?"

These timeless questions encourage us to approach this dramatic crisis of our contemporary world in free variations on its great themes, interpretations and prophecies as an object of study to be undertaken together by artists of different genres, social and cultural scientists of various disciplines, committed intellectuals and inspired people of widely differing political orientation.

17. Polyphonic narrations

We are convinced that the complexity of the social world, which is itself essentially “polyphonic”, requires an approach analogous to its degree of complexity, and that we need to collect every manner and way of speaking about it in order to attain a level of symbolic representation and critical reflection to enable us to be effective. We should develop collectively, step by step, a project which will unite in kaleidoscopic form the maximum number of forms of “speaking about social issues” in a gigantic panorama of the social world, offering to our sight and hearing the colors and tonalities not available to each (art and sociology) separately. This cross-field, “meta”- language, symbolic and empirical, artistic and scientific, simultaneously imaginative and objectifying, which we have tried to provisionally put in place outside those well-worn paths, with all their imperfections, difficulties, their about-turns and retreats, (which we consider represent a first crystallization) seems to us to be a starting point for appealing for the creation of what we will call – with Pierre Bourdieu – a *collective intellectual*. This finds its purpose in the evident reasons for action imposed by the critical historical situation in which we find ourselves; a dramatic situation, one needs to be reminded, showing its face in a particularly brutal way here in Greece.

18. In defense of autonomy

In the case of art, the radical economization of all contacts between producers, distributors and consumers is now beyond question. The field of art has suffered increasingly from the overwhelming might of the “big players” – big art galleries, big, fabulously wealthy art collectors, big art exhibitions – steadily monopolizing all representation and the public visibility of art – and imposing the logic of “the winner takes all”, allowing a minority of artists, the familiar 1%, to accumulate all the profits in the form of economic, social and symbolic capital, while the vast majority of artists cannot live from their artistic work and are relegated to the shadows characterized by an insecurity on many levels, without funds or public recognition, and while the “blue chip” producers, courtesy of the “new money” of the nouveaux riches, become the role models of the fashionable crowd.

It is the market price, seen in the rankings on web-sites such as Art Prize, which seems to have become the only criterion of quality and legitimacy for the value of art, and the idea that art and money do not go well together seems now to belong to a bygone age, the expression of a naïve and obsolete romanticism. It is becoming more and more evident that the increasing hegemony of the art market within the art world is being reinterpreted through a process of uniformization and standardization of production: it is the demand which dictates the aesthetic and to survive many artists are tempted to sacrifice their autonomy for the chance of commercial success, however uncertain that might be.

The economic uncertainty characteristic of the life of the artist since the emergence of autonomous art towards the end of the 19th century finds itself under severe conditions of domination by the logic of commercialization made worse by a moral and symbolic poverty. Those who do not bow to the new demands of radical commercialization, whether through opposition or an incapacity to play this game, find themselves not only marginalized and made insecure in their material lives, but also cut off from public visibility and recognition, which are just as important for an artist to exist in society.

19. Universal marketization

In a similar fashion, sociologists have found themselves for a good while confronted by the logic of the economization of scientific practices and constraints of adaptation to rules of the game up to now admittedly different from those of their professional field, and certainly different from what occurs in the art world, but with fairly similar consequences. New rules of the game, clandestinely imposed and without any serious opposition, dictate a calculating and strategic performance with regard to career and “profitable” investment: one must publish in English, in journals represented as “valuable” in totally arbitrary rankings, whose reading committees define in an autocratic way what represents a theme, a methodology, an empirical approach and data fit to be published. This rapid transformation of the academic culture favors the production of articles conceived according to a model imposed first by the natural sciences and then taken up by economic sciences to the detriment of an intellectual culture traditionally associated with hermeneutic approaches and qualitative methods, and with the production of books relating to the social and human sciences. In this way, sociological works are also submitted to a process of standardisation and successive levelling, accompanied by a growing auto-referentiality, given that one writes one’s articles principally for the eyes and the appropriation of reading committees and not for a larger public, which would have to be targeted if that science took its mandate of “public sociology” seriously. Put in another way, sociologists, just like artists, find themselves, in their respective fields of activity, faced with deep and long lasting transformations happening before their eyes, something which should already give them more than enough reasons to collectively mobilize in defence of their autonomy, even if one does not adhere to that idea that we hold dear, according to which art and sociology should in any case, by reason of their essential missions, engage actively in the defense of a social world in distress and offer their modes of expression and public visibility to those deprived of them. At the same time, one must be aware that the renunciation of such a public function under conditions of profound crisis and the precariousness of large peripheries of the population would also risk contributing to an image of art as simply “pure luxury” reserved for the privileged classes.

In other words, in our opinion, under the present critically historic conditions, one would have more reasons than ever to respond to the appeal for the creation of an collective intellectual, as already formulated by Pierre Bourdieu, during his visit to Athens fifteen years ago.

20. The collective intellectual revisited

What concept can be used as a common denominator to define a collective at first glance so heterogeneous? What name would be suitable for both representatives of, on the one hand, different artist genres and, on the other hand, a range of social and human sciences? To answer this question we could consult a precursory model which history appears to have provided for us. In 1898 a Frenchman with an interest in politics introduced a new concept into one of his speeches: that of the intellectual, in order to refer to artists, philosophers, journalists and sociologists who, in a heated debate about a political-legal scandal, that of the notorious “Dreyfus affair”, had spoken out publicly against a campaign of false accusations formulated in an openly anti-Semitic spirit against an officer in the French Army, suspected by the ultra-Catholic right of being a traitor and imprisoned for a long period despite being completely innocent. It was the great novelist Émile Zola who provided the leitmotiv for the collective and solidary engagement of this heterogeneous group, in support of a victim of political machinations, by writing a short book with the title: “I accuse!” Since then the notion of the intellectual has been gradually asserted, despite its initial polemical tone, to talk of those working in the spheres of symbolic production and, as we are accustomed to say, of the “intellect”, stepping out of their respective fields to take a public stand, taking advantage of their recognized authority as experts to lend legitimacy to their stance. In this way these philosophers, artists or sociologists have reclaimed the legitimate right to intervene directly in questions that appeared, up to that point, to belong exclusively in the domain of the political class. These individuals, questioning the monopoly of politicians regarding public speech, act as a collective within which each invests his own symbolic capital earned through artistic, literary or scientific work, in a common cause over and above his personal interests and special professional role, and places this capital of special recognition in the service of the universal good.

21. The interest of disinterestedness

What seems of primary importance in this form of non-political politics is the autonomy of such a collective intellectual and its members, not accountable to any temporal institution or any mandate from external authorities, who would therefore be better disposed and prepared to contribute effectively to the development of a – to quote Bourdieu - “Realpolitik of Reason”.

Their engagement could therefore express in an ideal-typical way a disinterested political conscience in the service of the public interest, needed more than ever today, which would openly oppose the “depoliticizing of politics” under the aegis of a technocratic ideology more and more dominant in all spheres of social life. Faced with the dominant ideology of neo-liberalism, it is first necessary to break the apparent unanimity of the dominant discourse, which constitutes the essence of its symbolic power, in order to re-establish the right of criticism in helping to remove internalized censorship, contributing by virtue of example, to the renewal of a political intervention by intellectuals, to the reconstruction of the roles of whistle-blower or awkward customer and, because there is no democracy without critical opposition, thereby to fight for democracy. The autonomy of such a collective balanced against institutional powers appears to us to represent a necessary condition for the perpetuation of a critical disposition on the part of producers of culture and their interest in the universal. This is the condition of the (Sartrian) denial of worldly powers and privileges, the condition for the affirmation of a special form of ethical, artistic and scientific universalism.

22. Re-inventing the collective intellectual

The appeal, repeated here and now, to contribute to the creation of an autonomous collective intellectual capable of intervening in the political arena through calling on the specific competences and special legitimacy with which each of its members is credited, each in his own way through the practice of his occupation as an artist or scientist, seems to us to be an urgent need.

It seems to us that this form of collective intervention constitutes a necessary condition for enabling art and sociology to realize their aspirations of becoming truly effective on a public level, while the dominant figures in post-war debates about the “total intellectual” (Sartre) or that of “the specific intellectual” (Foucault), who succeeded him, are no longer at the height of the fundamental questions about society posed today and have become inappropriate, when it is necessary to combat efficaciously the political, economic and social forces of a conservative revolution happening before our eyes. The collective intervention of intellectuals which can only offer possibilities for being heard publicly thanks to an accumulation of expertise, competences, tools of expression and symbolic resources, must begin with local initiatives that can be taken parallel to one another, or successively, in various places in order to be later organized on a national scale and finally reach the only platform truly on a par with neo-liberal domination, that of an international collective intellectual.

In the present historic situation, it is necessary firstly to support, with the correct measures united in a system of solidarity, the battles of those (of both genders) who are the first victims of the neo-liberal offensive, victims of job flexibility, insecurity, unemployment, salary reductions, impoverishment, the intensification of work and the stress this engenders, social dumping on a European and global scale: the unemployed, people in precarious jobs, workers, those disqualified from working, foremost amongst whom are immigrant workers and their children, victims moreover of xenophobia and ambient racism. Contemporary defensive struggles against the regression of social accomplishments on a European scale reflect awareness of the obstacles to mobilizing in a situation where objective insecurity engenders more often a subjective insecurity and demoralization rather than collective rebellion and mobilization.

23. Here and now!

The international, collective intellectual that we would like would have, amongst other things, the task of replying to the three key questions of our social world in crisis referred to above:

- What sort of society are we living in? It is the partnership of all the means of *thematization*, of analysis and interpretation of the conditions of present-day social life that must commence the counter-fire against the euphemistic and hypocritical discourse of the dominant ideology and reveal its function through a work of empirical analysis and artistic detachment.
- In what sort of society do we wish to live? Faced with the negative utopia of a world colonized by universal commercialization, in opposition to social realist utopias, we must start from the idea that what the social world has historically produced can also be defeated and re-constructed on the basis of the values and real needs of its citizens.
- How do we get there? By bringing back the Agora, the re-invention of forms of participative and engaged citizenship in a public space to be retaken and a radical repoliticization of a depoliticized politics in the hands of an international managerial class.

If there is now a place predisposed in present-day Europe, which is in the process of transforming itself into a political utopia and social negative, to symbolize such a denial of a purely market-driven and utilitarian Union, and to give birth to a realistic utopia of a Europe with a genuine community and solidarity, it is certainly that country which has been most affected by the destructive dynamics of a Europe in which its citizens barely recognize themselves. All the signs of a negative utopia and a Europe subjected to the imperatives of omnipresent and omnipotent market logic manifest themselves today in an exemplary fashion, as if seen through a magnifying glass, here in Greece. If this weakest link in an economic market without borders or social regulation has become a laboratory of the authoritarian imposition of a neo-liberal regime in the outer zones of a Europe of different economic speeds resulting in a globally precarious society, it is necessary to set against it the utopia of a Greece as a social laboratory, inventing political utopias, new forms of social solidarity and symbolic weapons of resistance against the dominant ideology.

Help us, here and now, to realize this kind of realistic utopia and join the international collective intellectual.