

Professor Zygmunt Bauman

THE DEMONS OF AN OPEN SOCIETY

LSE, Thursday 20 October 2005

Si vis pacem, para iustitiam – averred ancient wisdom; and unlike knowledge, *wisdom* does not age. Absence of justice is still barring the road to peace today as it did two millenia ago. This has not changed. What has changed is that – unlike through most of human history, when the ideal and the postulates of justice and the practice of injustice against which it rebelled were locked in a space limited by the natural ability of human perception and action and therefore territorially confined, local – ‘justice’ is now a planetary issue, grounded in planetary comparisons – and this for two reasons, and no longer tied to immediate human experience.

On a planet criss-crossed by ‘information highways’ human misery of distant places and remote ways of life is displayed by electronic images as vividly, harrowingly and humiliatingly as the distress of the humans close to home is during the daily strolls through the town streets. And on a planet open to free circulation of capitals and commodities, whatever happens in one place has a bearing on how people of all other places live. No well-being of one place is innocent of the misery of another.

As recently pointed out by Jacques Attali in *La voie humaine*, half of the world trade and more than a half of global investment benefit just 22 countries accomodating a mere 14 per cent of the world population, whereas 49 poorest countries inhabited by 11 per cent of the world population receive between themselves but a half of one percent share of the global product – just about the same as the summary income of the three wealthiest men of the planet. Tanzania earns 2.2 billion dollars a year which it divides among 25 million inhabitants. The Goldman Sachs Bank earns 2.6 billion dollars, which is then divided between 161 stockholders. We in Europe and the US spend each year 17 billion dollars on animal food, while according to experts 19 billion

dollars is missing to save the world population of hunger. There are no breakwaters in sight able to stem the global tide of income polarization. In Milan Kundera's succinct summary, the 'unity of mankind' as brought about by globalization means that 'there is nowhere one can escape to'.ⁱ

Globalization has done its job, and all societies are now fully and truly open, materially and intellectually, so that any injury of deprivation and indolence anywhere comes complete with the insult of injustice: of the feeling of a wrong having been done, a wrong to be repaired, but first of all avenged...

The 'openness' of the open society has acquired these days a new gloss, undreamt by Karl Popper. No longer a precious yet frail product of brave though stressful self-assertion, it has become instead an irresistible fate; a side-effect of the 'negative globalization' – that is, a selective globalization of trade and capital, surveillance and information, coercion and weapons, crime and terrorism which now disdain all territorial sovereignty and respect no state boundary. If the idea of an 'open society' stood originally for the self-determination of a free society proud of its openness, it now brings to most minds the terrifying experience of a heteronomous, vulnerable populations overwhelmed by forces it neither controls nor truly understands, horrified by its indefensibility and obsessed with security of its borders and of the individuals within them – though it is precisely that security inside the borders and of the borders that eludes their grasp and seems bound to stay elusive on a planet subjected to the solely *negative* globalization. On a globalized planet, security cannot be assured in one country or in a selected group of countries: not by their own means, and not independently of the rest of the world.

Neither can justice, that preliminary condition of lasting peace. The perverted 'openness' of societies enforced by the negative globalization is itself the prime cause of injustice and so, obliquely, of conflict and violence. As Arundhati Roy puts itⁱⁱ, 'while the elite pursue their voyages to their imaginary destination, some place at the top of the world, the poor have been caught into a spiral of crime and chaos'. It is

the action of the United States together with its various satellites, like the World Bank, World Monetary Fund and the World Trade Organization that 'prompted subsidiary developments, dangerous sub-products such as nationalism, religious fanaticism, fascism, and of course terrorism, advancing marching step in step with the neoliberal project of globalization'. 'Market without boundaries' is a recipe for injustice, and ultimately for the new world disorder in which (contrary to Clausewitz) it is the politics that becomes a continuation of war by other means. Global lawlessness and armed violence feed each other, mutually reinforce and reinvigorate; as another ancient wisdom warns – *inter arma silent leges*.

Before sending the troops to Iraq, Donald Rumsfeld declared that the 'war will be won when Americans feel secure again'.ⁱⁱⁱ But sending troops to Iraq lifted the feeling of insecurity, in America and elsewhere, to new heights. Far from shrinking, the spaces of lawlessness, the training grounds for global terrorism, stretched to new dimensions. And, expectedly, the feeling of security, in America and elsewhere, was not the sole collateral casualty of the war expedition. Personal freedoms and democracy soon shared its lot. To quote Alexander Hamilton prophetic warning,^{iv}

The violent destruction of life and property incident to war, the continual effort and alarm attendant on a state of continual danger, will compel nations the most attached to liberty to resort for repose and security to institutions which have a tendency to destroy their civil and political rights. To be more safe, they at length become willing to run the risk of being less free'.

That prophecy is now coming true.

*

Once visited upon the human world, fear acquires its own momentum and developmental logic and needs little attention and hardly any additional investment to grow and spread – unstoppably. In David L. Altheide words^v, it is not fear of danger that is most critical, but rather what this fear can expand into, what it can become...Social life changes when people live behind walls, hire guards, drive armoured vehicles..., carry mace and handguns, and take martial arts classes. The problem is that these activities reaffirm and help produce a sense of disorder that our actions perpetuate.

Fears prompts us to take defensive actions, and taking defensive actions gives immediacy and tangibility to fear. It is our responses that recast sombre premonitions as daily reality, making the word flesh. Fear is now inside, saturating our daily routines; it hardly needs any further stimuli from outside, since the actions it prompts supply day in, day out all the motivation and all the energy it needs to reproduce. Among the mechanisms vying to approximate the dream-model of *perpetuum mobile*, the self-reproduction of the tangle of fear and fear-inspired actions comes closest to winning. Though this is, of course, an illusion – just as it has been in the case of numerous other mechanisms claiming the miracle of energetic self-sufficiency. The cycle of fear and fear-dictated actions would not roll so uninterruptably and go on gathering speed, were it not drawing its energy from existential tremors.

The presence of such tremors is not exactly news; existential tremors accompanied humans through the whole of their history, as none of the social settings inside which human life-pursuits used to be conducted offered a fullproof insurance against the ‘blows of fate’ – an expression coined to set apart the misfortunes unlike the adversities which the humans *could* avert and to convey not so much the peculiar nature of such mishaps as the admission of *human inability* to predict them, let alone to prevent or tame. ‘Fate’ struck without warning and was blind to what its victims would do or would abstain from doing in order to escape its blows. ‘Fate’ always stood for human ignorance and helplessness, and owed its awesome frightening power to those weaknesses of its victims.

Perhaps the sole distinction of the present-day rendition of fear is the decoupling of fear-inspired actions from the existential tremors that generate the fear that inspired them; the *displacement* of fear, from the cracks and fissures in human condition where ‘fate’ is hatched and incubated, to the areas of life largely *irrelevant* to the genuine source of anxiety. No amount of effort invested in those areas is likely to neutralize or block the source, and so would inevitably prove impotent to placate the anxiety, however earnest and ingenious the efforts might be. It is for this reason that

the vicious cycle of fear and fear-inspired actions rolls on, losing none of its vigour – yet coming no nearer its ostensible objective.

*

The cycle in question has been displaced from the sphere of security (that is, of self-confidence and self-assurance, or their absence) to that of safety (that is, of sheltering from, or exposure to, threats to one's own person and its extensions). The first sphere, progressively stripped of the institutional state-supported protections, has been open to the vagaries of the market and turned into a playground of the global forces beyond the reach of political control and so also beyond the ability of the already affected or fearing to be affected victims to respond adequately, let alone effectively resist. The communally endorsed insurance policies against individual misfortunes, which in the course of the last century came to be known collectively under the name of 'social' ('welfare') state, are now being phased out, reduced below the level needed to validate and sustain the confidence of security, or no longer hoped, let alone trusted, to survive the next round of reductions. With the state-maintained defenses against existential tremors progressively dismantled, and the arrangements for collective self-defense, like trade unions and other instruments for collective bargaining, following suit under the pressure of market competition that erodes the solidarity of the weak, it is left to the individuals to seek, find and practice individual solutions to socially produced troubles – and to do all that by individual, solitary actions, equipped with tools and resources blatantly inadequate to the task. Offering more flexibility as the sole cure for the already unbearable insecurity, messages coming from the sites of political power paint the prospects of yet more challenges, more privatization of troubles and so, indeed, more uncertainty. They leave little hope for collectively assured existential security, and instead encourage the listeners to focus on their individual survival in an increasingly uncertain and unpredictable world.

Retreat of the state from the function on which for a better part of the past century its most persuasive claims to legitimation were founded throws the issue of

legitimation again wide open. A citizenship consensus ('constitutional patriotism', to deploy Jürgen Habermas' term) cannot be presently built, as it was not-so-long before, on the assurances of protection against the vagaries of the market that play havoc with social standings and sap the rights to social esteem and personal dignity.

*

Under such circumstances, an alternative legitimation of state authority and another formula for the benefits of dutiful citizenship needs to be urgently found; and it is currently being sought in the protection against the dangers to *personal safety*. The spectre of social degradation against which the social state swore to insure its citizens is being gradually yet consistently replaced by the threats of a paedophile let loose, of a serial killer, obtrusive beggar, mugger, stalker, prowler, poisoner, terrorist – or better yet by all such threats rolled into one in the figure of an illegal immigrant, against whom the security state promises to defend its subjects tooth and nail.

In October 2004 BBC2 broadcast a documentary series under the title 'The Power of Nightmares: The Rise of the Politics of Fear'.^{vi} Adam Curtis, the writer and the producer of the series and the most acclaimed maker of serious television programmes in Britain, pointed out that though global terrorism is an all-too-real danger continually reproduced inside the 'no-man's land' of global wilderness, a good deal if not most of its officially estimated threat 'is a fantasy that has been exaggerated and distorted by politicians. It is a dark illusion that has spread unquestioned through governments around the world, the security services, and the international media'. It won't be too difficult to trace the reasons for such rapid and spectacular career of that illusion: 'In an age when all the grand ideas have lost credibility, fear of a phantom enemy is all the politicians have left to maintain their power'.

Numerous signals of the imminent shift in the state-power legitimation to that of the security state could be spotted well before 11 September – even if people needed, as it appears, the shock of the falling Manhattan towers reproduced in slow motion and for months on end on millions of TV screens for the news to sink and be

absorbed, and for the politicians to re-harness popular existential anxieties to the new political formula. It was not a mere coincidence that (according to Hugues Lagrange^{vii}) the most spectacular ‘safety panics’ and the loudest alarms about rising criminality, coupled with ostentatiously tough responses of the governments and manifested among others in rapidly rising prison population (‘substitution of a prison state for the social state’) occurred since the middle ‘sixties in the countries with the least developed social services (like Spain, Portugal or Greece) and in the countries where social provisions started to be drastically reduced (like United States and Great Britain). No research conducted up to the year 2000 showed any correlation between severity of penal policy and the volume of criminal offences, though most studies did discover a strong negative correlation between ‘incarceration push’ and ‘and the proportion of the market-independent social provisions’ and ‘and the part of the GNP earmarked for that purpose’. All in all, the new focus on crime and on dangers threatening bodily safety of individuals and their property has been shown beyond reasonable doubt to be intimately related to ‘sentiment of vulnerability’, and to follow closely the pace of economic deregulation and of the related substitution of individual self-responsibility for social solidarity.

*

‘There are not terrifying new monsters. It’s drawing the poison of the fear’ – observed Adam Curtis. Fear is there, saturating daily human existence as the deregulation reaches deep into its foundations and the defensive bastions of civil society fall apart. Fear is there – and drawing on its seemingly inexhaustible and self-reproducing supplies in order to rebuild depleted political capitals is a temptation many a politician finds difficult to resist.

Well before the 11th September, surrender to that temptation complete with the drawing on its redoubtable benefits were already well-rehearsed and tested. In a study poignantly and aptly named ‘The Terrorist, friend of the Power’^{viii}, Victor Grotowicz analyzed the uses to which the government of the German Federal Republic

put the terrorist outrages perpetrated by the RAF (Red Army Faction). He found that whereas in 1976 only 7 per cent of German citizens considered personal safety to be a paramount political issue, two years later the considerable majority of Germans viewed it much more important than the fight against unemployment and inflation. During those two years the nation watched on their TV screens the photo-opportune exploits of rapidly swelling police and secret service forces and listened to the ever bolder auction bids of their politicians promising ever tougher measures to be deployed in the all-out war against the terrorists. Grotowicz found as well that whereas the liberal spirit of the original emphasis of the German constitution on individual freedoms had been surreptitiously replaced with the previously resented state authoritarianism and Helmut Schmidt publicly thanked the lawyers for abstaining from testing the new Bundestag resolutions against the constitutional law, the new legislation played mostly in the hands of the terrorists, enhancing their public visibility, and so obliquely their social stature, well beyond the limits they could conceivably attain on their own. By common conclusion of the researchers, violent reactions of the law-and-order forces added enormously to the terrorists' popularity. One could only suspect that the manifest function of the new stern policies, declared to be the eradication of the terrorist threat, played but a second fiddle to their latent function, which was the effort to shift the grounds of the state authority from the area which it neither could, nor intended to effectively control, to another area – in which its power and determination to act could be spectacularly, and to a public applause, demonstrated. The most evident result of the anti-terrorist campaign was the rapid increase in the volume of fear saturating the society; as to the terrorists, the campaign's declared target, it brought them to their own target, that of the sapping of democracy-sustaining values, closer than they could otherwise dream of. RAF's eventual falling apart and disappearance from German life was not brought about by the repressive police actions; it was due to the changed social conditions, no longer fertile to the terrorist *Weltanschauung* and practices.

Much the same may be said of the sad story of Northern-Irish terrorism, obviously kept alive and at some point growing in popular support owing in large measure to the harsh military response of the British; its end could be ascribed more to the Irish economic miracle and to the phenomenon similar to the 'metal fatigue' than to anything the British Army did or was capable of doing. And as the most recent experience shows (in the words of Michael Meacher^{ix}), the endemic ineffectiveness, or even outright counterproductivity of military actions against modern forms of terrorisms continue to be the rule: 'Despite the "war on terror", over the past two years... al-Qauida seems to have been more effective than in the two years before 9/11'. The already quoted Adam Curtis goes a step further, suggesting that al-Qauida barely existed at all except as a vague and diffused idea about 'cleansing a corrupt world through religious violence', and started life as a artefact of lawyers' action; it did not even have a name 'until early 2001, when the American government decided to prosecute Bin Laden in his absence and had to use anti-Mafia laws that required the existence of a named criminal organization'. According to the New York Times' report^x, there were 126 car-bomb attacks in Baghdad alone in 80 days leading to 18 May 2005 – as against only 25 in the whole of 2004. A 'senior officer' of the American troops in Iran couldn't promise the press anything more than his belief that the campaign against terrorists insurgency in Iraq 'is going to succeed in the long run, even if it takes years, many years'. One wonders; after all, the 'war against terrorism', once limited to the intelligence services, police and military actions, looks unwinnable. The actions in question tend to have the effects opposite to the declared intentions. The most evident effects of the two 'anti-terrorist campaign' in Afghanistan and Iraq has been thus far the establishment of two new powerhouses and training grounds for global terrorists, where the tactics of the 'anti-terrorist forces', their foibles and weaknesses, are studied and the new yet more sophisticated outrages are plotted and rehearsed before they are sent home to roost. As Gary Young observed^{xi},

Tony Blair is not responsible for the more than 50 dead and 700 injured on Thursday (5 July 2005). In all likelihood, 'jihadists' are. But he is partly responsible for the 100,000 people who have been killed in Iraq. And even at this early stage there is a far clearer logic linking these two events that there ever was tying Saddam Hussein to either 9/11 or weapons of mass destruction.

As recently as on 30 June 2005, three years after the anti-terrorist campaign in Afghanistan^{xii}

violence has increased sharply in recent months, with a resurgent Taliban movement mounting daily attacks in southern Afghanistan, gangs kidnapping foreigners and radical Islamists orchestrating violent demonstrations against the government and foreign-financed organizations. The steady stream of violence has dealt a new blow to the still traumatized nation of 25 million. In dozens of interviews conducted in recent weeks around the country, Afghans voiced concerns that things are not improving, and that the Taliban and other dangerous players were gaining strength.

A similar process has been set in motion in Iraq^{xiii}.

The largest Iraqi-led counterinsurgency operation since the downfall of Saddam Hussein set off a violent backlash on Sunday across Baghdad. At least 20 people were killed in the capital, 14 of them in a battle lasting several hours when insurgents initiated sustained attacks on several police stations and an army barracks...

(E)ven moderate Sunni Arabs were wavering in the face of the new government's sweeps.

As for the fruits of the two-years long anti-terrorists actions in Iraq^{xiv},

The question now are how many more times over how many years he (President Bush) might have to deliver the same message of patience and resolve – and neither the American public, confronted with the mounting death toll, an open-ended military commitment, lack of support from allies and a growing price tag, will accept it.

The speech offered no new policies or course corrections, and for the most part was a restatement of the ideas and language that he has been employing for two and a half years to explain the war...

In the light of the evidence available thus far, we may however predict that when (if) the terrorist acts eventually fizzle out it will happen despite of and not thanks to the sledgehammer violence of troops that only fertilizes the soil on which the terrorism blossoms and prevents the resolution of social and political issues that alone could cut at its roots.

*

Given the nature of contemporary terrorism, the very notion of the 'war on terrorism' is all but contradictio in adiecto. Modern weapons, conceived and developed

in the era of territorial invasion and conquest, are singularly unfit to locate, strike and destroy the extra-territorial, endemically elusive and eminently mobile targets, minute squads or just single persons travelling lightly, disappearing from the place of assault as rapidly and inconspicuously as they arrived and leaving behind few if any traces. Given the nature of the modern weapons at the disposal of the military, responses to such terrorist acts must be awkward, clumsy and fuzzy, spilling over much wider area than the one affected by the terrorist outrage, and causing yet more numerous 'collateral casualties', greater volume of 'collateral damage' and so also more terror, than the terrorists could possibly produce on their own. This circumstance is, to be sure, an integral part of the terrorists' design and the principal source of their strength which much exceeds the power of their numbers and arms.

Unlike their declared enemies, the terrorists need not feel constrained by the limits of the resources they themselves command. When working out their strategic designs and tactical plans, they may include among their assets also the expected and indeed almost certain reactions of the 'enemy', bound to considerably magnify the intended impact of their own atrocity. If the immediate purpose of the terrorists is to spread terror among the enemy population – the enemy army and police, with a whole-hearted cooperation of the mass media, will certainly see to it that the purpose is achieved much beyond the degree which the terrorists themselves would be capable of securing. And if the terrorists' long-term intention is to destroy human freedoms in liberal democracies and to 'close back' open societies – they may count again on the immense powers commanded by the political leaders of the 'enemy countries'. A few packets of explosives and a few desperados eager to sacrifice their lives 'for the cause' can go a long way – much, much further than the terrorists themselves could dream of achieving with the resources they themselves command and manage.

In the light of the evidence available thus far, we may predict that when (if) the terrorist acts eventually fizzle out, it will happen *despite* of and not *thanks* to the crude, sledgehammer violence of troops which only fertilizes the soil on which the

terrorism blossoms and prevents the resolution of social and political issues that alone could cut at its roots. Terrorism will vanish only when (if) its socio-political roots are cut. And that, alas, will take much longer and much more effort than a series of military punitive operations and policing actions.

The real – and *winnable* – war against terrorism is conducted not in the devastated Iraqi or Afghanistan cities and villages, but when cancelling the poor countries' debts, opening our rich markets to their products, sponsoring education of their 115 million children deprived of access to any school, and when other similar measures are decided – and *implemented*. There are few if any encouraging signs that this truth has been understood, accepted and put into practice. The governments of the richest countries gathered in Gleneagles in July 2005 are spending between themselves on arms ten times more than they spend on economic aid to Africa, Asia, Latin America and the poor countries of Europe taken together; Britain sets aside for armaments 13.3 per cent of its budget, on aid 1.6 per cent; for the US, disproportion is still far bigger: 25.0 % as against 1.0 %.^{xv}

Indeed, one can only repeat after Meacher: more often than not, and most certainly after 11th September, we seem to be 'playing Bin Laden's game'. This is, as Meacher rightly insists, a lethally flawed policy. It is also all the less forgivable, I'd add, for not being motivated by the intention to eradicate the terrorist scourge; it follows a quite different logic from the one which such an intention would suggest. Meacher accuses the governments in charge of the 'war on terrorism' with unwillingness to contemplate what lies behind the hatred: why scores of young people are prepared to blow themselves up, why nineteen highly educated young men were ready to destroy themselves and thousands of others in the 9/11 hijackings, and why resistance (in Iraq) is growing despite the likelihood of insurgents being killed'.

Instead of pausing for contemplation, the governments act – and if thought without action is admittedly ineffective, thoughtless action proves to be just as well – and that on the top of enormously increasing the volume of moral corruption and human suffering. As Maurice Druon pointed out^{xvi}, 'Before launching the war against

Iraq, the American had only four agents, who in proved moreover to be double agents'. Americans started the war assured 'that the American soldiers will be received as liberators, with open arms and bouquets of flowers'. But, to quote from Meacher once more, 'the death of more than 10 000 civilians, with 20 000 injured and even higher Iraqi military casualties, (was) exacerbated, one year on, by the failure to deliver key public services, ... rampant unemployment and a gratuitously heavy-handed US military.'

Terrorists forces would hardly budge under the blows; on the contrary, it is precisely from the clumsiness and the extravagant and wasteful prodigality of their adversary that they draw and replenish their strength. Excess does not mark the explicitly anti-terrorist operations only; it is salient as well in the alerts and warnings addressed to own population of the anti-terrorist coalition. As Deborah Orr observed a year ago^{xvii}, 'many flights are intercepted, yet are never found to have been actually under threat... The tanks and troops were stationed outside Heathrow, even though they eventually withdrew without finding anything at all'. Or take the case of the 'ricin factory', whose discovery was publicly and vociferously announced in 2003: it was 'trumpeted as "powerful evidence of the continued terrorist threat", although in the end the germ warfare factory at Porton Down couldn't prove that any ricin had ever been in the flat touted as a significant terrorist base'. And, finally, 'although 500 people (until the beginning of February 2004 – Z.B.) have been held under the new terrorist laws, only two have been convicted'.

Orr points out that in the result of all such inanities the hypothesis of powerful trade interests being instrumental in fanning up the terrorist scare, must acquire at least some credibility. Indeed, there are indication that the 'war on terror' has increased considerably, instead of combatting it, the world-wide proliferation of small weapons trade (the authors of the Amnesty International and Oxfam joint report estimate that by small weapons, 'the real weapons of mass destruction', half a million people are killed each year^{xviii}). The profits which American producers and traders of

‘self-defense stuff and gadgets’ draw from the popular fears which in turn are magnified by the very ubiquity and high visibility of such stuff and gadgets, have been amply documented. All the same, it needs to be repeated that the staple and the most massive product of the war waged against the terrorists accused of sowing fear has been so far the fear itself.

Another prolific side-line product of that war has been the new limits imposed on personal freedoms – some of them unheard of since the times of the Magna Charta. Conor Gearty, professor of Human Rights Law at the LSE^{xix}, lists a long inventory of laws limiting human liberties, which have been passed already in Britain under the rubric of ‘anti-terrorist legislation’, only to agree with numerous other worried commentators that it is by no means certain whether ‘our civil liberties will still be here when we seek to pass them on to our children’. British judiciary has so far complied with the governmental policy that ‘there is no alternative to repression’ – and so, as Gearty concludes, ‘only liberal idealists’ and other similarly deluded well-wishers may ‘expect the judicial branch to lead society’ in the defense of civil liberties in this ‘time of crisis’.

The stories about the dark exploits inside the Guantanamo camp or Abu-Ghraib prison, cut out not only from visitors but from any, national or international law, and of the slow but relentless descent into inhumanity of men and women appointed to supervise that lawlessness, have been publicised in the press widely enough to save us from repeating them here.^{xx} It is necessary however to point out that the disclosed and publised atrocities were in no way isolated incidents; modern science and its highly placed spokesmen were brought in to update the techniques of torture^{xxi}

Military doctors at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, have aided interrogators in conducting and refining coercive interrogations of detainees, including providing advice on how to increase stress levels and exploit fears... The program was wxplicitly designed to increase fear and distress among the detainees...

The military refused to give *The Times* permission to interview medical personnel at the isolated Guantamo camp... The handful of former interrogators who spoke to *The Times* about the practices at Guantanamo spoke on condition of anonymity; some said they had welcome the doctors’ help.

And Gen. Ricardo S. Sanchez, 'the former American commander in Iraq during the Abu Ghraib prison abuse scandal', has been promoted by the Defense Secretary Donald H. Rumsfeld to a new senior position in the army command. As *The New York Times* reporters comment^{xxii}, the promotion 'seems to reflect a growing confidence that the military has put the abuse scandal behind it'.

*

What we even less often think of, however, and very seldom hear, is that the demons that surfaced in those remote places could be but some particularly extreme, radical and impudent, wild and reckless specimens of a larger family of lemures that haunt the attics and cellars of our homes down here – in the world where, to quote Attali once more, 'Individualism triumphs. No one or almost no one believes that changing other people's lives is of any importance to him. No one, or almost no one, believes that voting could significantly change his condition, and so *a fortiori* the condition of the world': in a world, in other words, in which each individual is left on his or her own and called to mind its own interests, while individuals are tools of each other's promotion.

Solitary life may be joyous and must be busy – but it is always risky and fearful. In such a world, there is not much in which struggling individuals can invest their hopes of rescue and on which they can rely upon in case of a personal failure: human bonds are comfortably loose, but for that same reason frightfully unreliable, and solidarity is as difficult to practise as its benefits, and even more its moral virtues, are difficult to comprehend.

The new individualism, fading of human bonds and wilting of solidarity are but one side of the coin whose other side bears the stamp of globalization. In its present, purely negative form, globalization is a parasitic and predatory process, feeding on the potency sucked out of the bodies of nation states and their subjects. To quote Attali one more time, the nations organized into states 'forfeit their influence on the general run of affairs and abandon to globalization all means to direct the destiny of the

world and to resist the many forms that fears may assume'. Society is no longer protected by the state; it is now exposed to the rapacity of forces it does not control and no longer hopes or intends to recapture and subdue.

It is in the first place for that reason that state governments, struggling day in, day out to weather current storms, stumble from one ad-hoc crisis-management campaign and one set of emergency measures to another, dreaming of nothing more than staying in power after the next election but otherwise devoid of farsighted programmes or ambitions, not to mention visions of a radical resolution to the nation's recurrent problems. 'Open' and increasingly defenseless on both sides, nation state loses its might, now evaporating into the global space, and its political acumen and dexterity, now increasingly relegated to the sphere of individual 'life politics' and 'subsidiarised' to the individual men and women. Whatever of the might and politics remains in the charge of state and its organs, dwindles gradually to a volume sufficient perhaps to furnish a large size police precinct. The reduced state can hardly manage to be anything else than security state.

Few people would be ready to claim for their own, *personal* choices the kind of irresistible authority that once emanated from the *socially* enforced order – and if they do make such a claim, there is but a meagre chance that it will be accepted and obeyed by the others around. The social setting for the actions of contemporary men and women is now more reminiscent of a theatre of perpetual war, on which innumerable *reconnaissance* battles are launched daily and fought – such battles as are aimed not so much at the promotion of a consistent (let alone bidding for universal acceptance) code of behaviour, as at the testing of limits (if any) to individual choices, bargaining and negotiating on their behalf, and assessing the size of the ground that could be gained by the determined deployment of right weapons. Once the deficit of legitimacy becomes the feature of all bids and claims, the actions undertaken in their name and for their sake (once upon a time perceived as proper expressions of immutable, uncontestable and irresistible order of things) tend to be recast as acts of violence; that is, as

specimens of *illegitimate* coercion. A widespread impression of a fast rising volume of violence results: another prolific source of fears.

Such fears are scattered and diffused over the whole spectrum of life pursuits. Their sources stay hidden and stoutly refuse mapping. If only we could focus our apprehensions, and the actions intended to mitigate the pain they cause, on an object possible to locate and so, hopefully, amenable to control! As long as we fail to do that, we are doomed to grope in the dark. Perhaps clinging to the well lit places is a less harrowing choice, even if it proves pointless in the end.

Unable to slow down the mind-boggling pace of change, let alone to predict and determine its direction, we focus on things which we can, or believe we can, or are assured that we can, influence: we try to calculate, and minimize the risks of falling victims of uncounted and uncountable dangers which we suspect the opaque world and its uncertain future to hold in store. We are engrossed in spying out 'the seven signs of cancer' or 'the five symptoms of depression', or in exorcising the spectre of high blood pressure and high cholesterol level, stress or obesity. In other words, we seek *substitute* targets on which to unload the surplus existential fear that has been barred its natural outlets, and find such makeshift targets in taking elaborate precaution against inhaling someone else's cigarette smoke, ingesting fatty food or 'bad' bacteria (though avidly swilling the liquids promising to contain the 'good' ones), exposure to sun, or unprotected sex. Those of us who can afford it, fortify ourselves against the visible or invisible, present or anticipated, known or yet unfamiliar, scattered but ubiquitous dangers through detoxicating interiors of our bodies and homes, locking ourselves behind walls, stuffing the approaches to our living quarters with TV cameras, hiring armed guards, driving armoured vehicles or taking martial arts classes.

*

Having leaked from the society forcefully laid open by the pressure of globalizing forces, power and politics drift ever further in opposite directions. The

problem, and the awesome task that will in all probability confront the current century as its paramount challenge, is the imperative to bring power and politics together again.

The reunion of the separated partners inside the domicile of nation-state is perhaps the least promising of the possible responses to that challenge. On a negatively globalized planet, all the most fundamental problems – the meta-problems conditioning the tackling of all other problems – are *global*, and being global they admit of no local solutions; there are not, and cannot be, local solutions to globally originated and globally invigorated problems. The reunion of power and politics may be achieved, if at all, at the planetary level. As Benjamin R. Barber poignantly put it^{xxiii}, ‘no American child may feel safe in its bed if in Karachi or Baghdad children won’t feel safe in theirs. Europeans won’t boast long of their freedoms if people in other parts of the world remain deprived and humiliated.’ No longer democracy and freedom may be assured in one country or even in a group of countries; their defense in a world saturated with injustice and inhabited by billions of humans denied human dignity would inevitably corrupt the very values they are meant to defend. The future of democracy and freedom may be made secure on a planetary scale – or not at all.

Fear is arguably the most sinister of demons nesting in the open societies of our time. But it is the insecurity of the present and uncertainty about the future that hatch and breed the most awesome and least bearable of our fears. Those insecurity and uncertainty, in their turn, are born of the sense of impotence: we seem to be no longer in control, whether singly, severally or collectively. To make things worse yet, we lack the tools that could allow politics to be lifted to the level where power has already settled, and so enable us to recover and repossess control over the forces that shape our shared condition while setting the range of our options and the limits to our freedom to choose: control which has now slipped or has been torn out of our hands.

The demon of fear won’t be exorcised until we find (or more precisely *construct*) such tools.

-
- ⁱ Milan Kundera, *L'art du roman*, Paris 1986.
- ⁱⁱ Arundhati Roy, 'L'empire n'est pas invulnérable', *Manière de Voir* N.75 Juin-Jullet 2004, pp.63-6.
- ⁱⁱⁱ Quoted after Matthew J.Morgan, 'The Garrison State Revisited: civil-military implications of Terrorism and Security', in *Contemporary Politics* 10/1, March 2004, pp.5-19.
- ^{iv} Alexander Hamilton, 'The Consequences of Hostilities between States', *Federalist Papers* New York 2002.
- ^v David L.Altheide, 'Mass Media, Crime, and the Discourse of Fear', in *The Hedgehog Review* 5/3, Fall 2003, pp.9-25.
- ^{vi} Comp. Andy Beckett, 'The Making of the Terror Myth', *The Guardian* of 15 October 2004, G2 pp.2-3.
- ^{vii} See Hugues Lagrange, *Demandes de sécurité*, Seuil 2003.
- ^{viii} See Victor Grotowicz, *Terrorism in Western Europe: In the Name of the Nation and the Good Cause*, Warsaw, PWN 2000.
- ^{ix} Michael Meacher, 'Playing Bin Laden's Game', *The Guardian* of 11 May 2004, p.21.
- ^x See 'Generals offer sober outlook on Iraqi war', *NYT* 19 May 2005.
- ^{xi} Gary Young, 'Blair's blowback', *The Guardian* 11 July 2005.
- ^{xii} See Carlotta Gall, 'Mood of anxiety engulfs Afghans as violence rises', *The New York Times* 30 June 2005,
- ^{xiii} See John F.Burns, 'Iraqi offensive met by wave of new violence from Insurgents', *The New York Times* 30 May 2005.
- ^{xiv} See Richard W.Stevenson, 'Acknowledging difficulties, insisting on a fight to the finish', *The New York Times* 29 June 2005.
- ^{xv} See Larry Elliott, 'Rich spend 25 times more on defense than aid', *The Guardian* 6 July 2005.
- ^{xvi} See Maurice Druon, 'Les stratégies aveugles', *Le Figaro* of 18 November 2004, p.13.
- ^{xvii} See Deborah Orr, 'A relentless diet of false alarms and terror hype', *The Independent* of 3 February 2004, p.33.
- ^{xviii} See 'War on terror fuels small arms trade', *The Guardian* of 10 October 2003, p.19.
- ^{xix} See Conor Gearty, 'Cry Freedom', in *The Guardian*, G2, 3 December 2004, p.9.
- ^{xx} Yet one fragment at least of a copy of the nearly 2000-page long confidential file of the American Army criminal investigation, obtained by the *New York Times* (and published on 28 May 2005), needs to be reproduced here in full:

Even as the young Afghan was dying before them, his American jailers continued to torment him.

The prisoner, a slight, 22-year-old taxi driver known as Dilawar, was hauled from his cell at the detention centre in Bagram, Afghanistan, at around 2 am to answer questions about a rocket attack on an American base. When he arrived in the interrogation room, an interpreter who was present said, his legs were bouncing uncontrollably in the plastic chair and his hands were numb. He had been chained by the wrists to the top of his cell for much of the previous four days.

Mr.Dilawar asked for a drink of water, and one of the two interrogators, Specialist Joshua R.Claus, 21, picked a large plastic bottle. But first he punched a hole in the bottom, the interpreter said, so as the prisoner fumbled weakly with the cap, the water poured all over his orange prison scrubs. The soldier then grabbed the bottle back and began squirting the water forcefully into Mr.Dilawar's face.

'Come on, drink!' the interpreter said Specialist Claus has shouted, as the prisoner gagged on the spray. 'Drink!'

At the interrogators' behest, a guard tried to force the young man to his knees. But his legs, which had been pummeled by guards for several days, could no longer bend. An interrogator told Mr.Dilawar that he could see a doctor after they finished with him. When he was finally sent back to his cell, though, the guards were instructed only to chain the prisoner back to the ceiling.

'Leave him up,' one of the guards quoted Specialist Claus as saying.

Several hours passed before an emergency room doctor finally saw Mr.Dilawar. By then he was dead, his body beginning to stiffen. It would be many months before Army investigators learned a final horrific detail. Most of the interrogators believed Mr.Dilawar was an innocent man who simply drove his taxi past the American base at the wrong time.

^{xxi} See Neil A.Lewis, 'Interrogators cite doctors' aid at Guantanamo', *The New York Times* 24 June 2005

^{xxii} See Eric Schmitt & Thom Shanker, 'New posts considered for U.S. commanders after abuse', *The New York Times* 20 June 2005.

^{xxiii} See Benjamin R Barber in conversation with Artur Domosławski, *Gazeta Wyborcza* of 24-6 December 2004, pp.19-20.