

Books in Review

**Perry Anderson, *The New Old World*
(Brooklyn: Verso, 2009)**

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A series of tempting comparisons suggest themselves between *The New Old World* and its main object, the European Union. The composition of the book, like the constitution of the EU, is not so much an event rupturing history as a process unfolding in stages within it. The institutions of the EU have their origins in Cold War anti-communist economic self-defense, but now develop within a geopolitically unipolar and neoliberal frame—the tension this generates is among Anderson’s themes. Like the administrative framework of the EU, which leaves so much to the national governments, in Anderson’s book there are different compositional rules for different territories. Likewise, the sections of the book are time-stamped; some were written more than 15 years ago, when the Euro had not yet arrived. One might even say that, just as the bureaucratic order of the EU has been imposed from above by technocratic elites on national economic policies still intermittently responsive to social demands from below, so *The New Old World* has all the appearance of a book made through a sheer exertion of executive will on occasional materials that do not, always, serve the larger whole. Indeed, the form of Anderson’s book is an argument about the nature of its content, as one might say that the form of the EU is an attempt to impose a certain strong interpretation on Europe itself. Finally, both book and nascent political form might be accused of lacking an overarching political vision or telos, what Anderson calls “finality.”

Anderson first wrote about the possibility of British involvement in the European Common Market in the wake of

the 1957 Treaty of Rome, in an essay co-authored with Stuart Hall. That essay ends with the prophecy that if Britain involves itself in the project represented by the Treaty, the British Left “will find itself buried deeper and deeper in a political and economic rearrangement of world power which would be fatal to everything which we understand socialism to stand for.”¹ By the early 1990s, Anderson had come to believe that “the principal task of the European Left was ‘the completion of a genuine federal state.’”² *The New Old World*, then, is only the latest and most complete iteration of a long-pursued assessment of Europe as a political project with an eye to its instabilities and attendant possibilities.

It is an impressive book. Anderson digests and analyzes a staggering body of scholarship on and from the European continent. He treats a range of national cultures each with a depth and sophistication that many students of just one country would envy. It is difficult to imagine a reader who would not learn a great deal from this book. The usefulness of its analysis cannot be questioned for any political theory that wants to be engaged with the world as it is. Obviously, any work dealing in such specificity with so many different areas will be vulnerable to some degree to objections of detail, some of which will be offered below. It seems to me, however, that the fundamental limitation of the book is the imbalance in Anderson’s approach to the national contexts and to the European Union itself. To France, Germany, Italy, Cyprus and Turkey, he brings an attention to texture, a large body of empirical detail, and a strong sense of narrative sequence. Anderson’s discussion of the European Union as a structure of governance, however, is dominated by analysis of theories of the Union, that is, dissections of the presuppositions of books about the Union, rather than of the institutions that constitute its material reality. This is not a simple oversight on his part, but is rather the result of a considered opinion, “the EU is unquestionably a polity...yet in the life of the states that belong to it, politics—at an incomparably higher level of intensity—continues to be overwhelmingly internal.”³ Of course this is true, yet without sociological and economic analysis of the EU’s institutions—without, in fact, a political economy of the EU as it is embedded in pre-existing and evolving national governments on the one hand, and in transatlantic and global structures on the other—it will be impossible to understand how to make it into the genuinely democratic polity Anderson hopes and wishes it will become.

The book is divided into four parts. The first surveys the terrain of previous interpretations of Europe, locates the conjuncture of Anderson’s intervention, and lays some interpretive foundations for what will follow. It contains useful and rapid readings of numerous important historians, political scientists, and sociologists of Europe. Three long essays make up the second part, each divided into two sections written at different times, dealing in turn with France, Germany, and Italy—the “core” of the EU. The third part is entitled “The Eastern Question,” and deals first with Cyprus and then with Turkey. The chapters on specific countries provide concise narratives of their recent politics’ histories, and broad-brush accounts of intellectual life in each language. The final part of the book casts an eye over previous ways of understanding Europe, and attempts, without much optimism, to identify potentially productive contradictions in the fabric of contemporary Europe. The present essay will give a brief outline of the contents of the above frame, out of which emerges a

powerful argument about the suppression of democratic politics in favor of capital. I will then suggest some lines of interpretation or points of critique, and finally consider what the whole might mean for the future of both left-analytic writing and of Left politics in Europe.

The first chapter, written in 1995, treats the origins of the EU, and is a respectful but firm correction of the work of Alan Milward (to whom the volume as a whole is dedicated). Anderson concedes much to Milward's thesis that domestic policy concerns drove the initial phases of integration, but insists on the importance of Jean Monnet's "federalist vision of supranational Europe."⁴ He finds Monnet to have been "strangely unmoved" by US Cold War preoccupations,⁵ a man who "had an original agenda of his own...diagonal to US intentions."⁶ In Monnet's Europe—or at any rate in the one of which he dreamed—we see "the last great world-historical achievement of the bourgeoisie, proof that its creative powers were not exhausted by the fratricide of two world wars."⁷ The EU's origins are then of world historical grandeur, but "what has happened to it [was] a strange declension from what was hoped from it."⁸

Anderson's own framework for the rise of European integration divides it into two phases. Until the end of the 1960s, there was a "constellation"⁹ of forces best reduced to Monnet and his circle's technocratic federalism, the US imperative to make a strong Western Europe against Communism, the French attempt to retain some dominance over Germany, and finally the German desire to regain some status and "keep open the prospect of reunification."¹⁰ At the end of the 1960s, the UK became increasingly involved on the continent, while the US retreated and toned down its Cold War demands. The economic dislocations of the 1970s also brought on "a sea-change in official attitudes to public finance and levels of unemployment, social security and rules for compensation, that set the barometer for the eighties."¹¹ Thus the 1986 Single Europe Act is different from, but not discontinuous with, previous moves toward integration.

From the perspective of 1995, Europe's situation seemed to Anderson radically open along three fronts: the Maastricht treaty (monetary union), the re-unification of Germany, and the newly open east. The last is of the most significance because it takes the form of a contradiction between economic interests pushing for expansion and a political structure too weak to do so. With not a little eagerness in his tone, Anderson speculates that "might not precisely the prospect of institutional deadlock impose as an absolute functional necessity a much more centralized supranational authority than exists today?"¹² It is worth dwelling on this 15-year old reading of the European scene because it allows us to see what changed as Anderson put the book itself together. By 2009, it had become clear that "integration of the former Communist zone disturbed no reigning ideas in Western Europe...the fate of Cyprus and the pull of Turkey, by contrast, pose awkward questions for the good conscience of Europe."¹³ There is a transition here, from analysis based on the capacity of material institutions to manage political forces, to one that asks after conscience and coherence.

The historical meaning of the new North Atlantic configuration is plain. This is where global capitalism still lives. And it presents special dangers. The newly integrated capital structure of the Eurozone is vulnerable in its connection to the US

economy, “one moment of truth will come for EMU if and when there is any abrupt, as distinct from gradual, decline in the American housing market. Relatively immune to mortgage fevers during the boom, how far would the Eurozone be sheltered from a transatlantic recession?”¹⁴ The EU is neither a simple technical framework for value-neutral economic interactions,¹⁵ nor can it be considered a new imperial formation given its obvious deference to US foreign policy requirements.¹⁶ The EU in its current form represents for Anderson the victory of Friedrich Hayek over Monnet and Keynes. Hayek’s epigones came to power in the wake of the economic disturbances of the 1970s,¹⁷ and have been busily constructing a unified market, free from the democratic temptation of government interference. Of course the Hayekian dominance is imperfect, contested at various points. Still, for Anderson, “today’s EU, with its pinched spending (just over 1 per cent of Union GDP), miniscule bureaucracy (around 16,000 officials, excluding translators), absence of independent taxation, and lack of any means of administrative enforcement, could in many ways be regarded as a *ne plus ultra* of the minimal state, beyond the most drastic imaginings of classical liberalism.”¹⁸ In other words, “regnant in this Union is not democracy, and not welfare, but capital.”¹⁹ This view is made possible by an enormous minimization of the work of the national governments. The EU may be a smallish legislative apparatus, but it could hardly exist without massive administrations at the national level to carry out its bidding. In this sense, Europe, as opposed to the European Union, is hardly a Hayekian paradise, a pure catallaxy. The difficulty here is in deciding where to draw an analytical line between Union and member states.

Anderson devotes a long chapter to the academic study of Europe, which he sees as completely dominated by the US. It is a reflex or emanation of the real political meaning of the EU, which is to provide cover and support for US military hegemony. “Europeans are certainly not absent from the landscape of scholarship of Europe,” says Anderson, “but they do not occupy its commanding terrain. That has become a province of Greater America.”²⁰ Walking his reader through a substantial syllabus of European studies, Anderson comes to his favorite, Philippe Schmitter. Schmitter has a series of disruptive but concrete proposals for change within the EU, the best of which, according to Anderson, present for the EU “the appalling prospect...of social conflicts that might engage the passions and interests of its citizens. In short, the worst of all possible dangers, the intrusion of politics into the antiseptic affairs of the Union.”²¹ Concrete proposals for change in the EU are by no means lacking. The unanswered question is not what to change, but how to change it.

None of these various attempts to understand the EU, says Anderson, mobilize the resources of political economy. For them, the language of class does not describe the new Europe. It is somewhat surprising that Anderson spends so much time on the neoliberal, or the merely liberal, diagnoses of Europe and then mentions in a rush with little or no treatment the existence of *marxisant* ones. Only at the end of what was already quite a long chapter does he hurriedly mention the so-called “Amsterdam School” and the work of Kees van der Pijl—but we get only this intriguing summary: “putting Gramsci’s conceptual legacy to ingenious use, this is a line of interpretation that distinguishes between ‘disciplinary’ and ‘compensatory’ forms of neoliberal he-

gemony... within the Union, and... seeks the social base of these pendular forms in a new rentier bloc with an over-riding interest in hard money.”²² In the end, Anderson concludes that the deep meaning of “the strange pattern of expatriation... of European studies”²³ by American academics is that “Europe has, to a striking extent, become the theoretical proving-ground of contemporary liberalism.”²⁴

The center of Anderson’s work is the chapters on individual nations. The first of these deals with Monnet’s homeland. The French state, the French cultural scene, the French political imagination—all these have declined since the 1960s, and most sharply in the 1980s: Why? Despite Giscard d’Estang’s narrow victory in 1974, “polls indicated that the legislative elections scheduled for the autumn of 1978 would give a clear-cut victory to the Left, creating the first Socialist-Communist government since the war, on a platform repudiating capitalism and calling for sweeping nationalizations of banks and industries.”²⁵ “It was this prospect,” says Anderson, “that precipitated the real break in the intellectual and political history of post-war France.”²⁶ The transformation of anti-totalitarians into neoliberals, and the subsequent dynamic whereby neoliberal “medicine” is consistently pushed by politicians of the left and right, and just as consistently rejected at the polls and in the streets—these related phenomena have their origin in the electoral break of 1978. Yet longer trends, typifying the period between 1968 and 1989, or perhaps even the whole life of the 5th Republic, must be crystallized in the break of 1978. In 20 years, France went from hosting a near-miss revolution to a general agreement that the Revolution was finally over—from widespread Maoism and the largest strikes in the history of the country to a yet more widespread liberal consensus that found itself divided primarily over the *foulard*.

Great force is ascribed here to the intellectual and political program articulated around and after François Furet, most notably by Pierre Nora and Claude Lefort. This was a neoliberal victory: “it combined institutional penetration and ideological construction in a single enterprise, to define the acceptable meanings of the country’s past and the permissible bounds of its present... There has rarely been such a vivid illustration of just what Gramsci meant by hegemony.”²⁷ Anderson gives us an account of French thought in the 1980s and 90s, and although the terrain is barren, he does see light glimmering on the horizon: the legacy of Pierre Bourdieu, Pascale Casanova, the work of Boltanski and Chiappello.²⁸ It would have been quite interesting to hear Anderson’s account of Michel Foucault’s work on neoliberalism, beginning as it does at the crucial moment in 1978, and indeed of the political valence of his legacy today.

It can be agreed that much changed in French political and intellectual life, but why? Pushed by Pierre Nora’s response to his analysis, Anderson suggests that “Gaullist modernization destroyed the social bases of the very exceptionality to which it gave such remarkable (if contradictory) expression.”²⁹ Shifts in the social profile of the French population, its economy and its urban fabric, all created the space for a major ideological transformation. This is a valuable point, but can such large scale social changes explain the political gap between 1968 and 1978? Certainly, given the “numbskull insensibility” of the PCF, the incapacity of the broader left is a foregone conclusion: “a deaf communism generating a blind anti-communism.”³⁰ Yet

Anderson defers any explanation of the failure of the PCF itself. Against the backdrop of the rise of Sarkozy, his *pipolization* of French politics (Anderson has nothing but scorn for Carla), we are presented with incisive summaries of Gerard Noiriel³¹ and Pierre Rosanvallon.³² To the former, Anderson offers respectful criticism, and to the latter deflationary irony. The chapter finishes with a presentation of the contemporary woes of the Socialists, about whom Anderson justifiably cannot even bring himself to be cautiously optimistic. What optimism Anderson can muster is given to the Nouveau Parti Anticapitaliste and its figurehead, Olivier Besancenot.

Anderson notes, but does not delve into, the wreck and break-up of Furet's liberal consensus on the *foulard* controversy. This would have been interesting to pursue, because the NPA, with broad consensus among its militants about all that can be safely filed under 'capitalism,' also finds itself divided sharply on questions that the Anglo-American world would call multicultural. There is a strong current on the left dead set against any kind of affirmative action-type program for so-called 'visible minorities.'³³ Anderson turns to the issue of immigration later in the book at some length, but he discusses the large French-Muslim population, and France's colonial legacy in general, almost entirely within the context of the rise of the FN and a general slide to the xenophobic right. Yet what can broadly, if problematically, be called cultural diversity is among the most visible and galvanizing issues in French—and European—society at the present moment. It is particularly important in France precisely because, as Anderson points out, the French street retains its capacity to prevent neoliberal reform. Anderson highlights the surprisingly closed nature of the French ruling class, but he does not really go into the increasingly closed nature of the middle classes (however newly fashioned or beholden to state employment). One such case is the protests against the CPE in 2006. These protests were couched in the language of egalitarianism and social defense. There was a real desire to see the social safety net extended to all, to see full civil rights extended to the *sans-papiers*. Yet they defended a closed system that there was no hope of extending. Such protests defend the ideal of a just society in the form of a manifestly unjust—in fact, racist—institution. Anderson does not help us escape this political trap.

Because Germany is the dominant economic—and therefore political—force in the EU, Anderson is less concerned about its place within Europe than he is about the internal balance of power and ideas. Writing about the politics of the reconstruction of Berlin in 1998, Anderson argues that the drive to retain public architectural markers of guilt—from the Second and Third Reich as well as the DDR—"as perpetual hair-shirts" is only a way of using the past to cover over the present: "it is the fanatical cult of sound money, the insistence on arbitrary and anti-social criteria for convergence in the Treaty of Maastricht, the relentless pressure for a 'Stability pact' after it, which a self-critical German public should have been concerned about."³⁴ To insist, Anderson suggests, on the memory of past fascism, and even to worry about it above all else in the present, is only to avoid talking about the hegemony of neoliberalism.

His general diagnosis of the changes from the days of the Bonn republic is laconically expressed in these terms: "the economic sphere has been displaced to the right. The political sphere has not yet drifted far from the centre. The social sphere

has moved subterraneously to the left. The intellectual sphere has gravitated in the opposite direction.”³⁵ If the Greens have migrated close enough to the CDU to make coalition between the two thinkable, there nonetheless remains room to hope that the emergence of the new power of Die Linke will push things forward. Anderson pauses over Die Linke to hammer home one of his favorite themes. The price for political respectability, for coalition, is not going to be paid on the domestic policy front, “the sticking-point lies elsewhere, in Die Linke’s refusal to underwrite German military operations in the Western interest abroad. This is where the real dividing-line for the European political class is drawn. No force that refuses to fall in with the requirements of the Atlantic imperium...can be regarded as *salonfähig*.”³⁶ Among the causes for hope on the German political scene, Anderson identifies the relative newness of the political class, ascribed to the combination of the Third Reich’s incorporation of old elites and their subsequent participation in its destruction. In striking contrast with France, so beholden to the ENA, German elites are more “acephalous” even than American ones.³⁷

This narrative of the tectonics of recent politics is a foundation on which to discuss the German intellectual field. According to Anderson, who frames his discussion with the analysis of German culture provided recently by Wolf Lepenies, the long years of Helmut Kohl’s leadership were intellectually dominated by a broad “left-liberal” register that was by no means univocal—encompassing Jürgen Habermas, Niklas Luhmann, and Hans-Ulrich Wehler—but was for all intents and purposes politically homogenous.³⁸ Habermas’ trajectory meant that the legacy of the Frankfurt school no longer seemed radically contestatory. Fundamental dissent from the Bonn Republic, therefore, was found on the right, through the continued salience of Carl Schmitt, Arnold Gehlen, and Ernst Jünger.³⁹ Cracks in the ideological dominance of the “left-liberal” consensus appear as early as the 1980s, with the work of Peter Sloterdijk (“a Teutonic version, more erudite and bear-like, of Bernard-Henri Lévy”⁴⁰). Tracing the honorable career of the cultural and political journal *Merkur* from the 1960s until today allows Anderson to argue that even here, in what had represented the best European-oriented contestatory-liberal part of the German cultural world, American dominance is taking hold. Drawing on the tradition of German Romanticism, Karl-Heinz Bohrer defended the uprisings of 1968 against a Left not well prepared to understand them. Now editor of the journal, pursuing the idea of a reborn aesthetic for the German nation after reunification, Bohrer criticized the reticence of successive governments to become actively involved in military ventures, from Desert Storm to Kosovo to Afghanistan.⁴¹ The editorial focus of *Merkur* has slid away from Europe to the Atlantic, beginning to present something that Anderson calls, conscious of its inaccuracy, a “neoliberal front.”⁴² In Germany, as in the rest of Europe, the important political and intellectual points of reference are no longer other Europeans, but Americans.

Anderson’s treatment of Italy is a narrative of political maneuvering and tragicomic corruption. How is it that the richest and most broad-based Left political culture in Europe collapsed and brought forth Silvio Berlusconi? Anderson here, as elsewhere, is able to shift fluidly up and down through different explanatory levels.

He never fails to give credit to sheer politicking where such credit is due, but he also repeats his long-standing criticism of the PCI as essentially caught in Antonio Gramsci's failure to escape Benedetto Croce's idealism.⁴³ Anderson rejects the idea that Berlusconi represents a new version of fascism. Rather, he argues, Berlusconi should be seen as a natural and continuous evolution from Bettino Craxi, a dominant socialist of the First Republic.⁴⁴ This fits, in a particularly bitter mode, the general point that the new European ruling political class is above all an outgrowth of the Left itself. In this case, however, one wonders if Anderson is not covering over a new political reality in his presentation of the gaudy corruption of Berlusconi's Italy as a symptom of the decline of the Left. Whatever Berlusconi's filiations with a debased PSI, it seems plausible that his fusion of personal media ownership, big-business populism, and the purest forms of political corruption, is worthy of analysis on its own terms?

Anderson takes as evidence of serious decline the trajectories of far-leftists such as Mario Tronti, Asor Rosa, and Massimo Cacciari,⁴⁵ yet he reserves hope for a culture that produced Carlo Ginzburg, Luciano Canfora, Franco Moretti, and Danilo Zolo.⁴⁶ Nonetheless, in Italy as elsewhere, it seems to Anderson that right wing liberals have been best able to maintain a genuinely oppositional voice—he looks to Giovanni Sartori⁴⁷ and Marco Travaglio.⁴⁸ This might have been an opportunity to discuss at greater length the new configuration Anderson observes in the global intellectual economy, to link the sociology of intellectuals to the larger story about the consequences of neoliberalism's triumph during the 1980s. Antonio Negri, today, has increasing visibility in the American academy—is he an example of the de-Europeanization of European thought? It would have been very interesting, for instance, to hear Anderson pursue the rapidly-dismissed issue of the Franco-Italian convergence of Negri and Althusser's group in the 1970s—all the more so since Anderson cites the Franco-Italian correspondence of Croce with Georges Sorel as an example of the lost art of inter-European collaboration.⁴⁹

The inclusion of substantial accounts of Cyprus and Turkey in a book about Europe is welcome. Anderson sees Cyprus's contemporary situation as at its heart a catastrophe of late British imperialism. The island was a strategic asset, it would not have independence no matter what its people wanted. Sheer imperial politics dictated the terms, and so it is neither surprising nor especially to be condemned that the struggle for national liberation became an armed one.⁵⁰ More than this, Anderson argues that British imperial policy essentially created, then ruthlessly stoked and exploited, Greek-Turkish conflict on the island.⁵¹ Britain is in the position of primary moral responsibility for failing, at any one of a number of points, to stop the series of events that led up to the Turkish invasion of the island in 1974, partition, and attendant ethnic cleansing—although the United States also shares a significant amount of blame.⁵² Indeed, for Anderson, “in the modern history of the Empire, the peculiar malignity of the British record in Cyprus stands apart.”⁵³ Anderson is quite sympathetic to the current iteration of AKEL, and takes an anti-communalist line on effective reunification: all foreign troops, British as well as Turkish, should leave. Once this is accomplished, “a constitution with meticulous safeguards against any form of discrimination, and genuinely equitable compensation for losses on all

sides, is a far better guarantee of the welfare of a minority than provocative overrepresentation in elected bodies...to devise a political system that meets these goals is hardly beyond the bounds of contemporary constitutional thought.”⁵⁴

Anderson is farthest from his usual terrain in dealing with Turkey, so the chapter is different in several ways. It is interesting to see that he turns for help in this unfamiliar situation to undisguised Gramscian categories (see especially 416ff). The chapter is not an overview of the political or intellectual field, as the other chapters are, but is rather best described as an historical attempt to understand contemporary Turkish political culture. Two related points emerge as decisive. First, despite the strong Kemalist ideology of secularization, “Kemalism and Islamism have never been chemically separate.”⁵⁵ The integral nationalism—bordering on fascism—that knits together the elite and the people has always, Anderson says, presupposed an Islamic foundation. It should therefore be no surprise at all if, today, an Islamic political party is able to become dominant.

Second, the Armenian genocide and the suppression of its memory are central to the meaning of Turkey today. It was a founding moment of Turkish nationhood, and like all founding moments, it returns. For Anderson, Turkish history in the 20th century is given its rhythm by cycles of ethnic cleansing. The Armenian genocide has as its immediate context the pressures of the First World War,⁵⁶ but the generation of leaders who made modern Turkey—not Kemal himself, but those around him—had all been involved in the genocide.⁵⁷ Thus, it remains the great barrier to Turkish integration into the EU, “this is not remote history...the implacable refusal of the Turkish state to acknowledge the extermination of the Armenians on its territory is not anachronistic or irrational, but a contemporary defense of its own legitimacy.”⁵⁸ An honest public account would necessarily throw Turkish identity into question as it cascaded from the Armenians into “pogroms of Greeks, 1955/1964; annexation, and expulsion of Cypriots, 1974; killing of Alevis, 1978/1993; repression of Kurds, 1925-2008.”⁵⁹ If ethnic cleansing is deeply embedded in the political culture of the Turkish state, it can also be said that no particular emphasis is placed on rooting it out by the international community. Anderson ascribes this essentially to money and geopolitics. Among Americans, for instance, Nancy Pelosi and Dick Gephardt have simply been purchased. Israel is also not interested in speaking about Armenian genocide, and “ideology plays its part in this: the uniqueness of the Nazi destruction of the Jews as a moral patent not to be infringed. But there is also the close military and diplomatic relationship between Israel and Turkey.”⁶⁰ Reasons of state conspire to instrumentalize the Shoah and at the same time to repress the Armenian genocide.⁶¹ Anderson takes grim delight in the hypocrisy.

Where, then, does Anderson think Europe might go? First of all, it seems to be becoming less, rather than more, democratic.⁶² The left has either ossified or gone completely over to a moralized version of the neoliberal position, “the contemporary ideology that offers the Union as moral example to the world...is essentially a product of minds belonging to what was once the Left.”⁶³ Turkey and Cyprus have at least the virtue of troubling this easy consensus. Indeed, the Turkish Left might itself provide a needed revitalization to the broader European one.⁶⁴ Naturally, much

depends on the European response to the 2008 crash,⁶⁵ but Anderson does not seem to seriously entertain the possibility that states will secede from the Eurozone. It will be difficult to undo what has been done—but the reason for the doing in the first place seems to have become irrelevant: “the building of the institutions that make up the Union was certainly a project. But, once constructed, what is the ultimate purpose of these forms? The sense of a finality lost, or gone astray in the bureaucratic doldrums, is pervasive.”⁶⁶ The political meaning of the Union has been captured by capital, neoliberalism has swallowed the parties of the Left, and the range of choices open to voters has been reduced so “drastically [that] a certain decathexis of the public sphere is bound to ensue.”⁶⁷ Thus, through a kind of hydraulics of the political unconscious, “in this depoliticized setting...the issue of immigration has risen to a prominence out of all proportion with its objective place in society...in the absence of any collective vision of the structures of power that hold all those without capital in their grip, let alone of how to replace them, beleaguered minorities on the margins of social existence become the focus of every kind of projection and resentment.”⁶⁸ Although Anderson is willing to call immigration a kind of counter-finality⁶⁹ within the Union, he insists that its real meaning is not in itself. Conflict over immigration is a mask for deeper social conflict within the Union, and a reflection of the global postcolonial order. The distributive question is prior to that of recognition—or, as he says, “consumption is a more powerful force than any confession.”⁷⁰

The task of the Left, then, is to give a finality to Europe—to press a political project that implies a *demos* rather than an *ethnos*. How is this to be understood? What would it look like? Anderson’s discomfort in taking too seriously—except in the case of Turkey—a critique of the symbolic order that allows race to cover over class (to formulate the issue as crudely as possible) does his project a disservice. The newly racial encoding of social politics in Europe exposes the broader failure of the post-1945 left, but I am not convinced that the failure is primarily cognitive, or that its object is quite what Anderson suggests. If there is a cognitive problem, it is certainly not in understanding capital. It is, perhaps, in understanding the specific meaning of the supranational structure of the EU—a failure to understand neoliberal governance. Anderson, in keeping his nose to the national ground sees, for instance, Silvio Berlusconi as an example of the degeneration of a specific political formation, the PSI, under the influence of “the general metamorphosis of capitalism as an international order.”⁷¹ The mediation of specifically political forms—of representative democracy, but also technocratic bureaucracy—is required here. But this cannot be limited to Italy and Italian electoral politics since, as Anderson demonstrates, many of the important decisions are not made there—this is independent of Anderson’s point that for practically everyone political life at the national level remains salient, while at the European level it hardly registers. Demonstrating the capacity of new European financial institutions to topple national governments cannot explain the responses of populations to this neoliberal discipline. The EU is not just a devil sitting on the shoulder of whoever is in office at the national level; it is subtly implicated into the sinews of the intellectual, social, and affective life of the individual.

The deeper problem, however, is not a failure to understand the world as it is—nor even to insist on how it should be—but rather to arrive at concrete political

forms for imposing change. It is indeed the task of the European Left to constitute a European political sphere that does not yet exist just as, in the 19th century, the working class was obliged to constitute a sphere of democratic politics for itself. Just as, for Gramsci, the nation was the necessary field of political action, so today it is clear from Anderson's own work that progressive political change in Europe will have to take place also at a European level. For revolutionary politics to operate effectively in Europe, it needs not only a new subject (a multitude to replace a proletariat, perhaps), but in order for this subject to achieve concrete reality, it needs a terrain, a field of action. Gramsci, after all, had to understand and imagine Italy, in all its historical contradiction, in order to theorize an Italian Communist Party. Much exciting critical philosophical work today—Badiou and after, to speak in the broadest possible terms—gives us a surprisingly powerful ethics, but is for this reason shut off from what we can call, with Raymond Geuss, "real politics." On the other hand, while a revised political economy such as that worked out by Hardt and Negri can give us some general political directives—norms, perhaps, for the new revolutionary politics—it is also unable to navigate on its own power within the constellation of forces out of which durable political forms are obliged to take shape. This historically specific constellation of forces is the space of Anderson's intervention. He has taken, as it is arguably necessary to do, individual nations as the starting point of his analysis. These chapters provide invaluable empirical detail on social textures and political dynamics. Yet there is no corresponding density to his account of the institutions of the European Union. We get brilliant dissections of competing theories of Europe, and a far-reaching discussion of the forces of global capital, but we do not approach the lifeworld of those individuals who in fact constitute the regulative apparatus of the EU, those technocrats who will have to be moved if Europe is to become a democratic polity. *The New Old World* is the necessary prolegomena to the theoretical elaboration of a distinct European space in which a new political form, adequate to the age, might be constituted. This political form and its field of operation, however, remain to be imagined. ■

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- 1 Perry Anderson and Stuart Hall, "The Politics of the Common Market," *New Left Review* I, no. 10 (1961): 14.
- 2 Gregory Elliott, *Perry Anderson: the merciless laboratory of history* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1998), 220.
- 3 Perry Anderson, *The New Old World* (Brooklyn: Verso, 2009), xi.
- 4 *Ibid.*, 12.
- 5 *Ibid.*, 14.
- 6 *Ibid.*, 15.
- 7 *Ibid.*, 78.
- 8 *Ibid.*
- 9 *Ibid.*, 21.
- 10 *Ibid.*, Anderson uses 'Germany' throughout, although he means the Bonn government.
- 11 *Ibid.*
- 12 *Ibid.*, 45.
- 13 *Ibid.*, xiii.
- 14 *Ibid.*, 51.

- 15 Ibid., 64.
- 16 Ibid., 76.
- 17 Ibid., 64-65.
- 18 Ibid., 66.
- 19 Ibid., 67.
- 20 Ibid., 82.
- 21 Ibid., 129.
- 22 Ibid., 131.
- 23 Ibid., 132.
- 24 Ibid., 133.
- 25 Ibid., 151.
- 26 Ibid.
- 27 Ibid., 164.
- 28 Ibid., 182-183.
- 29 Ibid., 189.
- 30 Ibid., 190.
- 31 Ibid., 199-202.
- 32 Ibid., 202-209.
- 33 See for instance the report of one participant-observer, <http://viewsfrommontparnasse.blogspot.com/2010/12/au-revoir-ilham-et-bonjour-tristesse.html>
- 34 *The New Old World*, 230.
- 35 Ibid., 275.
- 36 Ibid., 255.
- 37 Ibid., 257-258.
- 38 Ibid., 262-263.
- 39 Ibid., 263-264.
- 40 Ibid., 265.
- 41 Ibid., 270-271.
- 42 Ibid., 272.
- 43 Ibid., 333-335. Anderson's classic 1976 article on Gramsci makes this argument in some textual detail—although it should be noted that one might disagree with Anderson's reading of Gramsci's text and yet agree with him that the PCI drew conclusions from the *Quaderni* that proved debilitating.
- 44 Ibid., 304, 321-322.
- 45 Ibid., 342.
- 46 Ibid., 347-348.
- 47 Ibid., 338.
- 48 Ibid., 347.
- 49 Ibid., xvii.
- 50 Ibid., 358-359.
- 51 Ibid., 361-362.
- 52 Ibid., 372-374, 387.
- 53 Ibid., 375.
- 54 Ibid., 391.
- 55 Ibid., 470.
- 56 Ibid., 405-408.
- 57 Ibid., 413.
- 58 Ibid., 470.
- 59 Ibid.
- 60 Ibid., 464.

- 61 Ibid., 469-470.
- 62 Ibid., 505, 539-540.
- 63 Ibid., 501.
- 64 Ibid., 471.
- 65 Ibid., 508.
- 66 Ibid., 520.
- 67 Ibid., 542.
- 68 Ibid.
- 69 Ibid., 534.
- 70 Ibid.
- 71 Ibid., 541.