

Tina or Tara?

“*Tina or not Tina? That is the question. Whether tis’ nobler in the mind to acquiesce to its imperious will or take up arms against it and suffer, fighting for freedom of thought*”: that’s how the monologue of Shakespeare’s Hamlet (Act III) kicks off – in the 21st century version.

In this life we are pestered by processes that are officially free and apparently democratic (even in schools of all sorts and levels, parents and pupils are convened to attend pointless rites related to somewhat futile elections of class representatives), only to then find out that the big decisions – the important ones, not the lesser ones – are all handed down from above.

“Brussels wants it”, “the protocols envisage it”; “it’s part of the algorithm”: hetero-direction permeates the epoch-making twists of the 21st century and then we naively wonder why turnout at the general election is so low.

But who is *Tina*? She’s not the cashier at the bar round the corner. *Tina* (*There Is No Alternative*) is the regulator of society, who imposes her will with her persuasive and mellow prevarication; she is the conduit of unknown and invisible ‘deities’. The Greek *τύχη* (*Tyche*) was derisive, ironic, unpredictable. *Zeitgeist*, on the other hand, evoked an atmosphere: that’s how the romantic poet Johann G. Herder conceived it, in the German language, in 1769, pitting it against the Latin expression *genius saeculi*, coined by philologist Christian A. Klotz a few years earlier, who had shaped it taking cue from the Roman concept of *genius loci*. Present-day *Tina*, on the other hand, embodies a greedy will and has upended a whole lot of things. For centuries, it was the craftsman who had to meet the desires and whims of the client; in the 21st century, it is the buyer who must adjust to the desires and whims of the sellers, with whom *Tina* gets along very well. *Tyche* pursued neither monetary goals, nor geopolitical interests. But *Tina* is more wary: she has switched from a lack of interest in fate to greediness for money. And all that stands before her must take a step back.

Tina dons good intentions, but her moral doesn’t break down into specific categories; she actually has a *hyper-moral* that is void of categories. She shows her very best (or very worst, depending on one’s standpoint) when it comes to war. She shaped the Treaty of Versailles in 1919 with articles 227 (“*The Allied and Associated Powers publicly arraign William II of Hohenzollern, formerly German Emperor, for a supreme offence against international morality and the sanctity of treaties*”) and 231 (*Germany accepts the responsibility of Germany*), which tragically introduced the moral condemnation of the defeated. In those months, it was J.M. Keynes who foresaw the disasters that would ensue, but his warnings were unheeded. *Tina* continued in 1946: she set up a tribunal in Nuremberg – whose legitimacy was dubious – for trying Nazi hierarchs. Even Hans Kelsen, who was forced to emigrate because of Nazism, expressed his strong doubts as to the members forming the judging panel, but he too was ignored. *Tina* wrapped up the 20th century by bombing civilians “for the sake of good order”.

She appeared for the first time in the Italian parliament as it was drafting the bill ratifying the 1947 peace treaty. The Constituent Assembly was an eloquent spectator. Authoritative figures countered the text presented by De Gasperi's cabinet; they argued soundly on their part, but *Tina* was relentless: "this shall be ratified". In that moment, nobody noticed or imagined how critical the lack of interlocution with those who attempted reasoning, with those who conjectured alternative solutions, actually was.

Great perplexity and problems arose with that bill, on two different levels: a strictly political one (raised by Togliatti, Nenni, Saragat) and a cultural one (raised by the best figures Italy had to offer at the time). But it was all useless. *Tina* was demanding: she appeared in the words of the majority rapporteur, Gronchi (who showcased the benefits of the Marshall Plan), of Minister Einaudi ("The Europe that Italy wishes for, for whose enforcement it must fight, is not a closed Europe, that is against some; it is a Europe open to all"), of Prime Minister De Gasperi ("Only by ratifying will we become part of the international community")¹. Such words echo the debate held in Greece in 2015, when the Tsipras government had to give in to the imperiousness of the International Monetary Fund and of the European Union.

In July 1947, in the Italian Parliament, Benedetto Croce's problematic (and certainly unbiased) thoughts had been to no avail: "War is an eternal law of the world [...] whoever places this matter under legal criteria is hiding the selfish profit of his own people or state under the guise of an impartial judge". Incidentally, he too dared to take a fault-finding stance vis-à-vis the Nuremberg trials, and, because of this, *Tina* was further vexed.

The dignified words uttered by Vittorio Emanuele Orlando, who complained about the excess servility, turned out to be fruitless: "Meekness could be felt [...] to the point that the Ministers of Italy were consulting with relatively low-ranking officials [...]. Resistance was possible, and resisting is what we should have done [...]. Now, this submissive behaviour has always existed, and it is yet to be seen again in the way, the time and the manner this ratification is being requested".

Even the reminiscences of another former Prime Minister, Francesco Saverio Nitti, were to no avail: "Our defence does not lie in denying our faults, but in acknowledging that our fault has been shared by England, by France, by America. Every time Italy showed it wanted to rid itself of fascism, their men or major newspapers intervened [...] in favour of fascism [...]. We have seen the most improbable things [...] Heads of government and powerful ministers come to Rome, pay tribute to Mussolini, lavishly praising him [...]. After many years of struggle, exile and deportation [...] it is even more painful for me [...] to accept the sacrifice".

Even Luigi Sturzo, in late 1946, urged the government not to sign, challenging the harshness of the clauses². But all these stances left *Tina* totally unaffected.

¹ Pressure came, concurrently, from the media too: the daily *La Stampa* on 25 July quoted the London *Times*: "Don't be cheap Machiavellis: today, the only possible and useful nationalism for Italy is European nationalism".

² Further reading: G. Formigoni, "*Sturzo e la collocazione internazionale dell'Italia nel secondo dopoguerra in Universalità e cultura nel pensiero di Luigi Sturzo: atti del convegno internazionale di studio*", Roma, Istituto Luigi Sturzo, 28-29-30 October 1999, Soveria Mannelli 2001, Rubettino, pp. 361ss.

Tina never once hesitated. This was confirmed by the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Sforza, who tied the ratification to Italy's immediate entry into the UN: he vehemently argued that if ratification had not taken place by 10 August, joining "the world's most solemn aeropagus" would be delayed by a year. It worthwhile pointing out that the treaty was indeed ratified before the imposed deadline (31 July 1947) and it was converted into Law no. 811 of 2 August, therefore one week before 10 August, but Italy actually joined the UN... only eight years later, on 14 December 1955.

Over the years, *Tina* has perfected her technique and has learnt how to bypass open-ended decisions. She works her way through *soft* international commitments, which initially are non-binding. She introduces concepts. Think about the gender theory: it is an original theory (in the case in point our thoughts focus on the method, not on the matter) that is foreign to the religious and social cultures of the western world. Well, it first appeared in Beijing in 1995, during the fourth World Conference on Women convened by the United Nations. A deliberation on the matter, by the German government, followed in 1999. Some twenty years later, the number of chairs and gender-teaching at universities in Germany has reached, and perhaps surpassed, the number of German literature chairs. Politics thinks that by doing so it is bypassing us, but it actually is politics itself that is being bypassed.

Tara (*There Are Reasonable Alternatives*) has tried to bite back, but she is some sort of novel Cinderella and has been relegated to the basement of inappropriate opinions. She may appear shy to the people who don't know her: she has a Mediterranean mindset, distant Athenian ancestry, she studied seriously – at a time when Erasmus student exchanges did not exist – at the universities of Bologna, Paris, Heidelberg (and elsewhere). She is not assertive, but she is sure of the method: she has learnt that $A=A$, that $B=B$; therefore, that A is not equal to B . She follows logic. Reflection is her strong suit.

While history is by all means a subject, *Tara* has found out that, above all, it's a method. *Tara* has studied the timeline of the western world and discovered that fiery *Tina* has been proved wrong on several occasions, starting from Salamis in 480 BC, when Themistocles' outnumbered forces defeated the powerful Persians in a naval clash; she further acknowledged it when Joan of Arc went to Charles, Dauphin of France, and guided him in defeating – against all odds – the English, liberating Orleans from the siege on 8 May 1429.

History often mocks the "inevitability" claimed by the "great thinkers": Diderot, feeling very self-confident and fully convinced of the soundness of his ideas, went to Saint Petersburg to meet with Catherine II; she listened with interest and curiosity to the smug exposition of his projects³, but then let it all fall on deaf ears and the only thing the fuming philosopher could do was to return to Paris. Karl Marx deemed the proletariat's victory

³ D.Diderot, *Mélanges philosophiques, historiques, etc., année 1773, depuis le 15 oct. jusqu'au 3 décemb. même année*. These are manuscripts for the Tsarina, whose original copies are kept in Moscow (State Archive of the Russian Federation, Fund 728, *opis* 1, no.217). For a more recent editions, see P.Vernière (edited by), *Mémoires pour Catherine II*. Paris 1966, Garnier.

inevitable⁴, but he failed to forge a bond, an alliance with the economic power that he actually wanted to overthrow.

During the last World War, the world – flabbergasted by France’s surrender – sat and waited for the United Kingdom to be invaded, as the *Luftwaffe* was dropping bombs on London and Coventry. And yet the inevitable did not come to pass and Churchill eventually overpowered Hitler – again, against all odds. And what about atomic energy? It showed up at the Brussels Expo in 1958, claiming to be the (obviously inevitable) energy source of the future. A monument, standing 102 meters tall, was actually built in the Heysel Park in Brussels in her honour (the *Atomium*, representing the nine atoms of a unit cell of a magnified iron crystal); yet it was banned in the following decades, having become “noxious energy”.

In the 21st century an unbreakable and solid alliance has been forged between a certain philosophical-political thought (the neo-Enlightenment movement praising *liber-...*⁵) and the economic-financial power (Big Tech). *Tina* has stepped up the rhetoric of inevitability – very reminiscent of the Trojan horse’s shrewdness – to bring to cities the most devastating economic imperatives. *Tina* wants humanity to line up before her, in one single line, walking with a cadenced pace that is equal for everyone, shrouded in a sombre haze, like the subjugated people in Fritz Lang’s film *Metropolis* (1927). This is neo-colonialism, whose aim is to conquer our consciences.

The core values of western culture are at stake. *Tina* fuels fear and makes us uncertain, incapable of deciding. She has crafted sophisticated mechanisms, skilfully playing with words: the more she oppresses with actions, the more she preaches freedom and tolerance. *Tina* is stentorian and imperious; she never replies, probably because debate is unknown to her: she scorns through *deplatforming*, she sanctions by accusing others of spreading *fake news*, she destroys by accusing others of fostering *hate speech*. We get blasted for “falsehood”, but *Tina* does not specify what is true or not (and obviously ignores what was said and written about truth in Athens in the 5th century BC). We get blasted for “hatred”, but she alone sets the yardstick. How awful the 1950s must have been... when Nat King Cole could afford to sing “*I hate you*” (in the song “*Sometimes I'm Happy*”) to the woman he loved.

Who dares contradict her? She is extremely touchy too... woe betide anyone who points out she often falls into contradiction. She would never admit it. After all, having abolished the sense of time and living in an eternal present, she never questions what she had imperiously stated before. One might just whisper the contradictory analysis of the North American society: for decades she asserted that the USA was a successful example of a *melting-pot*, of coexistence and convergence between such diverse populations; over the past few years, on the contrary, she has been claiming it is a society that is structurally racist and “noxiously” white. It’s either one or the other: either it was not a pacified society, or it is not racist. Wilful ignorance of the past leads to the falsification of the present.

⁴ *Lohnarbeit und Kapital*. This is a collection of editorials published in the *Neue Rheinische Zeitung* on April 5, 6, 7, 8, and 11, 1849.

⁵ A wide-ranging term that describes *Tina*’s mythologies, passed off as declensions of “liberty”: *liberal*, *liberalism*, *liberality*, *liberalisation*, *liberist*, *libertarian*, *libertine* ... see R.Ferrari Zumbini, *Il grande giudice-Il Tempo e il destino dell’Occidente*, Rome 2022 (1st edition, reviewed and extended), Luiss University Press.

Tina is always “*Europeistically correct*” (I’m quoting Lucio Caracciolo, *Limes* magazine 10/2019) and “offers the ‘*need to be*’ as a given”. *Tara*, on the other hand, is polite; she seems insecure because she asks herself questions, she is not as fussy as overbearing *Tina*: indeed, one of the two is aware of something the other totally ignores. *Tara* constantly resorts to her sense of time, while *Tina* never joins the dots between past, present and future; she simply does not know how to draw lines across time. *Tina* is fluid, *Tara* is solid. *Tina* feeds on the consumerism of the moment (*Konsum macht frei*) and obviously fails to see that a society that forgets history, its own history, does not erase the sense of time, but rather erases itself. *Tara*, instead, intercepts these trajectories and has never abandoned the perception of reality.

Tina claims to be tolerant, but if truth be told, she isn’t. She is intolerant by nature; she sees nothing other than herself. An example: democracy isn’t just about the rite of going to the polls; it’s about – perhaps above all – dialogue. And yet, the opinion corridors of the 21st century have become narrower, because *Tina* finds it hard to respect opinions that differ from her own ones. *Tina* expects to be universal, hence believes she holds the monopoly of truth. But, lacking proper contact with reality, everything is overturned. If the principle of reality is not enforced, one cannot be in touch with the world: consequently, one cannot be universal and therefore one cannot be the sole purveyor of truth. What is left is just vast intolerance, which rests on rough aggregations of concepts that are both simplifying and simplified. *Tina* considers man to be his own creator and that’s where her dissociation from reality begins. Her ultimate goal is not the truth of being but power over being. All critical thoughts on such imperatives are exposed to the scorn of condemnation, squeezed between isolation (being cancelled on the Internet) and being harassed and accused of spreading *fake news* and, raising the bar further, being accused of fuelling *hate speech*. In a nutshell, *Tina* operates through splinters of reasoning, through fragments of an incomplete logic, while *Tara* works to overcome the compartment-based approach and aims to reconstruct knowledge starting from a sensitive experience.

Who shall prevail? If we were to predict the outcome, there would be... no alternatives... overwhelming *Tina* just has to win. But again, history tells us that she hasn’t always won...

We can only hope that after forbidding us to hate, she will not also forbid us to love.

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