Outlines of a Topography of Cruelty: Citizenship and Civility in the Era of Global Violence

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With this pretentious title, I want to continue investigating a nexus of problems, both theoretical and philosophical, which I already touched upon several times – particularly in my Wellek Lectures at Irvine in 1996.[1] The term "cruelty" is chosen by convention (but with some literary references in mind) to indicate those forms of extreme violence, either intentional or systemic, physical or moral – although such distinctions become questionable precisely when we cross the lines of extremity – that, so to speak, appear to us to be "worse than death." It is my hypothesis, generally speaking, that the actual or virtual looming of cruelty represents for politics, and particularly for today's politics in the framework of so-called globalization, a crucial experiment in which the very possibility of politics is at stake. For the speculative idea of a politics of politics, or a politics in the second degree, which aims at creating, recreating, and conserving the set of conditions within which politics as a collective participation in public affairs is possible or is not made absolutely impossible, I borrow the term "civility" – which indeed has many other uses. It is certainly an ambiguous term, but I think that its connotations are preferable to those of, say, civilization, socialization, police and policing, politeness, etc. In particular, "civility" does not necessarily involve the idea of a suppression of "conflicts" and "antagonisms" in society, as if they were always the harbingers of violence and not the opposite. Much, if not most, of the extreme violence we are led to discuss is the result of a blind political preference for "consensus" and "peace," not to speak of the implementation of law and order policies on a global scale. This, among other reasons, is what leads me to discuss these issues in terms of "topography," by which I understand at the same time a concrete, spatial, geographical, or geopolitical perspective – for instance taking into account such shifting distinctions as "North and South," "center and periphery," "this side of the border or across the border," "global and local," etc. – and an abstract, speculative perspective, meaning that the causes and effects of extreme violence are not produced on one and the same stage, but on different "scenes" or "stages," which can be pictured as "real" and "virtual" or "imaginary" – but the imaginary and the virtual are probably no less material, no less determining than the real.

This paper is based on a talk which I was asked to deliver in November 1999 for the opening of the Graduate Course in Humanitarian Action at the University of Geneva.[2] This will explain why the issues of citizenship and segregation,

asylum and migration, mass poverty and genocides in the globalized world order will play a central role in this discussion. These are to me the crucial "cosmopolitical" issues which we should try to locate and connect if we want to understand how and why democratic citizenship in today's world cannot be separated from an invention of concrete forms and strategies of civility.

I shall focus on two sets of problems. The first is typically European. I am thinking of the negative counterpart of the post-national integration and introduction of "European Citizenship," which is not only a revival of so-called "communitarian" demands and "identity politics," but above all a development of quasi-Apartheid social structures and institutions. This forms a contradictory pattern, which in many respects is now becoming highly unstable. The second set of problems is global: it appears as a systematic use of various forms of extreme violence and mass insecurity to prevent collective movements of emancipation that aim at transforming the structures of domination. For this reason – and also with the pattern of state-construction that Thomas Hobbes once described in the *Leviathan* as preventive counter-violence in mind – I shall not hesitate to speak of a politics of global preventive counter-revolution or counter-insurrection. But from another angle this "politics" is really anti-political, since in a nihilistic way it leads to suppressing the very conditions of building a polity. Instead, we witness the joint development of various sorts of wars and a kind of "humanitarian" action or intervention, which in many cases becomes an instrument in the service of precisely those powers who created the distress. Not by chance, in these two sets of problems the traditional institution of borders, which I think can be defined in the modern era as a "sovereign" or non-democratic condition of democracy itself, mainly works as an instrument of security controls, social segregation, and unequal access to the means of existence, and sometimes as an institutional distribution of survival and death: it becomes a cornerstone of institutional violence. This explains in advance why I shall insist on the democratization of borders, not only as their opening (and perhaps least of all as their generalized abolition, which in many cases would simply lead to a renewed war of all against all in the form of wild competition among economic forces), but above all as a multilateral, negotiated control of their working by the populations themselves (including, of course, migrant populations). Perhaps new representative institutions should be set up in this regard which are not merely "territorial" and certainly not purely national. This is part of what I would call a "cosmopolitics of human rights," where citizenship and civility are closely associated.

Before giving more detail about the two sets of concrete problems I want to deal with here, I think that we need some philosophical instruments to place them in the broader perspective of a reflection on the relationship between human rights and politics. It is widely accepted – and I share this view to a large extent – that here Hannah Arendt's work provides a necessary starting point. Allow me a few considerations on what we can draw from her. In her discussion of imperialism in

The Origins of Totalitarianism she addresses the question of "stateless" popula-
tions, deprived of any civil and civic rights, which had been immensely increased
in Europe (and elsewhere) after the two world wars.[3] In so doing, she inverts the
perspective of political philosophy in a double manner.

First, she reinstalls – right in the middle of debates about citizenship and polit-
ical regimes – forms of exclusion and situations of extreme violence where the
survival of humans, as mere representatives of the species, is threatened. She did
not want only to assert a humanistic criterion with a view to doing justice, but to
show that it is only through the discovery of a solution for such situations that we
can find a new foundation for the public sphere, where collective political *action*
(or *praxis*) takes place, and not only the management of population movements
and policing of social conflicts. In a very similar way, the French philosopher
Jacques Rancière more recently argued that, since the very origins of democracy,
the measure of equal liberty for all in the political realm was based on "*la part
des sans part*," i.e., giving a fair share to those who hold no share in the common-
wealth, or the political recognition of the have-nots. In other words, this would
mean an active transformation of exclusion processes into processes of inclusion
of the discriminated categories into the "city" or the "polity."[4] This is exactly
what *isonomia* in Greek cities was about. In this respect, "politics" in the strong
sense becomes inseparable from "permanent revolution," a notion that Hannah
Arendt might have inherited from Rosa Luxemburg.

From this perspective, the juridical form of equal liberty is clearly not elimi-
nated. But it has to be reworked completely. With respect to the principles of
modern humanism-universalism, a notion of "persons without rights" is a contra-
diction in terms, since *de jure* nobody is without rights, not even children or the
handicapped. But if we view positively, for instance, such claims as those of prop-
ertyless peasants in Brazil, whose motto is "justice for the rightless" when they
demand that paramilitary forces who kill and terrorize the poor be tried and
condemned, or those of migrant workers in France who protest against their being
denied official documents by asking for a "*droit de cité pour les sans papiers*"
(legal residence for the undocumented), we can view these demands based on
resistance and the refusal of violence as partial but direct expressions of the
process of the creation of rights, a dynamic which allows the political constitution
to become recognized as "popular sovereignty" or democracy.

This is one aspect of the lessons we can draw from Arendt's reflections on citi-
zenship, but there is another which in a sense is even more relevant today. I am
thinking of the famous argument showing that the history of nation-states has
produced a reversal of the traditional relationship between "human rights" and
"political rights" (or *droits de l'homme* and *droits du citoyen*) since they evolved
from the originary democratic national revolutions to the generalization of inter-
national conflicts and the development of imperialism. *Human rights* in general
can no longer be considered a mere prerequisite and an abstract foundation for
political rights that are set up and preserved within the limits of a given national

and sovereign state, but neither can they be considered to set a limit to the domination of the political over the juridical; it has become the opposite, as the tragic experiences of imperialism and totalitarianism in the twentieth century made manifest. We discovered that political rights, the actual granting and conditions of equal citizenship, were the true basis for a recognition and definition of "human rights" – to begin with, the most elementary ones concerning survival, naked life. Giving a new, "unpolitical" meaning to the *zôon politikon* itself, those who were not citizens of some state, who were "citizens of nowhere in the world," were no longer practically recognized and treated as humans. When the *positive* institutional rights of the citizen are destroyed – e.g., when, in a given historical context where citizenship and nationhood are closely associated, individuals and groups are chased out of their national belonging or simply put in the situation of an oppressed national "minority" – the basic rights which are supposed to be "natural" or "universally human" are threatened and destroyed: we witness forms of extreme violence, creating a distinction between so-called *Untermenschen* (subhumans) and "humans" believed to be supermen, *Übermenschen*. This is by no means a contingent phenomenon; it results from an irreversible process that has become common in contemporary politics. It imposes upon democracy the immediate task of a renewed foundation. The very essence of politics is at stake, since politics is not a mere "superstructure" above the social and natural conditions of life, communication, and culture. The *true* concept of politics already concerns the very possibility of a *community* among humans, establishing a space for encounter, for the expression and dialectical resolution of antagonisms among its various constitutive parts and groups.

Seen from this angle, the crucial notion suggested by Arendt, that of a "right to have rights," does not feature a *minimal* remainder of the political, made of juridical and moral claims to be protected by a constitution; it is much more the idea of a *maximum*. Or, better said, it refers to the continuous process in which a minimal recognition of the belonging of human beings to the "common" sphere of existence (and therefore also of work, culture, public and private speech, etc.) *already* involves a totality of rights, and makes it possible. I call this the "insurrectional" element of democracy, which predetermines every constitution of a democratic or republican state. Such a state, by definition, cannot consist (or cannot only consist) of statuses and rights ascribed from above; it requires the direct participation of the *demos*. I should say that Arendt's argument clearly recognizes the importance of the egalitarian or insurrectional element constitutive of democratic citizenship, but there is more: what she displays is the dialectical relationship of this element and the politics of civility. This comes from the fact that the radically excluded, those who, being denied citizenship, are also automatically denied the material conditions of life and the recognition of their human dignity, do not provide only a theoretical criterion to evaluate historical institutions against the model of the ideal constitution. They also force us to address the reality of extreme violence in contemporary political societies – nay, in the very heart of their everyday life. This

is only a seeming paradox: the limit or the "state of exception" (Schmitt) is nothing exceptional. On the contrary, it is "banal"; it permeates the functioning of social and political systems which claim or believe themselves to be "democratic." It is both an instrument for the continuity of their vested interests in power, and a permanent threat to their vitality. This is why we should not consider the choice between access to and denial of the rights of citizenship – more generally, the possibility and impossibility of an inclusive political order – as a speculative issue. It is a concrete challenge. The (democratic) political order is intrinsically *fragile* or *precarious*; if not continuously recreated in a politics of civility, it becomes again a "state of war," within or across borders.

We know that Arendt's argument was based on the experience of a "catastrophe" in European history: Nazism, World War Two, and the racist extermination of European Jews, Gypsies, and other groups. She tried to trace back its "origins" in the evolution of the nation-form towards imperialism, while at the same time carefully remaining aware of its uniqueness. We might summarize her idea by speaking of a deadly circle in which the national constitution of the state had trapped us. The nation-state was at the same time the sole positive or institutional horizon for the recognition of human rights and an "impossible" one, producing the destruction of the universal values it had supported. Now we must ask ourselves whether we are still living and acting in the same conditions. If not, we should ask what the claim of "a right to have rights" could become in today's politics. This question becomes a burning one when we observe that, although the nation-form has not simply been withering away, the conditions of politics, the economy, and culture, the material distribution of power and the possibilities of controlling it, have become increasingly transnational. "Postnational" state or quasi-state institutions have emerged in the general framework of globalization. The "European Community" is a privileged case of these developments. Let us first reflect on some of the contradictory and worrying aspects of this process, which, seen from another side, holds much promise.

   I take it to be a crucial issue to acknowledge that, along with the development of a formal "European citizenship," a real "European *Apartheid*" has emerged. In the long or even the short run, it could obstruct or *block* the construction of a democratic European community. It could therefore block European construction altogether, since there is no real possibility of the supranational community being achieved in an authoritarian way, à la Bismarck, even for the sake of accumulating power or creating a regional power which would be able to match the world's economic, political, and military superpower. A supranational European community will exist only if, compared with existing national constitutions, it means a *democratic surplus* for the majority. Let me clarify the issue by asking two symmetrical questions: Why speak of a *European* Apartheid? Why speak of *Apartheid* in Europe?

Why speak of a European "Apartheid"? This cannot be simply the case because foreigners are granted lesser rights (more precisely: some categories of foreigners,

mainly immigrant workers and asylum seekers from the East and the South who legally or illegally crossed the frontiers protecting the wealthy "civilization" of Europe, the Balkan region featuring in this respect a kind of combination of both extraneities). There must be something qualitatively new. This is indeed the case with the new developments of the construction of Europe since the 1993 Treaty of Maastricht. In each and every one of the European nation-states, there exist structures of discrimination which command uneven access to citizenship or nationality, particularly those inherited from the colonial past. But the additional fact with the birth of the European Union (coming after a mere European Economic Community) is that a concept of *Civis Europeanus* progressively acquires a specific content: *new* individual and collective rights, which progressively become effective (e.g., possibilities to appeal to European Courts against one's own national administration and system of justice).

 Now the crucial question becomes: new rights *for whom*? It could be, abstractly speaking, either for the whole *population of Europe*, or simply for a more limited *European people* (I am expanding here the dilemma which is now taking place in Germany about the distinction between *Volk* and *Bevölkerung*, since this dilemma actually concerns all of Europe and the German controversy is paradigmatic). It proves very difficult and embarrassing to "define" the *European people* as the symbolic, legal, and material basis for the European constituency. Maastricht solved the problem by simply stating that those and only those who already possess citizenship (i.e., are nationals) in *one* of the constituent national states will automatically be granted European citizenship. But this – which may remind us of debates among the Founding Fathers of the US Constitution – already determines an orientation. Given the quantitative and qualitative importance of the immigrant population permanently residing in Europe (what French political scientist Catherine de Wenden has called "the sixteenth member-state"[5]), it immediately transforms a project of inclusion into a program of exclusion which could be summarized by three metamorphoses:

- from *foreigners* to *aliens* (meaning second-class residents who are deemed to be of a different kind);
- from *protection* to *discrimination* (this is a very sensitive issue, as shown by the Austrian case, but again, with some differences in degree and language, it is a general European problem: since some of the immigrant workers who are deprived of political citizenship enjoy some social rights, i.e., are included in "social citizenship," it becomes a crucial political issue and an obsession for conservative forces to have them expelled from welfare, social protection, etc. – what the French National Front has called *préférence nationale*, but precisely because a degree of *préférence* already exists in the national institutions, it is likely to become a *préférence européenne*); and finally,
- from *cultural difference* to *racial stigmatization*, which is the heart of the creation of the "new racism," postcolonial and post-national.

Why suggest a parallel with South African "Apartheid"? This could only be a useless provocation. . . Should we really suggest that, while *Apartheid* has officially disappeared in Africa, it is now reappearing in Europe (and perhaps also elsewhere) – a further development in the process of "the Empire striking back" (Paul Gilroy)? We could think of comparisons with other historical cases of institutional racism, for example the US, which we know has never completely forgotten the Jim Crow system, and periodically seems to be on the way to recreating it when conservative policy is on the agenda. . . For his part, my German colleague Helmut Dietrich, who has long worked on refugees and migrants on the "Eastern Border" of Europe, particularly the Balkans, spoke of the *Hinterland* of the new European *Reich*, etc.

Leaving aside the question of how to measure the amount of suffering created by one or another system and focusing instead on the structures, I suggest two complementary reasons at least to borrow lessons from the historical example of *Apartheid*, i.e., to compare the situation of the regions whence most of the migrants come, in Africa, Asia, or other parts of Europe, with *homelands* in the South African sense. One is that the position of the important group of workers who "reproduce" their lives on one side of the border and "produce" on the other side, and thus more precisely are *neither insiders nor outsiders*, or (for many of us) are *insiders officially considered outsiders*, produces a steady increase in the amount and the violence of "security" controls, which spread everywhere in the society and ramify the borderline throughout the "European" territory, combining modern techniques of identification and recording with good old "racial profiling" (*contrôle au faciès*). This in particular is what the Schengen agreement was about. The second complementary reason is that the existence of migrant *families* (and their composition, their way of life) has become a true obsession for migration policies and public opinion. Should the alien families be separated or united (that is, reunited)? If so, *on which side of the border*, which kind of families (traditional, modern), which kind of relatives (parents, children), with what kind of rights, etc.? As I have argued elsewhere, the interference of family politics, more generally a politics of genealogy, with the definition of the national "community" is a crucial structural mode of production of historical racism.[6] Of course, this is also true when the national becomes multinational community.

From all this we might draw the conclusion that a *de-segregated Europe*, i.e., a democratic Europe, is far from the agenda. Indeed, the situation is much more contradictory, since tendencies point in both directions; we are in the middle of a historical crossroad that is, only partially and reluctantly acknowledged. But I prefer to insist on another idea, which provides me with the necessary transition to the next point, namely the fact that these issues typically illustrate a *global-local* ("glocal") problem. The contradictory and evolutionary pattern of "European citizenship-*cum-Apartheid*" (or statutory, ascriptive citizenship) (Rogers Smith) in a sense is a *reaction* to real and imaginary effects of globalization. In another sense it is a mere *projection*, albeit with historical specificities, of such effects.

I shall now directly address the main issue that I announced, that of the "global counter-insurrection": not the violence of the border, but the violence *without borders or beyond borders*.

Allow me to quote from a recent study of humanitarian action, published by a Swiss expert, Pierre de Senarclens of the University of Lausanne, who rightly insists on the importance of *official definitions of contemporary violence* and also on the problematic aspects of the justifications they provide for an extension of the scope and meaning of "humanitarian interventions":

> In 1981, the United Nations General Assembly adopted a resolution dedicated to a *New International Humanitarian Order*. . . . Shortly thereafter, the Assembly gave its support to the creation of an independent commission on international humanitarian questions, which brought together eminent people. . . . The Commission's 1986 report placed within the humanitarian project the principal political and social challenges of the age, such as environmental degradation, demographic transition, population movements, human rights violations, weapons of mass destruction, North-South polarization, terrorism, and drugs.[7]

He concludes: "We consider humanitarianism as a frame of reference for the identification of important contemporary problems and a formula for their solution." Later the author shows how, after 1989, the collapse of the Cold War system of "two camps" suppressed the limits which the confrontation between the superpowers had set to political violence, and blurred the borderlines between "war" and "peace":

> No one foresaw the destruction of the Berlin Wall, the prelude to the swift end of the Cold War. Nor did anyone anticipate the transformations in international structures and the violence that followed. Toward the mid-1990s, we count more than fifty new armed conflicts, essentially civil wars. Certain of these conflicts – in Rwanda, Yugoslavia, Chechnia, or Algeria – astonish by their violence and cruelty, by the extent of the destruction and the population movements they provoke. International society has never been confronted with so many wars making so many victims in such a short time.[8]

In such conditions, we can incline towards diverging conclusions. Either we think that the multifaceted phenomenon of mass violence and extreme violence has generally replaced politics, including internal and external relationships of forces among states, or we fully take into account the fact that the fields of politics and violence – a violence that seems to lack rational organization, not excepting self-destruction – are no longer separated; they have progressively permeated one another. It is precisely in such conditions that something called "humanitarian action" or "intervention," both "private" and "public," has become the necessary supplement of politics. I cannot discuss all the aspects of this mutation, but I would like briefly to address three questions which seem to me to have an importance for the concept of politics itself.

1. Are we facing an "unprecedented" spread of extreme violence (or violence of the extremes)?

I should like to be very careful on this point, which raises a number of discussions ranging from the issue of "old and new wars"[9] to the highly sensitive moral questions of why and how to "compare genocides" in history. Perhaps what is unprecedented is basically the *new visibility of extreme violence*, particularly in the sense that modern techniques of media coverage and broadcasting and the transformation of images – in the end, as we could see for the first time on a grand scale during the Gulf War, of the production of "virtual reality" – transform extreme violence into a *show*, and display this show simultaneously before a world audience. We also know that the effect of such techniques is, at the same time, to *uncover some violent processes, or scenes of horror* (truly horrifying, such as hundreds of mutilated children in Angola or Sierra Leone), and to *cover up others* (equally horrifying, such as babies starving in Baghdad). We suspect that powerful ideological biases are at work when the coverage of extreme violence gives credit to such simple ideas as the political transition from the "equilibrium of terror" during the Cold War to the "competition among victims" through the undifferentiated uses of the legal and moral but hardly political notion of "crimes against humanity." In the end, we become aware of the fact that talking about and showing the images of everyday horror produces, particularly in the relatively wealthy and protected regions of humanity, a very ambivalent effect: raising compassion but also disgust, reinforcing the idea that humankind as such is really divided into qualitatively different cultures or civilizations, which, according to one political scientist, can only lead to a "clash" among them.

I am aware of all these difficulties, but I would maintain that a reality lies behind the notion of something "unprecedented." Perhaps it is simply the fact that a number of *heterogeneous methods or processes of extermination* (by which I mean eliminating masses of individuals inasmuch as they belong to objective or subjective groups) have themselves become "globalized," i.e., operate in a similar manner everywhere in the world at the same time, and so progressively form a "chain," giving full reality to what E.P. Thompson anticipated 20 years ago with the name "exterminism."[10] In this series of connected processes, we must include, *precisely because they are heterogeneous – they do not have one and the same "cause," but they produce cumulative effects*:

• wars (both "civil" and "foreign," a distinction which is not easy to draw in many cases – think of Yugoslavia or Chechnya);
• communal rioting, with ethnic and/or religious ideologies of "cleansing";
• famines and other kinds of "absolute" poverty produced by the ruin of traditional or non-traditional economies;
• seemingly "natural" catastrophes which in fact are killing on a mass scale because they are overdetermined by social, economic, and political structures,

such as pandemics (think of the difference in the distribution of AIDS and the possibilities of treatment between Europe and Northern America on one side, and Africa and some parts of Asia on the other), draught, floods, or earthquakes in the absence of developed civil protection. . .

In the end it would be my suggestion that the "gobalization" of various kinds of extreme violence has produced a tendential division of the "globalized" world into *life-zones and death-zones*. Between these zones (which indeed are intricate, frequently reproduced within the boundaries of a single country or city) there exists a decisive and fragile *superborder*, which raises fears and concerns about the unity and division of mankind – something like a global and local "enmity line," like the "amity line" which existed in the beginning of the modern European seizure of the world.[11] It is this superborder, this enmity line, that becomes at the same time an object of permanent show and a hot place for intervention. But also for nonintervention. We might consider whether the most worrying aspect of present international politics is "humanitarian intervention" or "generalized non-intervention," or one coming after the other. . .

2. Should we consider that extreme violence is "rational" or "functional" from the point of view of market capitalism ("liberal economics")?

This is a very difficult question – in fact, I think it is the most difficult question – but it cannot be avoided. Again, we should warn against a paralogism that is only too obvious but nonetheless frequent: that of mistaking consequences for goals or purposes. (But is it really possible to discuss social systems in terms of purposes? On the other hand, can we avoid reflecting on the immanent ends of a given structure, such as capitalism, or its "logic"?) It seems to me, very schematically, that the difficulty arises from the two opposite "global effects" which derive from the emergence of a chain of mass violence – as compared, for example, with what Marx called *primitive accumulation* when he described the creation of the preconditions for capitalist accumulation in terms of violent suppression of the poor.

One kind of effect is simply to generalize material and moral insecurity for millions of potential workers, i.e., to induce a massive proletarianization or reproletarianization (a new phase of proletarianization which crucially involves a return of many to the proletarian condition which they had more or less escaped, given that insecurity is precisely the heart of the "proletarian condition"). This process is contemporary with an increased mobility of capital and also humans, and so it takes place across borders. But, seen historically, it can also be distributed among several *political* varieties:

- in the "North," it involves a partial or deep dismantling of the social policies and the institutions of social citizenship created by the welfare state, what I call

the "national social state," and therefore also a violent transition from welfare to workfare, from the social state to the penal state (the US showing the way in this respect, as has been convincingly argued by Loïc Wacquant[12]);
- in the "South," it involves destroying and inverting the "developmental" programs and policies, which admittedly did not suffice to produce "take-off," but indicated a way to resist impoverishment;
- in the "semi-periphery," to borrow Wallerstein's category, it was connected with the collapse of the dictatorial structure called "real existing socialism," which was based on scarcity and corruption, but again kept the polarization of riches and poverty within certain limits.

Let me suggest that a common formal feature of all these processes that result in the reproletarianization of the labor-force is the fact that they suppress or minimize the forms and possibilities of *representation of the subaltern* within the state apparatus itself, or, if you prefer, the possibilities of more or less effective *counter-power*. With this remark I want to emphasize the political aspect of processes which, in the first instance, seem to be mainly "economic."

This political aspect, I think, is even more decisive when we turn to the *other scene,* the other kind of result produced by massive violence, although the mechanism here is extremely mysterious. Mysterious but real, unquestionably. I am thinking of a much more destructive tendency, destructive not of welfare or traditional ways of life, but of the social bond itself and, in the end, of "naked life."[13] Let us think of Foucault, who used to oppose two kinds of politics: *laisser vivre et laisser mourir. . .* In the face of the cumulative effects of different forms of extreme violence or cruelty which are displayed in what I called the "death zones" of humanity, we are led to admit that the current mode of production and reproduction has become a mode of *production for elimination*, a reproduction of populations which are not likely to be productively used or exploited but are always already *superfluous*, and therefore can be only eliminated either through "political" or through "natural" means – what some Latin American sociologists provocatively call *población chatarra*, "garbage humans," to be "thrown" away, out of the global city. If this is the case, the question arises once again: what is the rationality of that? Or do we face an absolute triumph of *irrationality*?

My suggestion would be: it is economically irrational (since it amounts to a limitation of the scale of accumulation), but it is politically rational – or, better said, it can be interpreted in political terms. The fact is that history does not move simply in a circle, the circular pattern of successive phases of accumulation. Economic and political class struggles have already taken place in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries with the result of *limiting* the possibilities of exploitation, creating a balance of forces, and this event remains, so to speak, in the "memory" of the system. The system (and probably also some of its theoreticians and politicians) "knows" that there is no exploitation without class struggles, no class

struggles without organization and representation of the exploited, no representation and organization without a tendency towards political and social citizenship. This is precisely what current capitalism cannot afford: there is no possibility of a "global social state" corresponding to the "national social states" in some parts of the world during the last century. I mean, there is no *political* possibility. Therefore there is *political resistance*, very violent indeed, to every move in that direction. Technological revolutions provide a positive but insufficient condition for the *deproletarianization* of the actual or potential labor-force. This time, direct political repression may also be insufficient. Elimination or extermination has to take place, "passive" if possible, "active" if necessary; *mutual elimination is "best,"* but it has to be encouraged from outside.

   This is what allows me to suggest (and it already takes me to my third question) that if the "economy of global violence" is not functional (because its immanent goals are indeed contradictory), it remains in a sense *teleological*: the "same" populations are massively targeted – or the reverse: those populations which are targeted become progressively assimilated, they look "the same." They are *qualitatively* "deterritorialized," as Deleuze would say, in an intensive rather than extensive sense: they "live" on the edge of the city, under permanent threat of elimination; but also, conversely, they live and are perceived as "nomads," even when they are fixed in their homelands, i.e., their mere existence, their quantity, their movements, their virtual claims of rights and citizenship are perceived as a threat to "civilization."

3. In the end, does "extreme violence" form a "global system"?

Violence can be highly "unpolitical," this is what I wanted to suggest, but still form a system or be considered "systematic" if the various forms reinforce each other, if they contribute to creating the conditions for their succession and encroachment, if in the end they build a chain of "human(itarian) catastrophes" where actions to prevent the spread of cruelty, extermination, etc., or simply limit their effects, are systematically obstructed. This teleology without an end is exactly what I suggested calling, in the most objective manner, "preventive counter-revolution," or, better perhaps, "preventive counter-insurrection." It is only seemingly "Hobbesian," since the weapon used against a "war of all against all" is another kind of war (*Le Monde* recently spoke about Colombia in terms of "a war against society" waged by the state and the Mafiosi together). It is politics as anti-politics, but it appears as a system because of the many connections between the heterogeneous forms of violence (arms trade indispensable to state budgets with corruption; corruption with criminality; drug, organ, and modern slave trade with dictatorships; dictatorships with civil wars and terror. . .). And perhaps also, last but not least, because there is a politics of extreme violence that *confuses all the forms* to erect the figure of "evil" (humanitarian intervention sometimes participates in that), and because there is an economics of extreme

violence which makes both coverage and intervention sources of profitable business. . . When I spoke of a division between zones of life and zones of death, with a fragile line of demarcation, it was tantamount to speaking of the "totalitarian" aspects of globalization. But globalization is clearly not only that. At the moment at which humankind becomes economically and, to some extent, culturally "united," it is violently divided "bio-politically." A politics of civility (or a politics of human rights) can be either the imaginary substitute of the destroyed unity, or the set of initiatives that reintroduce everywhere, and particularly on the borderlines themselves, the issue of equality, the horizon of political action.

There will be no "real" conclusion, only an attempt to direct reflection and discussion towards some sensitive issues: the issue of "counter-violence," the issue of international law, the issue of access to "citizenship," and what I called "insurrection." We might think of different kinds of "strategies of civility." To discuss their possible foundation and implementation would be a matter for another, different paper. Let me simply suggest the following. Since the *real* and *virtual* aspects are so closely interwoven in the nexus of extreme violence or cruelty, it is very difficult to escape an attitude that privileges either one or the other. This is, in a sense, what classical concepts of political action always did: they were mainly directed at either building *communities* and community-feelings (and I would certainly agree with Benedict Anderson that all historical communities are primarily "imagined communities") or at changing "the world," i.e., in a more materialistic way transforming *social structures*, particularly structures of domination and exploitation (classical Marxism being in this respect a paradigmatic example). I think that the central character of the issue of extreme violence in today's politics makes it even more urgent to look for and invent an *Aufhebung* of this dualism, not by ignoring its dual aspects but by trying, practically and concretely, to combine their demands and constraints in a critical manner.

   This might explain why, for instance, I would not feel satisfied with the idea that the foundation of a politics of civility is an insistence on *international law,* although I admit that it is a decisive element of democracy on a world scale. Jürgen Habermas, for instance, has consistently moved in this direction, adding an insistence on the underlying ethics of *communication*. But Habermas neglects the fact that the gates of "communication" sometimes have to be opened by force, sometimes in a violent manner, or they will remain locked forever. International law is necessary here, but not sufficient. From the opposite angle, we might suggest, there is certainly a good case to be made that the looming counter-revolutionary or counter-insurrectional character of massive violence calls for a "counter-counter-insurrection," a renewal of the idea of revolution – this time, perhaps, a true "world revolution" directed against the very global structures that connect violence with capitalism, imperialism, and what Negri and Hardt now call *Empire*.[14] But, again, there is a difficulty here: that of falling back into the very *symmetry* of political methods and goals that,

since the first socialist and anti-imperialist revolutions attempted to seize power in the name of "the dictatorship of the proletariat," has helped extreme violence to become built into the very heart of emancipatory politics, and helped the twentieth century become what Eric Hobsbawm called "the Age of Extremes." It is not only the *state* or the *economy* that need to be "civilized" or to become "civil," but also *revolution itself*. I am convinced that the solution for that historical puzzle is actively searched for in many places today, but it is not clearly found or shown.

In the end, in a more cautious and perhaps aporetic manner, I would consider seriously some suggestions recently made by the Dutch political scientist Herman van Gunsteren.[15] I think that van Gunsteren is right to suggest that *all* political communities today – including virtual communities, from neighbor-hoods to cities to nation-states to continents to the globe itself (Gayatri Chakra-vorty Spivak in this context would prefer the term *planet*[16]), from "territories" to "networks" – are *communities of fate* (as opposed to "destiny"). They are communities already including difference and conflict, where heterogeneous people and groups have been "thrown" by history and economics next to one another, in such a situation that they cannot spontaneously converge in their interests or cultural ideals, but also cannot completely diverge without risking *mutual destruction* (or *common elimination* by external forces). Taking inspira-tion from Arendt's critique of the rights of man (and also from Kant's formula-tion in his essay *On Perpetual Peace* from 1896: "in the end they must of necessity tolerate each other's existence"), van Gunsteren sets the *principle* (meta-political, admittedly): *for every individual in every group there must be at least one "place" in the world where he/she is recognized as a "citizen,"* and hence given the chance to enjoy human rights. But, moving just one step beyond that principle (which in another sense is but a question that interpellates us), we may simply ask: *where is that place?* If communities are "communities of fate," the only possible answer is the radical one: *any place where individu-als and groups belong*, wherever they "happen" to live, therefore to work, bear children, support relatives, find partners for every sort of "intercourse". . . Given what I have suggested concerning the "topography" of today's globalized and cruel world, I think we could even say more precisely: the recognition and institution of citizen's rights, which practically command the development of human rights, have to be organized beyond the *exclusive* membership in one community; they should be located, so to speak, "on the borders," where so many of our contemporaries actually live. Which of necessity means an unsta-ble situation, but also very precise demands. Van Gunsteren is right in this respect to stress the idea that, from what I would call a point of view of "civil-ity," the important question is permanent *access to* rather than simply *entitle-ment to* citizenship, and therefore humanity (or, as he writes, citizenship "in the making"). It is an active and collective civil *process*, rather than a simple legal status.

NOTES

1. Etienne Balibar, *Extreme Violence and the Problem of Civility* (New York: Columbia University Press, forthcoming).

2. Etienne Balibar, "Une politique de la civilité est-elle possible? (Citoyenneté, mondialité, civilité)," conference at the University of Geneva, opening session, Diplôme de Formation Continue en Action Humanitaire.

3. Hannah Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, new edition with added prefaces (New York: Harvest, 1973), pt. 2, ch. 9.

4. Jacques Rancière, *Disagreement: Politics and Philosophy*, tr. Julie Rose (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 1999).

5. Catherine Wihtol de Wenden, *La citoyenneté européenne* (Paris: Presses de la Fondation nationale sur les sciences politiques, 1997).

6. See, e.g., Etienne Balibar and Emmanuel Wallerstein, *Race, Nation, Class: Ambiguous Identities*, tr. Chris Turner (London & New York : Routledge, 1991).

7. Pierre de Senarclens, *L'humanitaire en catastrophe* (Paris: Presses de Sciences Po, 1999).

8. Ibid.

9. Cf. Mary Kaldor, *New and Old Wars: Organized Violence in a Global Era* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1999).

10. Edward P. Thompson et al., *Exterminism and Cold War* (London: Verso, 1982).

11. Cf. Carl Schmitt, *Der Nomos der Erde im Völkerrecht des Jus Publicum Europaeum* (Berlin: Dunckler und Humblot, 1988 (1950)).

12. Loïc Wacquant, *Les prisons de la misère* (Paris: Raisons d'agir/Darantière, 1999).

13. Giorgio Agamben, *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life*, tr. Daniel Heller-Roazen (Stanford: Standford University Press, 1998).

14. Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, *Empire* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2000).

15. Herman van Gunsteren, *A Theory of Citizenship: Organizing Plurality in Contemporary Democracies* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1998).

16. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, *Imperative zur Neuerfindung des Planeten/Imperatives to Re-Imagine the Planet* (Frankfurt/M: Passagen Verlag, 1999).