Desert Islands:
Ransom of Humanity

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Modern Greece has had a rather “idiosyncratic history,” as the first Greek Nobel laureate, George Seferis, has noted. A country created as the result of German philhellenism and Slavophobia, on the one hand, and British and French realpolitik against the Ottoman Empire, on the other, Greece was established as a sovereign nation in 1832, after a war for independence that lasted roughly eight years (1821–29). The notion of the sovereign nation ought to be taken judiciously in the case of Greece, however, as a foreign (German, indeed, Bavarian) king was installed by the Great Powers, followed by a royal family with kinship ties to the British and Danish throne, intermarrying, eventually, with both the Russian and the German royal lines. This is an inevitably elliptical reference to the beginnings of this new nation by way of introducing the concept of nominal sovereignty in the case of modern Greece.

World War II found Greece already in a state of emergency imposed by Ioannis Metaxas, whose dictatorship in 1936 had been facilitated by the King and put in place the architectonics for the systematic, methodical, and efficient persecution...
tion of the Left that had lasting effects for a half century.\(^1\) The Metaxas government based the development of the processes for the extermination of the Left on an already existing law from 1929, the Idiónymon, which had declared communism and the ideas that formed it to be a distinctly heinous crime that demanded the expulsion from the body politic by imprisonment or internal exile of anyone adhering to them.\(^2\) The Metaxas government, through its Undersecretary of Public Security (Konstantinos Maniadákês), introduced measures that were certain to engender (1) the efficient and effective prosecution of the Left and (2) the dissolu-

\(^1\) The Left in the case of Greece and for the purposes of the state, at this point in time, included the membership of the parties of the Left: the Socialist Party, the Communist Party, the Agricultural Party; trade unionists; readers of the leftist newspapers; anyone adhering to the ideologies of the Left even when not being an organized member of any party; and “fellow travelers.”

\(^2\) In 1917, the liberal republican (antiroyalist) government reenacted the 1871 law against brigandage that authorized the banishment of relatives of bandits. In 1913, another law authorized the penalty of individuals suspected of engaging in the disruption of public safety and order, effectively banishing the first socialists and trade unionists. For a comprehensive and succinct historical account of the political and social developments in Greece during the times that are of interest to us here, including the interwar period, World War II, the civil war, and the post–civil war period, Constantine Tsoucalas’s *The Greek Tragedy* (London: Penguin, 1969) is indispensable. For a more detailed assessment of Metaxas and his dictatorship, see P. J. Vatikiotis, *Popular Autocracy in Greece, 1936 – 1941: A Political Biography of General Ioannis Metaxas* (London: Frank Cass, 1998), a book that maintains the apologetic line about Metaxas that, although he was a dictator, he established a social state that cared for and about the masses, established a system of socialized pension, and legalized the workers’ unions, and that Metaxas himself decided to enter into war with Italy in 1940 rather than allow the surrender of the country to the Italian forces of Mussolini; and Marina Petrakis, *The Metaxas Myth: Dictatorship and Propaganda in Greece* (London: Tauris Academic Studies, 2006), which deals more specifically with Metaxas’s use of propaganda and the use of the press and cultural institutions for the cultivation of an image of the regime as benevolent, caring, and paternal. In Greek, Spyros Marketos’s *Pos Filesa ton Moussolini! Ta Prota Vemata tou Hellenikou Fasismou* (*How I Kissed Mussolini! The First Steps of Greek Fascism*) (Athens: Vivliorama, 2006) is the most comprehensive and detailed analysis not only of the Metaxas dictatorship and the bourgeois ideology that sustained its development into a form of fascism, but also of the process of aestheticization of Metaxism as modernism. Metaxas aspired to create a political environment in Greece akin to Nazism (he invited Joseph Goebbels to Greece shortly after the dictatorship was established and sent a Greek delegation to the School for the War against Communism that had been established by the Gestapo under the direction of Heinrich Himmler), although by his own assessment his ideology was closer to that of António de Oliveira Salazar’s in Portugal. See Georgios Andrikopoulos, *Oi Rizes tou Hellenikou Fasismou* (*The Roots of Greek Fascism*) (Athens: Diogenes, 1975), on the correspondence between Metaxas’s Undersecretary of Public Security, Konstantinos Maniadákês, and Himmler. For a history of the persecution of the Left during the civil war (1946–49) with a brief account of the history that preceded it, see Polymeris Voglis, *Becoming a Subject: Political Prisoners during the Greek Civil War* (New York: Berghan Books, 2002), which remains the most systematic analysis of the relationship between the Greek state and the leftist movement in Greece until the end of the civil war in the Anglophone literature on the subject.
tion of the Communist Party from within through the creation of a climate of suspicion and paranoia.\(^3\) The main measure that single-handedly effected the above was the introduction of the *delóseis metanoias* (declarations of repentance) that were to be extracted by any means from the members of the Left.\(^4\) These means included coercion, imprisonment, torture, and exile to concentration camps in faraway islands of the Greek archipelago,\(^5\) and they aimed at extracting from the accused a signed declaration that not only were they no longer adhering to the ideologies of Marxism and communism but that they decidedly renounced these ideologies. Along with the renouncements, they were required to procure names of others who had equally fallen prey to communism (as the state argument was) so that they, then, could be brought to their senses and renounce the party and its ideology. Maniadákês reasoned that the party could and would order its members to sign the declarations so that they could be released and return to party work, so he insisted that the names of those who had been released for having signed the declaration be made publicly known through the printing of their declarations.

3. Maniadákês commented on the ultimate inefficiency of the existing legal framework to dissolve the leftist movement in Greece when he, alluding to the failure of the Idiónymon to contain and obliterate the leftist movement, noted that “Communism, let us not have self-delusions, does not disappear through common policing means and through the material imposition of the state forces.” *Ho Kommounismós stén Helláda* (*Communism in Greece*) (Athens: Ethnikē Hetaireia, 1937), 3. This comment was further elaborated by the editors of the pamphlet in the section titled “Instead of a Prologue,” where they wrote: “One must arrive at a point of great panic and mental confusion to think that simply by using proscriptions, imprisonment, exiles, in other words with the dynamic imposition of the state, could such an enemy be fought effectively” (6). Theodoros Lymbíriou (Maniadákês’s nephew) further elaborated on this comment when he sneered and characterized as “sloppy” the manner in which the Greek state had tried to manage the question of subversive communist activity throughout the 1920s through a law that “was not concerned but with the prosecution of brigand-age!” Theodoros M. Lymbíriou, *To Kommounistikó Kinêma stén Helláda* (*The Communist Movement in Greece*) (Athens: Papazeses, 2005), 165.

4. Grigoris Farakos, former secretary general of the Greek Communist Party (KKE), mentions that during the Metaxas dictatorship 100,000 leftists were persecuted, of whom about half were members of the party, including the entirety of the leadership of the party’s Central Committee. Approximately 2,000 members remained imprisoned or exiled until the German invasion. “Ioannis Metaxas,” *Eleftherotypia* “Historika” supplement, August 2, 2001, 36–43. The article is important in the ways of assessing the role of Metaxas in the development of the communist and leftist movement in Greece by Farakos, who was deeply and intimately involved with the movement as one of its major actors. Farakos calls the idea of the *delóseis* a “diabolical invention” (36). See also the edited volume by Farakos, *Dekémvrês tou ’44: Néées Proseggiseis* (*December 1944: New Approaches*) (Athens: Philistór, 2000).

5. The term used for these camps during the Metaxas period, *stratópeda sygkentrôseôs*, was a direct translation from the German. During the civil war, when the camps of the Metaxas period were officially closed and new ones opened, the term was changed to “disciplined existence” (*peitharhêmenê diaviôsis*).
in the newspapers. In this way, the entirety of the party mechanism, the cadres, and the members would consider the signatory as a traitor and collaborator. Maniadákēs reasoned correctly that this measure would bring forth such levels of suspicion and paranoia within the party that it would be unable to function. 6

In order to secure the ultimate demise of the leftist movement, Maniadákēs capped all this with the introduction of a certificate that was needed and required for all interactions with the state, from obtaining a building permit to enrolling at the university, obtaining a driver’s license, or being employed in any sector of the economy. These were the *pistopoiētika koinōnikōn phronēmátōn* (*certificats du civisme*, certificates of loyalty) to the state, which remained in effect from 1936 to 1974. The procurement of these certificates rested on the premise that one’s police record and the record of one’s ascending and lateral kin (both affines and consanguine) were clean of political or ideological suspicions, accusations, or indictments. Citizens were asked and oftentimes forced to come forth to the Special Security, the police, or the Special Committees for Public Security that had been instituted and provide information about anyone. The information then had to be cross-checked by the receiving branch and used accordingly. The process was abused greatly (even if it was not originally designed for such abuse) as the cross-referencing by the committees often was abandoned or even resulted in the fabrication of material and evidence. In this way, the beginning of World War II found the Greek Communist Party and the general leftist movement in Greece completely dismantled, either in prison or in exile, in a state of mutual accusations of collaboration with the police, unable to trust itself—in other words, incapacitated. With the beginning of war, many of the prisoners asked to be released and sent to the front. The Metaxas government refused.

Greece was attacked by Italy on October 28, 1940. Unwilling to surrender, Greece fought on the side of the Allies and defeated the attacking Italian forces but was unable to resist the German war machine. On April 6, 1941, Greece was attacked and within a week was defeated by Nazi Germany and had surrendered, 6. Another measure that Maniadákēs brought about was the establishment of a shadow KKE (since a second KKE would not be recognized by the Communist International), a second party newspaper, and a second Central Committee that were staffed by the five or six members of the party who were later proven to have genuinely and knowingly collaborated with the Special Security. The collaborators were called *hafiédes* (snitches), and an entire discourse (*hafiedologia*) was developed within the party and outside of it. The importance of *hafiédes* in the political landscape of modern Greece cannot be overestimated, as it has produced generations of suspicion and paranoia not toward outsiders but, particularly and significantly, toward friends, neighbors, and comrades, one’s own closest.
and the Metaxas government handed all its political prisoners to the German commanders. The German victory meant a tripartite occupation by the Axis forces: Italy controlled much of the South (until the collapse of 1943), Germany the North, and Bulgaria the Macedonia and Thrace regions in the north. A formidable Resistance front was quickly put together, mainly by the leftists who had returned underground and had the knowledge and the structures to put together such a clandestine movement, but eventually also by members of the centrist parties and the liberal right wing. The largest resistance power, by far, was ELAS, the army of EAM (the coalition of leftist forces). Resistance was not unified but was almost universal and against an exceptionally brutal occupation made even more so because of the German and Italian retaliations. To counterbalance the influence that ELAS had throughout the country, first the British helped in the formation of a second resistance front, EDES, headed by a high-ranking officer of the pre-Metaxas era, and within a few months, in 1943, the collaborationist government, in tandem with the Germans, established a counterresistance army, the Security Battalions (Tágmata Asfaleias), which terrorized the country as they had full impunity for their actions. Other collaborationist units appeared through the country in small numbers but heavily armed by the Germans and with full impunity. Resistance was, indeed, not universal.

Greece was one of the first European countries to be liberated from the Germans, on October 12, 1944, and perhaps inevitably (although this has been a subject of great debate), such a history could not announce an uneventful return to normalcy and the rule of law. Greece slipped into a civil war that lasted for three torturous years, from 1946 to 1949, with almost as many casualties as the country had during the war and the occupation. The civil war started with a battle for autonomy from the king that took place in Athens in December 1944 (which quickly came to be known as the Dekemvrianá), went through a period of “White Terror,” and ended with a nominal democracy based on rigged elections, authoritarianism, and the sealing of patronage by the United States through the implementations of the Truman Doctrine and the Marshall Plan.

Perhaps also inevitably, given the particular history that preceded the war and liberation, Greece had the hideous privilege of establishing the first concentration camps in Europe after the end of World War II, and only twenty-two months after

7. Metaxas himself had died in January 1941, but the government remained in place until, led by the king and the cabinet, it fled first to Crete and then to Egypt while a collaborationist government was established. I use “Germans” as the local term used in Greece to denote the Nazis or the Third Reich.
the last existing Nazi camp at Dachau was liberated in April 1945. These camps were established with the expressed aim of reeducating and rehabilitating the leftists and were set up on three Greek desert islands, Makrónisos, Yáros, and Trikeri, a few months after the beginning of the civil war. Ideologically and financially under the auspices of the German-born Queen Frederica, who had been a member of the Hitler Youth, the camps were quickly supported by funds supplied by the Marshall Plan following the Truman Doctrine.

8. Gilles Deleuze engages in the radical deconstruction of the notion of the “desert” island by invoking the lack of recognition by the European traveler/settler of the humanity already existing there. He is primarily thinking of and discussing the European travel literature of the Enlightenment. Deleuze is most emphatically not referring to actually desert islands, places where only the most tenuous of life can be sustained with the scant rainfall of a couple of months a year, places that have no aquifer or an aquifer that holds only contaminated or nonpotable water. Deleuze is speaking of the construction of the desert as part of a discourse that has sustained colonialism. I am speaking of actual desert (not deserted, even metaphorically) islands. See Deleuze, Desert Islands and Other Texts, 1953–1974 (Los Angeles: Semiotext(e), 2004). Michael Taussig has actually captured not only the horror of the islands as colonies of the undesirables (Poulantzas’s “anti-nationals”), but also the complicity in the management of undesirable life by capitalist ventures, especially in the way in which he erects the problem of offshore operations as not simply an economic but a political one. See Taussig, My Cocaine Museum (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004).

9. Greece marks the beginning of the Cold War. As Michael McClintock notes, quoting Lt. Col. Robert Selton, officer of the U.S. Army, the Greek civil war “constitutes the formal declaration of the cold war” between the “Free World . . . and the forces of communism.” McClintock, Instruments of Statecraft: U.S. Guerrilla Warfare, Counterinsurgency, and Counterterrorism, 1940–1990 (New York: Pantheon Books, 1992), 11. It was because of the civil war in Greece (and the announcement by the British that they could not sustain their presence there any longer) that President Truman articulated his famous (or infamous) doctrine about the necessity for intervention on behalf of other countries to prevent the infiltration of foreign ideologies originating elsewhere. As McClintock mentions, as of November 1961, starting with an initial allotment in 1947 of $400 million through the Marshall Plan, Greece had been granted $3.4 billion for postwar reconstruction, out of which only $1.2 billion went to reconstruction, the rest being used for military aid and defense support, including the establishment and maintenance of the concentration camps and the containment of communism. See Lt. Col. Robert W. Selton, “The Cradle of U.S. Cold War Strategy,” Military Review, August 1966, 68; and McClintock, Instruments of Statecraft, 466n31. The importance of Greece in the “containment” strategy of former U.S. ambassador to the Soviet Union George F. Kennan, cannot be overstressed, as it not only indexes U.S. foreign policy and political and military involvement in the southern Balkans at the time but also had far-reaching results in later U.S. foreign policy and involvement, primarily in Vietnam, which was seen by President Lyndon B. Johnson “as the ‘Greece’ of Southeast Asia.” U.S. News and World Report, August 8, 1966, quoted in Todd Gitlin, “Counter-insurgency: Myth and Reality in Greece,” in Containment and Revolution: Western Policy towards Social Revolution: 1917 to Vietnam, ed. David Horowitz (London: Anthony Blond, 1967), 178. For the parallels between the U.S. involvement in Greece and Vietnam and an excellent (if brief) account of the British, American, and local Greek right-wing forces in the Greek civil war and the events of December 1944 that preceded it, see Gitlin, “Counter-insurgency,” 140–82. George F. Kennan was U.S. ambassador to the Soviet Union right after World War II. While in the Soviet Union, Kennan wrote a memorandum to President Truman that came to be known as “file X,” in which Kennan explained why communism had to be
Makrónisos was established for soldiers who had either participated in the Resistance or had been members of the party, or suspected of having done so. Yáros was established as a prison for those indicted or awaiting trial for any criminal act, political or civic (but it should be borne in mind that political acts were prosecuted as civil acts). Trikeri was reserved for women members of the party or suspected of leftist leanings, and female family members of those held on Makrónisos and Yáros: mothers, sisters, wives, fiancées, daughters. In essence, every male who had participated in the Resistance, had not renounced communism, and was of military age was sent to Makrónisos. Eventually everyone denounced as a Communist, a fellow traveler, or a member of the Resistance, or suspected for any of the above, was sent “to the islands.” Makrónisos was set up by an executive order (which later became law); Yáros and Trikeri, silently, by unspoken and unacknowledged gestures, without the enactment of specific laws or directives and without any parliamentary or ministerial discussion. On February 19, 1947, General D. Zafeiropoulos suggested to the Minister of Defense, G. Stratos, the organization of these three camps: Makrónisos for those conscripted into the Greek armed forces; Trikeri for the “suspicious” men and women of the areas cleared out by the government army; and Yáros for those interned under criminal law. The three were then set up and populated within weeks of contained within its borders and prevented from expanding to the West. File X was the primary material used for the composition of the Truman Doctrine and the Marshall Plan. Later on Kennan noted that his point had been gravely misunderstood and that “containment” referred to diplomatic means and did not include (or justify) the militarization of the Cold War.

10. Nikos Margaris, *Historia tès Makronisou (History of Makrónisos)*, vols. 1 and 2 (Athens: Dorikos, 1966). The category of the “suspicious” is not new, and we can find it both in totalitarianism and in liberal democracies. In the case of the Third Reich, we see its first institutionalization in the 1936 “A List” of suspicious persons as the object of the law to be arrested in case of situation “A” that (Gestapo chief) Reinhard Heydrich composed, which in 1937 included 46,000 names. Harold Marcuse, *Legacies of Dachau: The Uses and Abuses of a Concentration Camp, 1933–2001* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 32. The case of the Greek liberal governments of the early twentieth century was not much different, nor was the case of the FBI lists of dangerous individuals of the McCarthy and post-McCarthy eras. I want to note, though, that the first instance of the category of the “suspicious” outside the context of ideology was the case of the internment camps for persons of Japanese descent in place from 1942 to 1946 throughout the western, southwestern, and Pacific Coast states of the United States. “NARA/ALIC/ Japanese Relocation and Internment during World War II/Documents and Photographs Related to Japanese Relocation during World War II,” www.archives.gov/research/alic/reference/military/japanese-internment.html (accessed December 20, 2004); see also, The Virtual Museum of the City of San Francisco/Western Defense Command and Fourth Army Wartime Civil Control Administration”: “Instructions to All Persons of Japanese Ancestry,” Internment of San Francisco Japanese, www.sfmuseum.org/war/evactxt.html (accessed December 20, 2004); also, on the same site see Lt. Gen. J. L. DeWitt’s letter of transmittal
each other. Of the three islands, only Trikeri was then and remains a sparsely inhabited island. Makrónisos and Yáros are literally dry desert islands (xeronisia). There is no water at all on Makrónisos, while the scant water found on Yáros is salty and thick with sludge. It is the quality of the water found on Yáros that makes the island perhaps the most horrific of the three.

Yáros was briefly inhabited during Roman times, but its inhabitants were driven away by the rats that live on the island. After it was abandoned, it became a place of exile, although so abject a place that even the Romans considered exile there to be the cruelest of all punishments. They reserved it only for the most dangerous of the “enemies of the empire.” Around 80 BC, Yáros was used by Lucius Sulla as a place of exile for eighty thousand of his political adversaries. They were left on the Chief of Staff, U.S. Army, June 5, 1943, “Final Report; Japanese Evacuation from the West Coast 1942,” Headquarters Western Defense Command and Fourth Army, Office of the Commanding General, Presidio of San Francisco, California (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1943), chaps. 1 and 2. Shortly after the establishment of the Makrónisos camp, similar camps were instituted in Malaya, from 1948 to 1960, where approximately six hundred communist partisans were interned by the United States with the explicit aim of being reeducated. There is a good-sized literature on these internment camps. See Richard Clutterbuck, “Communist Defeat in Malay: A Case Study,” *Military Review* 43 (September 1963): 63–78; Clutterbuck, *Long War: Counterinsurgency in Malaya and Vietnam* (New York: Praeger, 1966); and Clutterbuck, *Revolution in Singapore and Malaya, 1945–1963* (London: Faber, 1973). The least known case is that of the Goli Otok island camp established by Marshall Tito in 1948 to reeducate and rehabilitate Stalinists. See Venko Markovski, *Goli Otok: The Island of Death: A Diary in Letters* (Boulder, Colo.: Social Science Monographs, 1984); Ivo Banac, *With Stalin against Tito: Cominformist Splits in Yugoslav Communism* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1989); Renata Jambresić Kirin, “The Retraumatization of the 1948 Communist Purges in Yugoslav Literary Culture,” in *History of the Literary Cultures of East-Central Europe: Junctures and Disjunctures in the 19th and 20th Centuries*, vol. 1, ed. Marcel Cornis-Pope and John Neubauer (Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 2004), 124–32; Tomislav Z. Longinović et al., “1948: Introduction: The Culture of Revolutionary Terror,” in Cornis-Pope and Neubauer, *History of the Literary Cultures*, 107–32. Lest the gravity of the importance of these camps be underestimated, I feel compelled to note here that the methods used in all of these islands were comparable to the methods used in the Nazi camps that preceded them. The similarities in the narratives of the survivors are uncanny, and there is no reason for us to believe that the narratives are the product of narrative cross-fertilization of experiences because (1) the narratives that I am referencing were produced during the time that the camps were still in operation, and (2) it seems that the inmates of these different camps (in Greece, Yugoslavia, and Malaya) were oblivious to the existence of the others. For further discussion of the rehabilitation/reeducation camps for the Left as a paradigm of biopolitics, see Neni Panourgia, *Dangerous Citizens* (Bronx, N.Y.: Fordham University Press, forthcoming).

11. This seems to be a preposterous number of people for this island. Yáros has no level areas—it is a precipice of 45 degrees—so it would be hard for that many people even to stand on the island. The reference to Sulla’s banishment of eighty thousand of his political enemies to Yáros (also known as Yioúra) comes from the anonymous publication *Yioúra: Matoménē Vivlos* (Athens: Ekdoseis G nosi, n.d. [1953]), 85, a survey of the conditions of the exiles on Yáros and a historical account of the
the island with seeds to sow and some agricultural implements, but the soil was so sterile that within a very short time the exiles died of hunger, diseases, and the bites of rats and scorpions. By the time of Tiberius, according to Tacitus, Yáros was abandoned as a place of exile. Yáros remained uninhabited until 1947, when it was set up as a camp, initially for 12,000 political prisoners. During the Colonels’ dictatorship, Yáros was used again, first in 1967–68, for 6,150 prisoners. An undisclosed number of political prisoners were taken there again at the time of the follow-up coup in 1973. The prisoners were finally removed from there and the island was emptied on July 25, 1974, with the fall of the dictatorship.

**Makrónisos and the Politics of Suspicion**

The camp on Makrónisos, the island where, according to legend, Helen of Troy found refuge after the start of the Trojan War, was originally established during the First Balkan War in 1912 to intern captured Turkish prisoners of war who were infected with cholera and tuberculosis. Then came Russian and “undesirable” Greek soldiers and refugees from the Asia Minor expedition in 1922. During World War II, the Germans built watchtowers there. The first boats full of young soldiers arrived on Makrónisos in January 1947. When established as a place of exile and internment, Makrónisos had a singular purpose: to reeducate the Greek leftists into the principles of nationalism (ethnikophosynē) and Christianity and to obtain from them délōseis nomimofrosynēs: written declarations renouncing communism and submitting to the rule of law.

From 1947 to 1958, more than 100,000 people were deported and tortured on island. I have not been able to cross-reference the information on any of the published biographies of Sulla that I have consulted. This does not mean that the information is necessarily inaccurate.


13. The coup d’état of April 21, 1967, to July 24, 1974, that installed a dictatorship in Greece has come to be known as “the Colonels’ dictatorship” because it was enacted by a troika of colonels of the Greek Army.

14. Throughout this text I use the terms leftist, Communist, and Marxist interchangeably because they were used interchangeably by the Greek authorities. I appreciate the nuanced differences in English usage that exist among the three terms. Obviously the terms, even in Greek, denote a hierarchy of involvement with a political movement, the leftist (aristerós) being the most inclusive one, the Marxist (marxistēs) being the person who is interested in scientific Marxism, and the Communist (kommounistēs) being committed to political change sometimes by violent means (what constitutes revolutionary praxis), although all these connotations constantly bled into each other in the Greek case (and in certain circles still do).
Makrónisos, Yáros, or Trikeri, before dying or being transferred to exile on the other “small islands” (as the expression came to be in Greek). Those deported comprised the leadership of the Communist Party and the Democratic Army, members of the Communist Party, and uncommitted leftists, suspected leftists, and their families, at some point including women and children from the ages of two to eighty. The only ones who were spared were those who had served in the German-instituted and -supported Security Battalions (Tágmata Asfaleias) and other organizations of collaborators. The two conceptual categories that organized the classification of the exiles were that of the suspicious individual, and family and kinship as a separate category of danger, based on the old law against brigandage that had made the prosecution of families of brigands possible from 1871 onward.

Under a law issued by the Themistocles Sophoules government in February 1946, the concentration camps of the Metaxas period (1936–41) were officially abolished. The camp of Makrónisos was officially established one year later when, on February 19, 1947, General Zafeiropoulos suggested to the minister of defense the establishment of these camps, as spaces where the leftists could be reeducated and rehabilitated as nationalists, something that was accepted as a suggestion and put into effect without any specific legal or parliamentary act.

15. Yáros was abandoned in 1952, when all its inmates were transferred to Makrónisos, although two hundred political prisoners were briefly transferred there from the Aegina prison in 1955. Trikeri was abandoned in 1953, when all the inmates, women and children, were transferred to the various exile “small islands” (primarily Ai-Stratis).

16. As has repeatedly been noted, there are no definitive answers as to the exact number of persons sent to the three islands during 1947–52, when Yáros was abandoned. For Makrónisos, the numbers range from 100,000 (the number given by the Makronissiates themselves) down to 40,000–45,000, as presented officially to the Greek Parliament in the summer of 1950, up to one-tenth of the Greek population (a number that perhaps includes all the prisoners, exiles, and otherwise prosecuted by Metaxas up to 1953). The question of enumeration becomes even more acute when we take into account the fact that the Greek Army kept fairly accurate records of the soldiers who were sent to Makrónisos, but record keeping about family members sent to exile, the number of exiles under criminal law, and the number of children sent there was, at best, scattered and, at worst, concealed. See Strates Bournazos, “To ‘Mega Ethniko Sholeion Makronissou,’ 1947–1950” (“The ‘Great National School of Makrónisos,’ 1947–1950”), in *Proceedings of Scientific Meeting Historiko Topio kai Historikē Mnēmē: To Paradeigma tes Makronisou* (Historical Landscape, Historical Memory: The Paradigm of Makrónisos) (Athens: Philistor, 2000), 115–45.

17. As Voglis (*Becoming a Subject*) has pointed out, both of these categories emerge in the context of the “National Schism” of 1915 and 1916 engendered by the battle between the republicans (led by Eleftherios Venizelos) and the royalists. Although both positions were forcefully articulated by and comprised a large number of politicians, and produced a cleavage in the social and political body of the country, the Dichasmos (the Split) came to be known as the Venizelists and the royalists. The royalist side never came to be indexed by a specific name as the republican side did.
A special constitutional resolution was brought to parliament in October 1949 (a month after the civil war had ended) that sought to create a legal framework for the existence of the Makrónisos camp. The rest of them remained under the general laws concerning confinement. All male leftist or even suspected leftist conscripts, almost without exception (including all conscripts who had participated in the Resistance against the Germans, but excepting those who had served in the Security Battalions), started being taken there in the winter of 1947.

As Nicos Alivizatos has noted, during the period between the Dekemvrianá and the White Terror (between December 1944 and April 1946), very few new laws were enacted that addressed specifically the Left. The avalanche of laws that were enacted starting in 1946, however, each one tightening up even more the provisions of the previous ones, makes the question of the function of the law as a means of neutralizing dissent rather than protecting the citizen from the excesses of the state even more acute. What is of great importance to keep in mind, however, is that the persecution of the Left took place “over and beyond the existing legal framework.”

It is under this gesture of preserving the law while vacating its meaning that we must see the establishment of the concentration/rehabilitation camps of Makrónisos, in a space where, as Begoña Aretxaga has noted about Spain, “the State was both the law and its transgression.” These were laws that allowed the concentration camps of the Metaxas era to be reconceptualized into a new form of biopolitics, not exactly under the guise of the Nazi’s proclaimed “protective custody” (*Schutzhaft*), but under the formulation of “disciplined existence” (*peitharhêmêne diaviôsis*), presumably for the interned to experience for themselves “the healing effects of productive work and tight discipline” that the Nazis had proclaimed as the objective of Dachau when they had first opened the camp.

19. Alivizatos, “‘Emergency Regime,’ ” 222.
20. Begoña Aretxaga, “A Fictional Reality: Paramilitary Death Squads and the Construction of State Terror in Spain,” in *Death Squad: The Anthropology of State Terror*, ed. Jeffrey Sluka (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2000), 46–69, 60. Aretxaga looked at the narratives that surrounded the experience of state terror in the context of the constructed terrorism of ETA (Euskadi Ta Askatasuna; Basque Homeland and Freedom) in Spain and the Basque country in order to underline the complicity of the established legal sovereign state (Spain) with the paramilitaries who existed in expressed opposition to the law but within a discursive space that was constantly being disarticulated as such.
in March 22, 1933. In October 1949, a month after the end of the actual hostilities of the civil war, the status of Makrónisos and the methods applied there for the “reconversion” and “rehabilitation” of the exiled were legalized by a special constitutional resolution brought to parliament by the democratic Diomidis government. I want to return to the desert islands, then, to address their capacity to receive the Left as the wake, the refuge, and the remnants of humanity, as undesirable and “superfluous,” or, perhaps, as “naked life.”

**Distomo, 1944**

Giorgio Agamben has argued that *naked life* (or *bare life*) is what life became in the concentration camps of the Third Reich. It is life, he argues, that is stripped of any value, any desire, any signification as life. Agamben opens his discussion of naked life by producing a circuitous genealogy of the notion of life through “the ancient Greeks [who] did not have only one term to express what we mean


23. “Noxious and superfluous” is the locution used by Wolfgang Sofsky to denote the Nazi progression of exclusionary ascriptions from “socially dangerous” to suspicious and, at the end, to the superfluous. See Wolfgang Sofsky, *The Order of Terror: The Concentration Camp*, trans. William Templer (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1997), 33. Hannah Arendt has shown how humans are being construed as “superfluous” as they enter the process of tight capitalist production. Totalitarianism, she argues, received this notion of “superfluous” and applied it to different classes of people; in the case of early Nazi Germany, these were, in order of appearance, the mentally ill and challenged, the Communists, the union leaders, the Gypsies, the homosexuals, the beggars, the work-shy, the asocials (*Asoziale*), the prostitutes, those suffering from venereal diseases, the psychopaths, the traffic offenders, and, at the end, the Jews. I find Arendt’s flattening of “totalitarianism” in the contexts of Nazism and Stalinism highly problematic and restrictive. See Hannah Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (New York: Harcourt, 1968).

by the word life. They used two semantically and morphologically distinct terms: zoē, which expressed the simple fact of living common to all living beings (animals, humans, or gods), and bios, which signified the form or manner of living peculiar to a single animal or group. In modern languages this opposition has gradually disappeared from the lexicon.”25 Naked life, Agamben argues, is zoē, the life of the animal, the life that is devoid of political meaning, the one that belongs to the sovereign while being devoid of any sovereignty of its own. It is a life that contains no bios, and it is the life that belongs to homo sacer, the sacred man, he who cannot be executed, nor can he be sacrificed (thus falling outside the provenance of both the law and the church) but can only be killed with impunity.

Agamben has taken a rather eclectic approach to ancient Greek terminology, and his conceptual leaps threaten to undermine his argument.26 To begin with, can ancient Greece really be considered the index of all humanity, to the extent that the ancient Greek distinction between zoē and bios could acquire significance for the totality of human experience, as Agamben suggests? Is there an uncomplicated kinship line between this undifferentiated we ("we mean by the word life," says Agamben) and the ancient Greeks? Who are "we"? The subjects of the modern state? Europeans? Moderns? And which are these "modern languages" out of whose lexicon the "opposition has gradually disappeared"? Which languages other than Greek, we might ask, ever contained this opposition so that "we" can now lament its elision?

The place where this once happened, and that still retains the tensions, oppositions, and distinctions, is of course Greece itself, both in language and in practice. It is not, however, a place to which Agamben turns in his genealogy of the concept of life. The lexical distinction between zoē and bios is still vibrant in Greece, although never as clear or unambiguated as Agamben imagines it, but it has never existed outside the Greek context.27 It becomes increasingly difficult,

25. Agamben, Means without End, 2. In Homo Sacer, the ancients have been ascribed a specific name: it is Aristotle who is credited with the specificity of the distinction.

26. Jacques Derrida has alluded to the fact that the surgical distinction that Agamben is producing has never been so clear in reality, but Derrida does not elaborate on this. Derrida, Voyous: Deux essais sur la raison (Paris: Galilée, 2003).

27. Two modern Greek expressions are indicative:

1. *Den einai zoē aftē* (“this is not life”—indicating that life is so hard and abject that it has become a burden)
2. *Bios abiotos* (“my life has been made unlivable”)

In either case, however, the meaning is the same: it is life that is being debated, and a life that can be attributed or lived equally by humans and by animals. The terminology of the Greek camps,
then, to understand exactly what this invented lack/lapse/absence, this vacating of meaning might mean (perhaps the modern Greek paradigm has nothing to offer to Agamben). The one space/place/location where the distinction exists as an organic part of its lexicon has been, it seems, elided out of the paradigm of modernity (if it is, indeed, modernity that one attempts to index through the elucidation of this distinction, as Agamben maintains).

The camps in Greece stand as a particularly salient paradigm for the interrogation of the lexical tensions of life in the context of the distinctions drawn between zoē and bios, and the praxes that these tensions have engendered. An unexpected location turns up right at one of the points, pregnant with the future to come, where the Resistance meets the space of metaphor. It is the case of Distomo, a small village in western Greece where German brutality, irrationality, and deep paranoia led to the massacre of the village. This is what happened in Distomo (countless times recounted to me by my mother when I was growing up in Athens): A German company of Waffen SS was ambushed by a guerrilla company that happened to have been stationed a few kilometers outside Distomo. The guerrillas had not been sent to ambush the Germans; it was not an organized attack. On their way to Athens, after the attack, the Germans chanced upon some Greek farmers tending their fields. The German commander thought this suspicious, turned around, went to Distomo, and ordered his men to shoot and kill everyone in sight. Very few people lived to tell the story (although the story was told, in the form of conflicting reports, by the German commander, an accompanying member of the military police, and, over the last few years, in the German and international courts to which some of the survivors who were young children at the time have turned to earn reparations).28

But Distomo is also the place where, according to legend, the meeting between Oedipus and his father Laius happened. And Oedipus happens to be one of the originary metaphors that has informed the perception of zoē as naked life. Oedi-
pus, the mythical character who was simultaneously a native and a stranger, offspring, parent, and sibling, king and subject, exile and dispossessed, is the character who is always liminal, always existing on the sides of the center, never occupying a firm and stable position. And the Oedipian paradigm was erected as paradigmatic of the experience of life in Greece, as in this reading of the Massacre at Distomo in 1944:

The great truck road across the Boetian plain divides at Livadia. To the left it continues north past the Lion of Chaeronea to the mountains behind which lies Thessaly; to the right, after crossing the Alpine district of upland meadows, where in the spring the large number of Judas trees strike a curiously exotic note, it follows the barren valley dividing the two great massifs of Parnassus and Helicon. Less than an hour from the town the latter route divides again at a depressing wind-swept cross-roads where, according to tradition, took place the unfortunate meeting between Oedipus and his father, *hinc illae lacrimae*, whence the main road continues on to Delphi and the fork to the left winds its wretchedly surfaced way to Distomo. This village, which must always have worn a sufficiently poverty-stricken aspect, is now a terrifying monument to human barbarity. In 1943 [actually in 1944, as the Germans were leaving] it was the scene of the most savage act of German reprisal and almost every house still standing amid the ruins exhibits crosses scrawled in blue paint beside the door, together with the names of its inmates whom the Germans took out and shot in the market-place.29

In this way Osbert Lancaster, in an ingenious conceptual sweep, fixed in the Greek experience of history the management not only of space and time, but also of alterity and selfhood, and, unbeknownst to him, undoubtedly, he participated in bringing the paradigm of Oedipus as syntagmatic to the experience of the Left in the somatisization (literally) of the tension between *zoë* and *bios*. Because Oedipus appears again, a few years later, in the context of the camps, as the iconic figure of life in the camps, especially if we keep in mind the possibility that if some of these guerrillas survived the war, the Dekemvrianá, and the White Terror, they would probably have been sent to the camps, they would probably have lived the somatic experience of swollen feet and gouged eyes themselves.

Sacrum homo sacer

I. sacer, sacra, sacrum [root sa- Gk. σάος, σάος, safe; whence Latin sanus] dedicated or consecrated to a divinity, holy, sacred = ἴερος (cf. sanctus, augustus) Transf., in gen. holy, sacred, awful, venerable (not till after the Augustinian period, and very rare).

II. in particular with a bad accessory significance; devoted to a divinity for destruction, forfeited; and in absolute accursed, criminal, impious, wicked.

absolute: homo sacer is set, quem populus judicavit ab maleficium; neque fas est eum immolari; sed qui occidit, parricidii non damnatur. Nam lege tribunicia prima cavetur: si quis eum, qui eo plebei scito sacer sit, occiderit, parricida ne sit. Ex quo quis homo malus atque impobus sacer appellari solet, fest, s.v. sacer mons.

Transf. in genitive accursed, excerable, detestable, horrible, infamous, etc. (only poetic and in post-Augustinian prose).30

Freud: disgust, blessed but also accursed, worthy of.31

Caillois creates a genealogy for sacer through the Greek ἁγος, “defilement,” also meaning “the sacrifice which cleanses defilement,” and the later usage of ἁγης, “pure,” and ἐνοχής, “accursed”; ἄφωσιον, etymologized from “ὁσιος,” just as the Latin expiare, “to expiate,” is interpreted as “to rid oneself of the sacred (pius) element that has been introduced by the defilement.” Expiation is the act that permits the criminal to resume his normal activity and his place in the profane community, by ridding himself of his sacred character, by deconsecrating himself, as de Maistre had earlier phrased it.32

Later, in Rome, the word sacer designates “the one or that which cannot be touched without defilement” (what in anthropology has come to be known as “untouchability”). If someone becomes guilty of a crime against religion or the state, the assembled populace casts him out of its midst, in declaring him sacer. From this moment on, if there is any supernatural risk involved in putting him

to death, the murderer is at any rate regarded as innocent in terms of human law (*jus*) and is not condemned for homicide (*parricidii non damnantur*).\(^{33}\)

Henri Hubert and Marcel Mauss provide the (anthropological) definition of *sacrifice*: “a religious act which, through the consecration of a victim, modifies the condition of the moral person who accomplishes it or that of certain objects with which he is concerned.”\(^{34}\)

The state, by evoking its own experience as (secular) sacrifice, engages in an act of self-sanctification. By refusing to recognize the act of the leftist as sacrifice, however, the state engages not only in the desanctification of the leftist but in the refusal to recognize the leftist as selfsame, meaning as *human*. It is in light of this twisted gesture of the state that Yiorgos Yiannopoulos, a survivor of the Makrónisos camp, making a comparison to Dachau, writes: “At the concentration camps of the Nazis extermination was primarily on the level of the body, whereas in Makrónisos the primary care was for the moral and psychic extermination of the *human*.”\(^{35}\) It is in this way that Yiannopoulos, unwittingly perhaps, splices the enumerative project of the Nazis (driven by the desire to exterminate of the Other in its totality) onto the enumerative project of the Greek liberals (driven by the desire to subsume the Other in its totality). In either case, we witness the dialectic between necropolitics and biopolitics.\(^{36}\)

War, Roger Caillois reminds us, is the ransom of civilization, with its sacrifice, blood right, and the disruption of the everyday by the enormous, the horrific, and the transgressive. If, however, war circumscribes what civilization is, it simultaneously presupposes what humanity is exposing, thus the question of what is human as a question through which the anthropological project becomes a political problem. The political subject, the dissident, the Marxist, as simultaneously object

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35. Yiorgos Yiannopoulos, *Makrónisos: Testimonies of a University Student 1947 – 1950* (Athens: Bibliorama, 2001), 118 (emphasis added). The notion of the human ought to be taken, here, as a “local term” in the sense that it constitutes a local category of existence, not (necessarily) burdened by the discourses that have produced humanism as an ideology in the tradition of Western moral philosophy. “Human” is the category opposed to that of the animal and (decidedly) opposed to the divine. Therefore, the deployment of the term *human* in modern Greece does not inevitably invoke a metaphysics of existence but rather calls into order the responsibility of acknowledging the intersubjectivity that makes recognition of a human by a human possible and inevitable. It is precisely the resolute decision by the Nazis in Dachau or the Greeks in the camps not to recognize the Other (in both cases the Other is the leftist) as “human” that brings about the announcement of the humanity of the interned. On Dachau, see Harold Marcuse, *Legacies of Dachau*.
36. I take *necropolitics* from Achille Mbembe and *biopolitics* from Michel Foucault.
and subject of the humanist State, is the location where this circumscription of humanity happens as an event. Located at the space of the profane, deeply suspicious of the state’s call to sacrifice, the Marxist calls to order the contradictions inherent in the humanist tradition that has produced her, as she stands resolutely antithetical to any sacralization of experience.

As a response to this gesture, the state, always animating sacrifice as the constitutive history of itself, re-produces the category of the leftist as categorically nonhuman. Christianity, through the instantiation of Christ as human, dislodged the sacrificiality of the selfsame\textsuperscript{37} from the realm of totemism and reterritorialized it within the realm of political theology.\textsuperscript{38} Through that gesture, sacrifice of the self becomes circularly redemptive, so that sacrifice of the Other becomes impossible, even as it enables the annihilation of the Other. Therefore, the relegation of the leftist to the realm of the unhuman presupposes while it actualizes both her untouchability and her unsacrificability.

“We live in a sacrificial society” is a philosophical announcement the weight of which cannot be lifted even by the critical positionalities of the announcers, such as Luce Irigaray, Jacques Derrida, René Girard, or Jacques Lacan.\textsuperscript{39} Are the “desert islands,” then, this sacrificial space par excellence? Is that where the delineation and delimitation of the “human” takes place, so that the act of sacrifice produces the circle of interiority needed by the state? Not necessarily, intuits Panos Terzopoulos, one of the survivors of the massacre of 1948 in Makrónisos, because it is precisely on the “islands” that the categories of sacrifice collapse completely onto themselves, so that what remains is the fissure between the linguistic and the semantic appropriation of the concept of sacrifice by the state (as it becomes a ritual on which the state can be built) and the originary premises of sacrifice as a religious ritual of inclusion (where ritual is the gesture of inclusion

\textsuperscript{37} I use the term \textit{selfsame} to denote the fiction of the self \textit{as} the same, which is the fiction implicated in the process of totemism as examined in anthropology.

\textsuperscript{38} A political theology that is by no means confined to Christianity.

par excellence), which is precisely the moment where the sacrifice of the Other becomes impossible or, rather, undesirable, or (even more rather) useless. And, perhaps not unexpectedly, it is the prison priest who officiates upon this fissure of the political and the religious: “My child, through torture the human reaches purification,” he would say after the military police had tortured the soldiers. In the words of Bruce Lincoln, “There are more ways than one to sacrifice a human being, and it is not those victims alone who are actually led to the altar who deserve our respect and compassion.”

But this is precisely where one can recognize that if there is any way in which the leftist can be the subject of a sacrifice, it would be a sacrifice that has no relevance for the state: the state gains nothing by this bodily violence to which the leftist is subjected “for his own good,” for the attainment of his own purification, for the purge of his own plague, no matter where this leftist exists, no matter where sovereign power can be located. And, at any rate, as Lincoln has pointed out, under any circumstances where the specter of sacrifice is raised (metaphorical, linguistic, allegorical, or actual, with the head on the butcher block, so to speak), “far greater sacrifices are required from some members of society than from others, while those who offer the most often reap the leanest rewards.” Sacrifice presupposes the presence of a sacrificial victim, one that will be sanctified to the point of becoming untouchable. A pre-Christian homo sacer, an impossibility.

Suicide

There is a central and riveting, if disturbing, question that shadows Agamben’s Homo Sacer: Why does the Foucauldian formulation of biopolitics and governmentality not extend to the concentration camp? Why does Foucault look at the prison, the school, the hospital, but not the place of containment that holds not dear, but sacred life, in its barest form: life that does not deserve to be appropriated by the state (and thus be executed) or the church (and thus be sacrificed), but can only be killed with impunity?

A disturbing question is thus raised with respect to the liberal state in a time of crisis, or a state of emergency (e.g., the condition in Greece between 1936 and

41. Panos Terzopoulos, in Geladopoulos, Makrónisos, 52.
43. Lincoln, Death, War, and Sacrifice, 175.
1974): How does human life get constituted and instituted as existing as if in a prelegal space (in the Hobbesian state of nature) while at the same time being securely within the parameters of the law? In other words, what is the rupture in the law, the fragmentation in its very constitution, that allows for the suspension of life during a case of emergency? Agamben locates this in the “happening” (in a sense, in the “Becoming”) of the concentration camp, but I would like to argue that it takes place primarily in the space of the rehabilitation camp that only becomes one of extermination out of carelessness (as was the case with the Greek camps).44 Agamben has invoked the moment of non-Kantian ethics in Karl Binding’s gesture of dislocating the act of suicide from the discourse of ethics and placing it within a legal discourse of rights. Felix Karl Binding and Alfred Hoche (Binding as a specialist in penal law and Hoche as a professor of medicine interested in medical ethics) published a pamphlet in 1920 on the question of the legality of suicide and the efficacy of a program on eugenics. In a move away from Kantian ethics (in which suicide is a move against one’s duty toward oneself), the authors determined that sovereignty over living man resided with himself, eliding thus, as Agamben rightly points out, the distinction “between exteriority and interiority, which the juridical order can therefore neither exclude nor include, neither forbid nor permit . . . like the sovereign decision on the state of exception.”45 However, the discussion on suicide would not, on its own, have acquired a signification had it not rested upon the crushing structure of “euthanasia” within the program of German eugenics. Suicide, Agamben writes following Binding, “cannot be understood as a crime (for example, as a violation of a duty toward

44. Despite the threats by the torturers to the interned that they would leave their last breath there, a threat that was almost always supported by the authorities of the camps, the Greek camps had been established as a project of education, not of extermination. See Bournazos, “To ‘Mega Ethniko Sholeion Makronissou.’ ” The reason was partly practical: with the civil war raging, the state was in dire need of soldiers, whom it found among the repentant ones from the camps. It was also a matter of ideological hubris: as Maniadákès had noted in 1937, if communism could infect the minds of the citizens, then nationalism could infect them. See Ho Kommounismós stén Helláda.

45. Agamben, Homo Sacer, 136–37. Mbembe fixes this hesitant moment of sovereignty when he recognizes that there exists in sovereignty a “central project” that does not struggle for autonomy (Mbembe does not define autonomy, but from the position he takes and the development of his argument, it seems that it is the autonomy of both Immanuel Kant and Cornelius Castoriadis) but rests on the “generalized instrumentalization of human existence and the material destruction of human bodies and populations.” Achille Mbembe, “Necropolitics,” Public Culture 15 (2003): 14 (emphasis original). In the case of the Greek camps, the specter of extermination looms ominously, as it involves the total extermination of the leftist as a form of life, on the level of ideas, and its reforma-

414
oneself) yet also cannot be considered as a matter of indifference to the law,” but “the law has no other option than to consider living man as sovereign over his own existence.” 46 It is only when human sovereignty can be handed to the citizen in the specter of the law that this sovereignty can be taken away, by the law. It is only through the annunciation, this solipsistic representation of sovereignty, that sovereignty and its annunciation can be constituted as existing, as Being, and hence that they can be questioned and become the political objects of the legal state. It is only when the citizen can announce, in the context of the law, “I am a legal subject” that her sovereignty over herself-as-being can be questioned by the law and retained or revoked. It was decided in the Weimar Republic that suicide was not against the law.

The gesture that the Weimar Republic was so reluctant to complete—the announcement that suicide was illegal—was completed by Antonios Vassilopoulos, the military director of Makrónisos, on March 6, 1948. On February 28 and March 1, a massacre of the nonrepentant First Battalion had taken place. Starting in the evening of February 28 and continuing all day long on March 1, the military police raided the First Battalion on Makrónisos, the Battalion of the incorrigibles, demanding signed declarations of repentance. At the end of the raid close to two hundred men were dead, and the entire battalion maimed, some for life. Eyes were gouged out, feet made unable to walk, bones broken, backs broken, lungs pierced, teeth extracted, genitals twisted. Some of the men were driven to madness. Many committed suicide in the following days. Later that week, Vassilopoulos issued a memo to his subordinates (members of the military police who had participated in the massacre) in which he declared: “There is a wave of suicides that has occurred in the Battalion under my command. Those attempting suicide are misled if they believe that they can dispose of their selves as they wish. From now on, it is decreed, that a sworn interrogation will take place on any and all who attempt suicide, the results of which will be submitted to me immediately along with the necessary suit for the indictment to special Court Martial.” 47

“It is forbidden for the soldiers to commit suicide,” concludes Yiannopoulos, who survived the massacre. 48 Both of these contexts, Nazi Germany and civil war Greek camps, are different from, but their effect no more chilling than, the events of summer 2006 in Guantánamo Bay. On June 10, Guantánamo officials

announced the first _successful_ suicides at the camp. Navy Rear Admiral Harry Harris told reporters about the three men who committed the suicides: “They have no regard for human life. Neither ours nor their own. I believe this was not an act of desperation but an act of _asymmetric warfare_ against us.” If this gesture, then, is interpreted by the military and the George W. Bush administration officials as an “asymmetric act of war,” one would have to conclude that had the three men survived the attacks, the military would have the right to kill them _as if_ in combat, albeit an asymmetric one.

In the conceptualization of “life that does not deserve to live,” Agamben recognized a pivotal moment in the construction of an ideology of biopolitics: it led from the examination of suicide as a possible breach of the legal system in Germany through the institutionalization of euthanasia as humanistic and compassionate practice, to the emergence of a discursive and legal system that made possible the extermination of dangerous and polluting life (that of the leftists, homosexuals, Jews, Gypsies, and those perceived to be of lower intelligence and suffering from mental illness). So far, so good: things are clear even if chillingly and objectionably so. The talk is still about bodies; we are still in the 1920s, and there is no talk about minds.

**Dachau, 1933**

Dachau was the concentration camp Greeks knew best. It was the only name of a camp that I knew growing up, until I was old enough to listen to Mikis Theodorakis’s music for the record _Mauthausen_ and learn about Auschwitz and Bergen-Belsen. “It is important not to forget that the first concentration camps in Germany were the work not of the Nazi regime but of the Socialist Democratic governments, which,” as Agamben reminds us, “interned thousands of communist militants in 1923 on the basis of _Schutzhaft_.” The history of Dachau is almost as old. Originally built as a munitions factory during World War I, it was used as a concentration camp in March 1933 to intern political prisoners. The camp was placed under the jurisdiction of the SS, and special laws were enacted to legitimate its existence. With the Nuremberg Laws of 1935, Dachau acquired all the legal framework that it needed. Greek Communists and partisans started

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49. Officials at Guantánamo Bay have reported forty-one unsuccessful suicide attempts by twenty-five detainees since the United States opened the concentration camp there in January 2002. The numbers indicate that the same detainees have attempted suicide more than once.
being sent there as early as 1941, and some of them were released in 1945, when the U.S. troops entered the camp.

Oedipean Humanity

Behind the ravine he had been tortured cruelly, they did phálanga on him and he couldn’t walk. . . . Why did they hit him so much? When the “polite” lieutenant asked him “well, child, will you sign the declaration?” he responded “why should I sign, and stay out of solitary, with the thieves?” In this way he transgressed every boundary of . . . politeness and the lieutenant decided to repay him by making him King Oedipus [Vassiliá Oidipoda].

— Yiannopoulos, Makrónisos

Who is “we”? Who counts with whom? What is the economy of the “same” and the economy of the “other,” the economy of the “friend” and the economy of the “enemy”? Technologies of alterity are fundamentally technologies of inaugurating a self. Processes of recognizing alterity in the presence and existence of the self constitute this inaugural moment in the technology of alterity. Bodies—total, intact, contained—submit to the facticity of representation: whole bodies, healthy bodies, desirable bodies. Pestilent bodies are only fragmentarily represented, fragmentarily received, providing textual fragments that participate in the erasure of any possibility of the recognition of an intersubjectivity. The question raised here, reading Agamben, becomes pressing: if racialism, racism, and eugenics provide the framework of alterity for Arendt’s “banality of evil,” what is the ideological structure that participates in and facilitates the separation of self from same? If metaphors of pestilence (lice, nits, pests) provide the trope for the extermination of the one who has been situated outside this circle of interiority of the national body, metaphors of biomedicine (miasma, the plague, cancer) allow the sovereign to articulate a logos that surrounds the process of extermination of

52. Among them, the secretary general of the Greek Communist Party, Nikos Zachariades.
53. Phálanga is the term used in Greece for bastinado, the practice of strapping the prisoner on a bed or a plank and with his/her shoes on or off hitting the bottom of the feet until they swell and bleed and the flesh becomes pulp so that the person cannot walk or even stand, sometimes for weeks. The damage is permanent and ranges from permanently swollen feet to fractured or shattered tarsal bones. The connection with Oedipus (even if it had not been made by Yiannopoulos) is painfully obvious.
54. See the pamphlet Ho Kommounismós sten Helláda published by the Ethnikē Hetaireia in 1937. Although anonymously written, this pamphlet has a motto by Ioannis Metaxas and a frontispiece by Konstantinos Maniadákēs.
the Communist. This same *logos* allows the sovereign, not the law, to announce the need of a "purging ‘*pharmakon,*’ one that will cure the organism of all those who, out of lightness, ignorance, weakness, emotionality, ideology, or silly calculation, have been infected by the communist microbe."55

The annihilation of the “Communist” takes place in the same space as the annihilation of the “Jew.”56 But, whereas the latter has already been constituted as the “radical Other,” as that which can never be read as the self, the former becomes the tragic self, the one who will never be an Other but can never be selfsame, either. In the words of Maniadákēs, “Communism is a psychic and intellectual affliction that seizes each person who lacks the force of resistance and self determination against this [agent] that upsets and destabilizes the social, political, and intellectual cohesiveness of our life.”57 Where the extermination of the Jew, the Gypsy, the non-Aryan constitutes annihilation, the extermination of the Communist (German, Greek, Italian, Slav) constitutes self-annihilation that refuses to be recognized as such. What becomes urgent, then, is to consider the continuities in modes of governmentality between the pre- and the postwar period with reference to the Greek leftists, paying particular attention to the establishment and continuous use of rehabilitative concentration camps.

The Dangerous Individual

*Are there individuals who are intrinsically dangerous?*
— Michel Foucault, “About the Concept of the Dangerous Individual in Nineteenth-Century Legal Psychiatry”

It is particularly instructive to look at the discourses that make possible the processes of constituting an Other as such, especially in the case of the leftists, who, through the employment of biomedical metaphors, have been termed a “pesti-

55. *Ho Kommounismós stēn Helláda*, 4.

56. The first camps were established for the concentration of the Communists and socialists. It was only after 1938 that these same camps were used to intern “Jews” as a distinct *legal* category, over and above the existing category of *race* (if a separation of the racial could ever be distinct from the legal)—I am using the distinction here catachrestically, as a heuristic tool). But the “Communists” of 1933 were also largely Jews, although they did not become explicitly and uniquely “Jews” until the Final Solution was articulated (at which point the majority of the Communists in Dachau were already dead). The collapse of the Jew and the Communist in interwar Europe was one of the most banal locutions that survived through the Cold War (so, communism was repeatedly announced as part of the “Jewish conspiracy”). See Sofsky, *The Order of Terror*.

57. *Ho Kommounismós stēn Helláda*, 3.
Desert Islands

Nicos Poulantzas has noted that concentration camps are a particularly modern invention in the sense that they are drafted into concretizing the same “spatial power matrix” as the national territory, thus making possible the notion of the “internal enemy” by internalizing “the frontiers of the national space at the heart of that space itself.” Poulantzas correctly identifies the fact that concentration camps are constructed in order to hold “anti-nationals” within the national space. Poulantzas’s position, however, further underlines what Gil Anidjar has explicitly pointed out and convincingly addressed, namely, that we don’t have a theory of the enemy. See Anidjar, *The Jew, the Arab: A History of the Enemy* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2003). See also Anidjar’s further argument on the construction of the enemy in his reading of Carl Schmitt’s *The Theory of the Partisan: A Commentary/Remark on the Concept of the Political* (Berlin: Duncker and Humblot, 1963), English trans. A. C. Goodson (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 2004), in Anidjar, “Terror Right,” *Centennial Review* 4, no. 3 (2004): 35–69.

human nature, producing, administering, and managing life itself, and ultimately
deciding on its value or non-value.”60 And we see that although this description of
biopolitics resonates in the case of the rehabilitation camps (where brains, indeed,
were the object of sovereign intervention), it does not in the case of the extermina­
tion camps (where the intervention was on the level of life itself, as Yian­nopoulos
and Agamben have pointed out). The question, then, demands to be rearticulated
and readdressed: Why is it that Agamben does not note the fundamental differ­
ence between extermination and rehabilitation, wherein the notion of biopolitics
really articulates itself?61

Paris, 1755

The paradigms of concentration, rehabilitation, and annihilation that I have men­
tioned above cannot be ignored in the darkness of the new American imperial
project, with its Guantánamo Bay and Abu Ghraib, its secret prison camps in
undisclosed locations throughout the newly “Europeanized” space of old Eastern
Europe, the inane discussions over what constitutes torture or not, as if these
questions have not already been definitively answered and solved. They cannot
be glossed over in the shadows of the Patriot Act. Such places and spaces forc­
ibly participate in the radical reconstitution of humans into pre–habeas corpus
objects of the state, of humans whose very humanity is questioned, whose ani­
mality becomes the object of a new sovereignty of biopolitics. In 1755, Abbé
Laugier, a cleric interested in the origins and functions of architecture, offered a
modern, first glimpse of what blurs the line between the animal and the human.
His famous “primitive hut” was a structure encapsulating the idea of “rational
simplicity,” where the bare necessities of the human meet the bare necessities of
the animal. Constructed of assembled tree trunks, open on all sides but covered
by branches, it was supposedly used by humans and their animals for shelter,
bare humans, bare animals, bare shelter, bare truth.62 One look at the structures
at Guantánamo Bay brings the abbé’s formulation painfully to mind: prisoners

60. Andreas Kalyvas, “The Sovereign Weaver: Beyond the Camp,” in Politics, Metaphysics, and
(Paris: Seuil, 1997), does address the question of the extermination camps when he interrogates the
sovereign’s right to kill, and posits the question of how biopower could have been effectively applied
to the Nazi death machine.
62. Neni Panourgíá, “Colonizing the Ideal: Neoclassical Articulations and European Moderni­
being herded by guards behind occluding barbed wires, transferred from cage to cage, provided only with open spaces. “They don’t need anything more than that,” President Bush proclaimed on national television. “I’ve been to Cuba, the weather is beautiful, it never rains.”

The detainees at Makrónisos and Yáros (and, to a lesser extent, at Trikeri) lived in tents for the duration of their confinement, roughly from 1947 to 1958. These were tents affixed on low stone walls that the detainees themselves not only had to build but for which they also had to procure the needed stones, an endeavor that became part of the torture itself. There seems to be a preoccupation on the part of the technologies of punishment and rehabilitation with the handling of stone (already well known since the chain gangs of the nineteenth-century prisons). On Makrónisos and Yáros, on the Andaman Islands, on Goli Otok, in Dachau, the mindless, useless, and repetitive handling of stone becomes simultaneously the syntagmatic modality of punishment and resistance. The order was always very clear: take those rocks from up there and bring them down here. When the transport had finished, then the order was reversed: take the stones from down here and move them up there. This would take place all day long, in the heat of the summer, in the cold of the winter, always in the presence of a relentless wind, without water, without rest, without shoes, in tattered clothes and psyches. At some point the torture acquired a target: make embankments for the tents. The tents were large enough for ten people, but were occupied by thirty, or forty, or sometimes fifty. Some of them had cots, most had nothing, as if the lack of objects would teach the leftists the value of property, would infuse in them the merits of our “Western, democratic values” (to echo President Bush, himself eerily and unknowingly echoing the torturers of Makrónisos and Yáros a lifetime earlier).

Makrónisos, Yáros, Trikeri, Guantánamo Bay do not belong to totalitarianism. They are all gestures located within the consensual context of parliamentary democracy, and they are gestures that expose the deep desire for power that ties together, strings along, all structures and formulations of governance.