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The Right to Peace and the Globalization of Infinite War
A Dialogue with Susan Petrilli

Abstract

The cultural and political climate as well as the values that inspired the Helsinki Final Act of 1975 belong to a distant past. The Gulf War of 1991, which introduced the concept of "just and necessary war," marks a watershed between the Helsinki Final Act, which interdicts war as a solution to international controversy, and the 2002 White House document which instead proclaims the need for war, for "preventive war," and "infinite war," as the only sure means to security and peace—a ratification of the idea expressed in George Orwell's novel *1984*: "war is peace." Between 1991 and 1999 not only is war described as "just and necessary," but it is also justified as humanitarian, as in, "humanitarian military intervention," "humanitarian military operations." Migration and terrorism are the consequence of an "infinite war" which can be dated back to 1991, but in truth it can be dated back at least to the two world wars, including all conflicts antecedent to the 1991 Persian Gulf War: war in Indochina, in Korea, in Algeria, in Vietnam, the Arab-Israeli Six-Day-War, etc. The relation between migration and terrorism is not a direct relation of cause and effect, as is often insinuated by mass-media discourse and everyday gossip. Instead, both can be considered as effects of the same cause, symptoms of the same disease, one that is far more invasive: a common economic capitalist system shared at a world level, and the correlated social programming. Migration is not to be confused with *emigration*, that instead is englobed by the production system. What characterizes migration today is its Alterity with respect to the system, the fact that it presents itself as excess, namely an Alterity that cannot be assimilated. "Migrants" now represent a part of humanity that cannot be reduced to the status of labor-commodity. The migrant's request for hospitality evidences the limits of "human rights" which are made to appear for what they effectively are: the rights of *identity*, from which the rights of the *Other*, the rights of *Otherness*, therefore the right to peace, are excluded.

Keywords: Hospitality, Migration, Peace, Rights of Others, War.

Susan Petrilli: In an essay of 2005, *National Identity and War: The Helsinki Final Act and USA Security Strategy, A Semiotic Purview*,[1] originally published in Italian in 2003, and which you took up again in 2004 for an English edition published under the title *Semiotics and Power, Peace and War: The Helsinki*

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[1] See Ponzio (2005). *L'Acte final d'Helsinki* is edited by the European Co-ordination Centre for Research and Documentation in Social Sciences (1990).

Final Act and USA Defense[2], you compare two documents of central importance, The Final Act of the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe (1975, hereafter the Helsinki Final Act, read in the 1990 edition), a project for international cooperation, and The National Security Strategy of the United States of America (White House, 2002), a document for national defense (pro-US). Comparing the language of the two documents, you analyze some fundamental concepts using the instruments of semiotics and philosophy of language: "peace," "security," "freedom," "nation," "cooperation," "solidarity," "equality," "justice," "responsibility,"and "international law."[3]

An important historical event which acts as a divide between these two contrasting attitudes to war is surely the Gulf War of 1991, which introduces the concept of "just and necessary war" and translates it into praxis.[4] The outcome was not only the destruction and loss of the land, its history, and its people, (military personnel, but also, if not more importantly, civilians—an inconvenient "side effect," so to say), but legitimation thereafter of the recourse to war—justified as "preventive war," even "humanitarian war," also "war on terror"—at a global level, as an instrument for the resolution of national and international conflict. War comes to be considered as a means of maintaining "World Order."[5]

The "Gulf War" gave a new impulse to the condition of ongoing warfare across the globe. The allusion here is not only to "official war"—war waged by the national state, *coups*, genocide—but also to so-called "terrorist attacks" (as if wars were not all terroristic!), today ever more on the rise.

The Gulf War inaugurates a new form of warfare that is identifiable with the expression "surgical intervention." The allusion is to a military strategy that was intended, most admirably, not to produce deaths, at least not unnecessary ones, in spite of the frantic dissemination of bombs made to flash in the sky and explode on the earth, including over the civilian and urban population. Military intervention is no longer circumscribed to the battlefield.

To all this let us add a third consideration: cleaned up and legitimated as surgical and humanitarian, war is communicated at a global level as a spectacle, war becomes entertainment, spectacularized and globalized as a "reality show," thereby exciting the curiosity of television viewers who become ever more indifferent to the sense and dimension of the tragedy that is striking humanity.

Eventually, the show was over, but the wounds of the Iraqi population remained open, worsened, and became infected. All this was aggravated by the politics of embargo applied to post-war Iraq, when sanctions were extended by an international coalition to ban all trade and financial resources: after surgery there was no medication, everything was lacking, from drugs, to food, to water. The children—so that we might remember the usual innocent and defenseless—continued dying; the suffering is indescribable, as in all wars, after all.

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[2] Ponzio (2004). See also Id. (1986, 1999a, 2003, 2009c).
[3] See also Ponzio (2009d: 23-29): §§ 4. *Comunicazione e consenso alla inevitabilità della guerra*; 5. *Ideologia della comunicazione globale e "sicurezza"*.
[4] See Ponzio (2011, part II, ch. I: 223-234), *1991: Di nuovo la guerra giusta*.
[5] See Catone and Ponzio (2005a)

The cultural and political climate, the values that inspired the Helsinki Final Act of August 1, 1975—the result of encounters and negotiations that took place in Helsinki and Geneva between July 1973 and July 1975—belong to a distant past. The Helsinki Final Act preceded the first Gulf War by approximately twenty years. Are we to conclude that something went wrong in the languages of national and international politics? The change from the plans and aspirations of the Helsinki Conference era to the wars of the 1990s and the first half of 2000s—the Gulf Wars, the Balkan Wars, the war in Afghanistan, and in Libya, along with their relative exterminations and genocides, including those on the African continent—is mind boggling.

Augusto Ponzio: As you know, I began working on the text of the 1975 Helsinki Conference from the second half of the 1980s, when I was invited by Adam Schaff (1913-2006)[6] to participate in a series of international meetings he had organized to take place in various cities—Budapest, Vienna, Moscow—to discuss the semiotics of the vocabulary of the Helsinki Conference. I addressed the topic specifically for the first time in 1985, at a meeting in Budapest where I analyzed some of the fundamental terms that recur in the Final Act resulting from the Helsinki Conference.

However, I dealt with these issues more systematically in a paper I delivered (with Giuseppe Mininni) at the University of Trieste, in 1986, again, as part of our international meetings revolving around the semiotics of the vocabulary of the Helsinki Conference. We focused on the types of argumentation that had been implemented at the Helsinki Conference to justify the discourse and motivate its conclusions.[7]

So, as you see, all this was prior to 1991. But the events you recall from the Gulf War to today's conflicts have pushed me on various occasions to return to that important accord for international cooperation that is the Final Helsinki Act, furthering my analysis of it and even critiquing it.

It may well be that Adam Schaff, at the time honorary President of the European Coordination Centre for Research and Documentation in the Social Sciences UNESCO, in Vienna, had already perceived that the text of 1975 had become a dead letter, only ten years later. In the face of growing nationalism, Schaff had been forced to shift to Vienna in 1969. Powerful groups in the communist party had promoted an anti-Semite campaign and Schaff was expelled from the central committee. Moreover, he was made to leave the direction of the Institute of Philosophy as well as his Chair in Philosophy at the University of Warsaw.[8] So, from 1984 onward, he invited scholars of different nationalities and from different fields in the human sciences to reflect on the Helsinki Conference Final Act (1975), and therefore on development and cooperation in Europe more generally. The perspective was "semiotical," what today we would describe as "semioethical."[9]

As I have evidenced subsequently on other occasions—let me cite my book of 2009, *Da dove verso dove. L'altra parola della comunicazione globale* (From where to where. The other word in global

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[6] On Adam Schaff see Ponzio (2002). See also Schaff (1979, 1994, 2014) and Petrilli (2015).
[7] See Ponzio (1986).
[8] Cf. Schaff (2011: 101-104).
[9] See Petrilli and Ponzio (2003); Petrilli (2014).

communication)[10]—the text of the Helsinki Conference does not address the *objective reasons* for mutual collaboration nor for the need to abrogate or "repudiate the war," as stated in the Italian Constitution. In spite of "good intentions" and the words that recur in it—"solidarity," "equality," "justice," "responsibility," "mutual understanding," "mutual awareness," and "mutual knowledge"— the *Helsinki Final Act* is not effective in argumentative terms, nor is it really capable of influencing international politics.

The most obvious, concrete, practical *denial*—more than violation—of the Act, and the demonstration that this document was ineffective, useless, null and void, is the so-called "Persian Gulf War" against Iraq. *Solidarity,* a primary value in the Helsinki Conference Final Act (though, in truth, this word only appears once in the text), became the solidarity of war among the US-led European states that participated.

Respectable intellectuals like the Italian philosopher Noberto Bobbio (1909-2014) immediately recognized the war against Iraq in 1991 as "just and necessary," a question of *extrema ratio* given the absence of alternatives, as he claimed in an interview published in *Corriera della Sera*[11] the same day the air raid began against Iraq. On the contrary, in an interview published that same day in another newspaper, *L'Unità*, Noam Chomsky warned that this war could prove catastrophic for the whole world, evidencing the precise self-interests that subtended the dominant ideology intending to justify it.

On this account remember that another highly esteemed historian, Jacques Le Goff (1924-2014), also intervened in favor of the war identifying "pacificism" with "propaganda pro Saddam." As you will recall, we sent him a petition, a letter to the UN Secretary, entitled, "Human Sciences for Peace," which he refused to sign, unlike the other intellectuals we contacted at the time, including N. Chomsky, L. Canfora, T. De Mauro, F. Fortini, M. Halliday, R. Posner, and T. Tentori.[12]

S.P.: Yes, I remember Le Goff's reaction to our petition. He responded in French recalling that at the young age of 14 he disapproved of the agreement signed in München, in 1938, adding that things hadn't changed since, that the situation was the same. And then he went on to say that while he understood that the Arab masses were blinded by Saddam Hussein, he did not accept such an attitude from "democratic European professors," declaring that not only did he not approve our text, but that he "condemned" it.[13]

A.P.: Yes, so much for the objectivity of history! The 2002 White House document *The National Security of the United States of America*, is diametrically opposed to the Helsinki Conference document. However, unlike the Helsinki document, *The Final Act of the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe*, which claims that the security of states can only be reached once the possibility of war is rejected inexorably, the White House document instead proclaims the need for war as the only sure

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[10] See (Ponzio 2009d: cap. I, §§ 4, 5, 10-12).
[11] Cf. Ponzio (2011: 224-226).
[12] This letter to the UN Secretary, entitled "Human Sciences for Peace" is reported in Ponzio (2011: 228).
[13] See the reply from Jacques Le Goff in Ponzio (2009d: 39).

means to security and peace. This is a ratification of the idea expressed in George Orwell's renowned novel *1984*[14] and a program for the 2000s, but in truth a longtime part of an effective historical reality: "war is peace."

Even before the 2002 White House document, the September 11, 2001 terrorist acts, which saw the destruction of the World Trade Center "twin towers" in New York, served the George W. Bush administration to justify the war in Afghanistan, initiated on October 7, 2001 and presented as a "war on terrorism," motivated by the need to fight al-Qā'ida and eliminate its leader Osama Bin Laden. Of course Bin Laden was eventually killed by US forces, (under the Presidency of Barack Obama, on May 2, 2011)—and the continued war effort was backed by NATO, initially to provide tactical, aerial, and logistic support after the conquest of Kabul, with the effective presence of US-led coalition troops, sent in as part of the operation entitled, "Enduring Freedom."

The 2002 White House document, *The National Security of the United States of America*, proclaims that peace and security call for war, that is, "preventive war," "unending war," to stop "rogue states," including Iraq and Syria, from shooting first.[15] This type of war is still happening today to the great satisfaction of the war industry, which guarantees its efficiency and duration—whether directly, officially and ostentatiously, or indirectly and underhandedly through illegal trafficking.

In 2003, military intervention against Saddam Hussein—who had been accused of possessing "arms of mass destruction" (which failed to be verified either before or after the intervention, nor after Baghdad had been conquered)—was also justified as a "preventive war." Another justification was that this war served for the "exportation of democracy," in spite of the fact that formal authorization from the UN Security Council was lacking. Military intervention was decided by the two "peacekeepers" (a title conferred upon England and the United States of America in 1998 by UN secretary, Kofi Annan), precisely, George W. Bush and Tony Blair, British Prime Minister at the time. (We know that twelve years later Blair repented, declaring that he regretted the invasion which he now considers an error and perhaps even the cause for the birth of ISIS, but maintaining that he had acted in good faith).

In spite of flaunting the "end of the 1991 war," armed conflict was inflicted on Iraq again in 1993, 1998 and 1999. In the meantime, as you mentioned, Iraq was subjected to an embargo (with Italy's participation). "Surgical interventions" and the embargo had already produced an enormous number of deaths before the attack in 2003—men, women, and children, punished for the "sins" of the Iraqi government, according to the law of "retaliation" against innocent people.

Following the 2003 attack there was "Shock and awe"—this was the motto of the "Freedom for Iraq" campaign—and foreign troops remained in Iraq for a long period of time thereafter (officially until 2011). Still today, as we all know, Iraq is all but a "pacified" country.

The same is true of Libya, also "liberated" through military intervention, again by a US-led international coalition, this time under the Presidency of Nobel Peace Prize winner Barack Obama (in 2009, awarded the same year he became President!).

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[14] "War is peace, freedom is slavery, ignorance is strength" (Orwell [1949] 1982: 17).
[15] On this connotation see (Derrida 2003).

You rightly also mention the wars in the Balkans, in Yugoslavia (1991-1995): the Slovenian war of independence (1991), which was the first war in Europe since World War II; Croatia (1991-1995); Bosnia and Herzegovina (1992-1995); Operation "Deliberate Force" (1995), the NATO military air campaign against the forces of the Serbian Republic in response to the continued siege of Sarajevo; and Kosovo (1996-1999), with NATO military intervention in 1999 (Operation "Allied Force").

Between 1991 and 1999, not only is war described as "just and necessary", but it is also justified as "humanitarian," as in, "humanitarian military intervention," and "humanitarian military operations."[16] Under such banners the Italian army intervened in Albania. And the inglorious expedition to Somalia (which nobody likes to talk about any more) was organized under the fine denomination of "Restore Hope," precisely. The NATO war against Yugoslavia, "against Serbia" is presented as a "humanitarian operation" and as "defensive war." The same type of "anomalous" war continues, thus denominated insofar as it is "war not formally declared," as practiced by Hitler's Germany towards Poland, and by Japan towards China and the USA. As regards the so-called "Kosovo war," initially Italy had limited itself to providing airports for air attacks as part of the Operation "Allied Force." Subsequently (under the D'Alema government), Italy intervened directly, but never made a formal declaration of war; that Italy was at war was never decided officially, with all the procedural consequences foreseen by the Italian constitution.

The "Balkan war" represents an important phase in the construction of the ideology of peace, according to which the "real pacifists" are those in favor of military intervention, "painful but inevitable," like the war in defense of Kosovo. Of course, that Kosovo, like other parts of former Yugoslavia, was struck with bombs made of "depleted uranium" (derived from nuclear wastes, albeit "in small doses," and with long-lasting effects, far superior to the immediate effects of "surgical intervention") is no longer mentioned.

Remember that NATO is a defensive war organism inaugurated in 1949 with direct reference to the "threat" represented by the Soviet Union. Today, its defensive character concerns "World Order": therefore, a defensive alliance "of self" and "of the other," as had already occurred with "humanitarian intervention" in Yugoslavia. In *One-Dimensional Man*, Herbert Marcuse[17] observes how under the pretext of brevity, the acronym NATO hides the "astuteness of reason." In fact, the "strange" presence of Turkey from 1952–"strange" insofar as it is a nation with no outlet whatsoever on the North Atlantic–does not emerge from the acronym. It does, however, in the full version of the alliance's denomination: "North Atlantic Treaty Organization." Today the European Union and the United States of America are concerned by Turkey, above all because of its re-pacification with Russia (but concern is officially referred to the totalitarian character of the Turkish government which continues to declare itself "democratic" and wanted by the people, and to the introduction of the death penalty–a scandal for the US!). And yet previously, neither the European Union nor the USA had shown signs of concern in the face of the legalization of torture in Turkey, nor for the

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[16] On these evaluations of war see De Leonardis and Ponzio (2008).
[17] See Marcuse (1964).

mistreatment of the Kurds, just as there was no sign of concern for the Kurds in 1988 in the face of genocide, including through the use of nervine gas under Saddam Hussein.

S.P.: The expression "war on terror" as you have remarked on several occasions[18] is ambiguous in Italian, the wording is *"guerra al terrore"* which is translated as meaning "war on terror," but it could also be translated in the sense of "war flavored by terror," "terror-flavored war" like chocolate-flavored ice-cream, *"gelato al cioccolato."* In fact, if we consider the situation of unending warfare across the world today, the expression *"guerra al terrore"* is easily made to resound in the sense of war flavored by terror, rather than war on terror, thus, terror-flavored war, like chocolate-flavored ice-cream, precisely. You recalled the expression "shock and awe" used to refer to the attack against Iraq in 2003. But the point is that not all wars are flavored with terror, not all wars are wars of terror—in fact, "shock and awe." In any case, since war has become humanitarian and preventive, war culture, war ideology has well and truly escalated, accompanied by an ever-growing increase in "terrorist acts," the "unofficial" ones, with a corresponding increase all around in terms of the dead and wounded: the news feed in this sense is constant these days. It is as though the cluster bombs used in the war against Iraq have never stopped exploding and spreading their sinister lights. "War on terror," *"guerra al terrore,"* war flavored with terror, official war, too, has been translated into global terrorism, disseminating a state of terror worldwide. And "terrorism" today is like a macabre container capable of collecting anything ranging from the actions of a politicized and carefully planned will, to those of actors trapped to varying degrees in the condition of urban and global desperation, now on the rise.

There are different levels of war interconnected to each other at different levels of political-economic-social life, war and wars diversified and interwoven both internally to the same nation, and externally on an international level. Wars at the level of official ideologies, but also at the level of unofficial ideologies, including ideologies connected with the imaginary of the masses – ever more homologated thanks to globalized communication[19] and social networks, a spectacularized and globalized imaginary, often emptied of contents, sense and values – wars involving urban reality, often the expression of life alienated and abandoned to itself, articulated in "urban wars," and then of course the war of life during the war, and of postwar conditions in countries implicated directly in official wars.

Terrorist attacks are proliferating over the globe, today. Their effect is that alongside an attitude of "global indifference"[20] what is taking place among national and international civil population is a feeling of "global fear," "global terror" ending up in a "globalization of terror." This phenomenon includes among its actors not only figures featured with a precise political de/formation, but also many marginalized people and linguistically and socially alienated individuals. In many cases, they are not politicized nor endowed with a precise political consciousness, and not even connected to terrorist cells. Nonetheless, all these people resort to terroristic rhetoric to somehow "ennoble" the expression of their own desperation ant find legitimacy for their actions.

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[18] See Ponzio (1995, 2009d, 2013).
[19] See Petrilli (2014, and 2016).
[20] *Inter alia*, this exrpression echoes Pope Francis' warning against the "globalization of indifference").

Terrorism today is also, in large part, war on the economic-political system dominant over the world today, in one way or another, at a global level and in its correlated social programming. In any case, I doubt that we can seriously deny the connection between such events as those of the early 1990s in the Middle East, the "global war on terror" as well as the condition of global alienation, of global *malaise*, on the one hand, with that which is happening all over the world today in terms of "terrorist attacks," on the other, and the birth of ISIS, just to name the most recent and currently the most popular terrorist phenomenon of our time, as it translates into the ongoing spread of "terrorist acts" all over the globe.[21]

A.P.: Metaphorically speaking I would say that the world, indeed the entire planet, has been wounded by "humanitarian military interventions," by "just and necessary wars," by "preventive wars," which effectively are no more than episodes in an infinite war, an unending war, as war in our times has now been qualified. If, instead of healing wounds, new wounds are continuously added, as you said, they effectively become hemorrhagic and infected.

Outside metaphor: migration and "terrorism," thus described with respect to the current "world order," are the consequence of an "infinite war" which we are dating back to 1991 simply for a question of perspective.

But the condition of "infinite war" can be dated back at least (again an arbitrary decision) to the two World Wars, thereby including all conflicts antecedent to the 1991 Persian Gulf War. Let us recall the following:

– The war in Indochina: 1946-1954, between US-supported France and the movement for independence in Vietnam led by Ho-Chi-Min. The latter freed Vietnam from Japanese dominion (Japan had invaded Vietnam during World War II) and declared the end of the French protectorate (begun in 1883). The war began with the bombing of Haiphong by the French fleet, causing 6,000 deaths mostly among the civil population; this was followed by the occupation of Hanoi, house by house; and concluded with the defeat of France (the battle of Dien Bien Phu), the end of French colonial dominion, and the subdivision of Indochina (Geneva Peace Conference) into four new independent states: North Vietnam, South Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos.

– The war in Korea, fought in the Korean peninsula from 1950 to 1953, between North Korea (supported by China and the Soviet Union) and the United States, under the auspices of the UN, and flanked by another seventeen countries, including, beyond South Korea, Great Britain, Canada, Australia, Turkey, France, South Africa, and Japan.

– The war in Algeria, from 1954 to 1962, fought between France and the Algerian independentists led by the National Liberation Front, and ended with the independence of Algeria.

– The Six-Day-War, 5-10 June 1967, fought by Israel and the neighboring states of Egypt, Jordan and Syria. The Egyptian air force was caught by surprise and almost entirely destroyed while still on the ground (Operation Focus). This war concludes with the victory of Israel and conquest of the Sinai Peninsula taken from Egypt (which was returned to Egypt eleven years later, under the Camp David Accords), the West Bank and East Jerusalem taken from Jordan, the Gaza Strip (still at

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[21] See G. Dammacco and S. Petrilli (2016).

the center of Israeli-Palestinian conflict), and the Golan heights taken from Syria. The geopolitical situation in the Middle East is heavily influenced still today by the outcome of this war.

– The war in Vietnam, this too with the direct involvement of the USA (with contingents from South Korea, Australia, New Zealand, among others), from 1955 to 1973, resulting in well over 300,000 military deaths, and by some estimates more than one million war-related deaths overall. By the initiative of Bertrand Russell and Jean-Paul Sartre, the "Russell Tribunal" (International War Crimes Tribunal), was constituted in 1966, with the participation of such figures as Günther Anders, Lelio Basso, Simone de Beauvoir, Alice Walker, Peter Weiss, among others, to judge the United States for war crimes.

– The war in Afghanistan, 1979-1989, initiated with the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, which caused widespread destruction and numerous deaths among civilians, and concluded with the withdrawal of Soviet troops. During the conflict, training camps were set up to prepare volunteers for guerilla warfare in Afghanistan, including camps in Pakistani territory, financed by Osama Bin Laden and by funds from the USA.

– The Iran-Iraq war (1980-1988), initiated by Iraq, this time, too, without a formal declaration of war, and once again with the involvement (even if not directly), of both the USA and Soviet governments. The major concern was to avoid that either of the two contenders should make an overpowering and shattering victory over the other, confiding instead that the war would weaken both; in this sense both were considered dangerous.

So before 1991, before 2003, infinite war had already begun and was taking place on all five continents. I have not referred to the wars in the Congo (1996-1997 and 1998-2003). The 1994 war in Rwanda should also be mentioned. Genocide provoked by interethnic hatred between Hutu and Tutsi tribes involved a number of victims estimated from anywhere between 80,000 to one million. This hatred, originally alien to the two ethnicities, was an outcome of the Belgian colonial administration. In fact, under Belgium dominion, what had been no more than socio-economic difference (the Hutu people were agriculturalists, the Tutsi were farmers, with mixed marriages between the two groups), was exacerbated and transformed into racial difference based on somatic characteristics and, subsequently, into differences between the poor and exploited (the first group, the most numerous) and the rich and powerful (the second).

The millions of deaths caused by these wars consist mainly of civilians. And it is the civilians – those still alive, the survivors, refugees, migrants, outcasts, the subjugated, deported, mutilated, offended, deluded, frustrated, angry, exalted, demented – who continue to suffer the consequences of this infinite war. In one way or another, civilians are the victims of a war that never ceases to cease, similarly to what may be described as *blind* capitalism – blind "like a mole," devoid of the light of reason, insensible, that does not admit being called to issue, with no way out, like an *impasse*, a dead end, a blind corridor, a cul-de-sac (in Italian *vicolo cieco*, literally a blind lane or alley), like a walled-up window, that proceeds blindly, haphazardly, without reflecting on the consequences.

In collaboration with Andrea Catone, we edited a volume in the book series "Athanor. Semiotica, Filosofia, Arte, Letteratura," entitled *Mondo di guerra* (XVI, 9, 2005).[22] In it I maintain that

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[22] Catone and Ponzio (2005).

this is a "world of war" not only because war is ongoing and re-presents itself continuously so that peace is no more than a short-lived truce, but also because the world has been designed as it is, with its current geo-political configuration through war. The truth is that there are no national boundaries that are not the result of war.

Alongside the fear of terrorist acts – now intensifying due to current world events as well as to today's information flow, faster and more efficient than ever—other fears, more or less important, in different historical periods, have also taken their toll. Fear of "arms of mass destruction" is widespread, for example. We have already observed how this was used as a pretext for the war in Iraq in 2003.

On the contrary, we seem to be "accustomed" to living with the danger of nuclear bombs, the possession of which is now a sign of "great power;" to possess nuclear arms seems to be acceptable for the UN, given that it has never considered the possibility of banning or abolishing them. The following is an open letter from our friend and colleague Arrigo Colombo to Barack Obama in the name of a "Movement for a society of justice and for hope":

To the President Barack Obama
to the Vice-President Joe Biden
to the Secretary of State John Kerry

The abolishment of atomic weapons

An initiative must start, and can begin from the America of President Obama, in these months of Presidency that still remain, five months until November 8, which are not few.
And just after the visit to Hiroshima, where *he spoke of the need for a "moral awakening,"* he spoke of the need to "pursue a world without nuclear weapons."

Starting from the principle that nuclear weapons are *so destructive*, not only of goods, but of human beings in their dignity, in their own right, in the richness of their personality
(140.000 in Hiroshima, 90.000 in Nagasaki, when they were still the first and even crude instruments, there was not yet a nuclear weapon). A weapon *that humanity can no longer tolerate*, which it must get rid of as soon as possible.

From America of President Obama *should start the initiative, contacting the States which hold the atomic-nuclear weapon*:
Russia, England, France, China (which have concluded that famous pact of non-proliferation, hypocritical pact, which ensured them horrid supremacy); India, Pakistan, Israel, North Korea.

The invitation to a *big labor meeting in which they achieve getting rid of nuclear weapons*, with *the destruction of the weapons they possess*; or that they filed by allies (as in the case of NATO), and *of the materials and tools* that can produce other weapons.
Also getting the *adhesion of many other countries that have a nuclear program underway.*
So as to *free humanity* from this horrid instrument of destruction.
Horrid *and useless, because no one dares to use it, and one thinks he will never dare.*
A horrid and insane instrument of death kept in an insane plan of power.

It will be a great step towards peace. After which there will then have to follow the other, the destruction of all weapons of war. And already in this meeting *it can be discussed.* You can wisely *foresee the next step.*

Lecce, June 19, 2016
For the Movement

the Chairman
Prof. Arrigo Colombo

The atomic bomb has not been a deterrent for war, even if it has served to dissuade the enemy from eventual attacks, for fear of an even more violent reaction, as occurred with the Cold War between USA and USSR, commonly cited as lasting from 1947 to 1991. In the years immediately following the second World War, the nuclear bomb was the object of much moral and philosophical reflection. Think of Karl Jaspers, *The Atom Bomb and the Future of Man*,[23] of Günther Anders, *Der Mann auf der Brücke*[24] (literally "Man on the bridge" translated into Italian with the expression "To be or not to be"), subtitled, "Diary from Hiroshima and Nagasaki," a "dramatic diary" (C. Fabro)[25] of the "International Conference against A and H-Bombs and for Disarmament," held in Tokyo, August 1958, and much more.

The effects of the nuclear bomb are familiar to us, thanks to the USA. We have come to know them at the expense of "Others." The atomic bomb has already been used. Once the decision was made, somebody had to obey the rules. Analyzing the text of the interrogation which took place on April 16, 1954 of Julius Robert Oppenheimer—the scientist who created the A-bomb launched on Hiroshima and Nagasaki and who later expressed his perplexities for which he was brought to trial accused of high treason, André Gorz in *La morale de l'histoire*[26] maintains that when the interests and the functioning of society require that we each deny ourselves and renounce all human needs, the human becomes suspect, scruple becomes weakness, and torment becomes disloyalty, treachery. Continuing in this direction, with reference to the conscience and human behavior, the prospect is what Hannah Arendt described *à propos* of Adolf Eichmann with the expression "the banality of evil."[27]

Claude Eatherly was a different case. Eatherly was the 27-year-old Texan pilot and meteorologist who gave the order to release the atomic bomb over Hiroshima on 6 August 1945, the first uranium atomic bomb ever in history, denominated in code "Little Boy;" the second, a plutonium bomb, in code "Fat Man", was released over Nagasaki on 9 August 1945. In his letter to President Kennedy, Günther Anders maintains that Eatherly was not Eichmann's twin, but his great antithesis (*Off limits für Gewissen*, 1961).[28] He is not the man who makes a pretext of the mechanism and justification for the lack of conscience, but the man who scrutinizes the mechanism as a terrifying threat to the conscience. He thus goes to the heart of the moral problem today and warns us: if we unburden ourselves of all responsibility, ditching it on the system, into which we are inserted like unaware screws, we are selling off *ipso facto* the freedom of moral decision and of conscience. The adjective "free" in the expression "free world" then becomes the emptiest hypocritical assertion

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[23] Jaspers (1957).
[24] Anders (1959).
[25] See Fabbro (1958).
[26] Gorz (1959).
[27] Arendt (1963).
[28] See Anders (1961, It.trans. 2016: 185).

possible. Eatherly does the very opposite, he uses the anonymity of the system to keep his conscience alive, and given that it is always critical, always non-conformist, this is not allowed him.

S.P.: Dominant, mass-media discourse encourages, confirms, and sanctions the connection between terrorism and migration. To identify the cause of terrorism in migration (now reaching biblical dimensions) is a dangerous argument from an ideological perspective. On the contrary, migration as much as terrorism, I believe both emerge as symptoms of a widespread sense of uneasiness, of *malaise*, even disease over the planet, as is emerging in ever more exasperated terms in our globalized world. The relation between migration and terrorism is not at all a direct relation of cause and effect, as is often insinuated by mass-media discourse and everyday gossip. Instead, both can be considered as effects of the same cause, at least in part, a significant part at that, symptoms of the same disease, one that is far more invasive. I am alluding here to a common capitalist economic system shared at a world level, with its correlated social programming, dominant in the world today and now in its extreme phase of development—an agonizing apocalyptic beast, disseminating death with the backlashes of its tail, without ever ceasing to cease, without ever dying. This type of analysis hardly ever, if at all, emerges from mass-media public debate.

A.P.: In fact, capitalism, what is currently defined as "blind capitalism" in the sense described above, is well-defined metaphorically as an agonizing beast whose tail backlashes are in effect lethal. But there's no sign of how long this agony will last.

Unlike the traditional phenomenon of *emigration*, migration today is not functional to the dominant production system, it cannot be absorbed by the system.

Migration as it now presents itself is at once new and ancient. It is not identifiable with *emigration* which instead is englobed by the production system. What characterizes migration today is its Alterity with respect to the system, the fact that it presents itself as excess, an Alterity that cannot be assimilated. "Migrants" now represent a part of humanity that cannot be reduced to the status of a labor-commodity. Migration hampers universalization of the market, unlimited extension of commodification. Homologation inherent to "equal exchange" gets jammed in the face of the migration phenomenon.

This new face of migration manifested itself blatantly under our very eyes when 25 years ago, on March 7, 1991, 20,000 Albanese refugees landed in the port of Bari (the first wave had already occurred in the port of Brindisi just a few months earlier). *Migrazioni* is the title of the fourth volume of "Athanor", published in 1993, including essays by Cl. Gandelman, U. Eco, J. Kristeva, W. Krysinski, M. A. Bonfantini, F. Loriggio, in addition to our own.[29]

In 1995 I published the first edition of *La differenza non indifferente* (Un-indifferent difference), subtitled, *Comunicazione, migrazione, guerra* (Communication, migration, war), where I address the problem of migration, and again in other essays and books, whether directly or indirectly, in particular in my 2009 book, *Da dove verso dove. L'altra parola della comunicazione* global,[30] as well as in

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[29] See Ponzio (ed., 1993).
[30] See Ponzio (1995 and 2009d).

more recent essays (whether directly or indirectly) and in various volumes of the "Athanor" series[31] (in the meantime become a book series, with Mimesis publishers in Milan).

In 1990, Umberto Eco had already distinguished between "migration" and "emigration" in two issues of his column "Bustine di Minerva," published in the journal "L'Espresso," *Quando l'Europa diventerà afro-europea*, and *L'Africa e l'Est. Migrazione e liberazione* (*When Europe Becomes Afro-European* and *Africa and the East. Migration and Liberation*):[32]

The last objection made to me is why think about future migration (with all the tragic overtones the event involves, independently from the positive outcomes that will result through the centuries), while in Europe we are witnessing such admirable events as the liberation of the East. [...] Certainly we have witnessed what are exciting events for our small European dimension over the past few months, but the remote possibility that [...] the fall of the Russian empire should bring a situation of para-Balkans chaos throughout the whole of East Europe is negligible in the face of a world situation, at least from a planetary perspective. The third world is full of people who would sell their mothers to live as well as they lived in Bucharest under Ceausescu[33] (Eng. trans. by S. Petrilli).

Migration by far oversteps the traditional emigration phenomenon. *Emigration*, the shift of the work force from less developed areas of the world to the more developed, is a phenomenon that can be controlled, contained and rendered functional to development. The request for hospitality made by migration is a request from people who cannot find a place in the current order, this is a request that comes from an Alterity that cannot be assimilated by the community, as such this request is an absolute request from the extra-communitarian. This request for hospitality is also an interrogation, a request for justification from those who have a *place* in the developed world—and not just a work-place—and who never thought the day would come when they would have to justify themselves for occupying that place.

Hospitality from the community towards the extra-communitarian, concession of a "residency permit" depends on whether that extra-communitarian is able to find work. This betrays the fact that as per a capitalist perspective, the community is conceived of as a *work community*, a community of separate individuals who only enter into communication on the basis of self-interest. In this type of community, work is such a strong compensating factor for the fact of not belonging that in Nazi Germany a work certificate could save a Jew from deportation, torture and death, in spite of the anti-Semite campaign.[34]

The extra-communitarian demands a response that involves interrogating community identity and its laws, the logic of identity, the conception itself of community that continues to be a "work-community," as in the Nazi state and in all social forms that claim to be an alternative with respect to

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[31] See in particular *White Matters. Il bianco in questione*, ed. by S. Petrilli (2007) and *Globalizzazione e infunzionalità*, ed. by A. Ponzio (2009a).

[32] «L'Espresso», April, 1, 1990 and April, 15, 1990; republished in Ponzio (ed., 1993: 25-27) under the title *L'Europa tra migrazione e emigrazione*.

[33] Eco (1993: 27).

[34] As shown by Spielberg in his film, *Schindler's List*.

capitalism. This response can only come from our very own Alterity, from our being other with respect to this logic and with respect to our community, the community we belong to, identify with, the difference-indifference community, with its recourse to alibis, limited responsibility, negation of non-in-difference. The request for hospitality from the extra-communitarian can only receive a response from our own condition of being "strangers to ourselves" (Julia Kristeva), [35] extra-communitarians in turn, with respect to ourselves, to the communities we belong to, whether large or small, collective or individual, in which our Alterity as single individuals is segregated, excluded, but never totally eliminated.

As a request that cannot be accepted from an ideological viewpoint according to the "ideo-logic" of the work community, as a request for hospitality that cannot be translated into a request for work, this very request resounds—albeit unintentionally—as an accusation. In fact, in a situation where identity logic is dominant, it evidences the dirty conscience of the clean conscience, the presence in capitalism of underdevelopment, oppression, segregation, poverty, famine, sickness, death, war, all excrescences that cannot be reduced to the system. The request for hospitality evidences the limits of "human rights" which are made to appear for what they effectively are: the rights of identity, from which the rights of the *other* man[36] remain excluded, the rights of otherness,[37] the rights of difference outside the common places of the order of discourse, irreducible to community identity, in this sense extra-communitarian.

The community that capitalism is able to produce in view of its identity logic is truly called to issue today. This is not so much because of conflict among the different identity interests, among the different identities forming the community—all of which is still part of the same capitalist logic. Rather, what calls the system to issue is the migrant's request for hospitality, being a request that presents itself as a claim to the rights of otherness. The migrant's request for hospitality is something altogether distinct from claims to difference in the name of some affiliation, some genre (gender, class, region, ethnic group, religion, etc.), which are claims to the rights of identity, to the rights of relative otherness. To the extent that it comes from an Alterity that is outside any genre whatsoever, the request for hospitality comes from an absolute Alterity, from the single individual in his or her uniqueness, singularity, and not from the individual relative to a genre. The extra-communitarian demands a reply that involves the interrogation of community identity and its laws, of the logic of identity. This request is not even made in the name of "human rights," which are in fact the rights of identity. Instead, as stated, we are dealing here with the rights of a humanity that is other, the rights of the *other* man, the rights of Alterity: the rights of difference. But this is difference without a genre, that is not relative, that is not internal to community identity and its dialectics. Instead, this is difference of the extra-communitarian.

Together with structural unemployment migration—Adam Schaff [38] had already reflected closely on these phenomena as the consequences of globalized communication-production—[39]there is

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[35] *Strangers to ourselves* is an expression used as the title of a book by Kristeva (1999).
[36] This is the title of Levinas (1972).
[37] See Levinas (1985).
[38] See Schaff (1999).

another limit internal to the global communication-production system, "internal" because the system itself produces it. In this sense we know that unemployment and migration are the effects of the same cause. Both redundancies, the unemployed and the migrant, present a limit on the possibility of exploiting free labor. This is what brings them together. However, this communion is contrasted by a difference *in rights*, difference because the former belongs, nevertheless, to the national territory, to the community, and the latter does not; this is the difference between "communitarian" and "extra-communitarian." In other words, as a "communitarian" the unemployed attempts to recover a threatened identity (mostly without succeeding), defending the right to a place in the work force, with consequent regurgitations of racism leading to the criminalization and expulsion, if not physical elimination even, of the "extra-communitarian." But, whether we like it or not, the truth is that the capitalist system in the current phase of its development transforms the communitarian, insofar as that communitarian is unemployed, into a redundancy, an excess, like a migrant, an individual that is constitutively useless to the production process, dysfunctional, who unlike the emigrant and the traditional unemployed person, cannot be absorbed by that process.

Certainly there is a very close relationship between the sequence of conflicts as we have described them above, the current situation of infinite war plaguing the planet at the ecological level as well as the socio-human, on the one hand, and migration, on the other. War produces numerous deaths, but it also produces numerous survivors reduced to life-conditions which do not even meet subsistence levels. Migration shows how war presents us with a situation of overpopulation which re-proposes the same problems, no doubt in more complex terms, as those produced by demographic development, which war is cynically expected to solve.

As to terrorism, not only is it the product of wars but it is part of wars. Terrorist attacks are foreseen by attacks against the enemy and are normally considered and exalted as acts of heroism.

The denomination "kamikaze," today commonly used for whoever sacrifices himself in terrorist actions, the suicide terrorist, is a term dating back to the second World War for the Japanese aviator who heroically sacrificed himself by launching his plane loaded with explosives against the enemy.

That it is better not to welcome migrants—whether because they are poor, unemployed, refugees, survivors of a massacre, of bombardments, or simply because they are in search of the possibility of a life that is effectively more human—because of the danger of there being among them a terrorist, a future kamikaze, is certainly a justification, an alibi, an argument that releases us from a series of problems, that puts the conscience at peace, and favors solidarity among the population with those governments that respond to terrorist attacks by closing frontiers and raising walls. This is what England does (one of the reasons why it voted in favor of *Brexit* was fear of migration), this is what France does as a reaction to "terrorist attacks," the same for Switzerland. Migrants at the borders are numerous, in Calais, in Ventimiglia and along several European national borders.

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[39] In the current phase of development of the capitalistic system, communication is production. Today's capitalistic system is a global communication-production system: see Ponzio (1999b and 2009d: II, 1, 63-65).

S.P.: The destruction of the World Trade Center twin towers, September 11, 2001, could probably be considered to be a new starting point in the development of "global terrorism." The immediate response from the world at the time recalls the response to today's ongoing attacks, or said differently, we are responding today in exactly the same way, *immer weider*, always the same, that is, with the language of violence exalted by tones of revenge and emptied of any significant attempts at analyzing the "reasons" (if of "reason" we can speak)[40] for such devastating, destructive and tremendously inhuman action.

And yet the response to an event so pregnant with meaning as is September 11, 2001, has not led us to anywhere constructive; terrorist attacks continue—the failure of "preventive war," of "humanitarian war" is under the eyes of all. Yet, in spite of this, the "official language" has not changed, our actors continue responding in the same way, always the same, with the language of violence and blind revenge, intimidation, without ever taking any blame, without ever recognizing one's own involvement or responsibilities, which if anything are attributed exclusively to the "other," with the usual rhetoric of arrogance and a clean conscience, without the will to "understand" in any serious sense of the term, and thereby fomenting mass delirium.

A.P.: Another September 11 should also be remembered, that of 1973, when La Moneda Presidential Palace in Santiago, Chile, was attacked and bombarded from the air, an event that was no less terroristic than the 2001 attack, bringing the socialist government led by Salvador Allende to an end.

As to what you were saying, let me add the following considerations:

In general, resentment is dominant. Clashes and violence call for *resentful* partners, whether individual or collective. To respond: this is what normally happens, in the sense of being *reactive*. Reactive is he who reduces himself to the *effect* of a cause, reduces himself to the status of a mere effect. I don't act; I *react*. Nietzsche called to issue what he referred to as the "reactive type." And he was right. In individual life, each one of us can do what we want. But when there is a collective responsibility, we cannot reduce ourselves to being the effect of a cause, we cannot limit ourselves to responding, in the sense of simply reacting. From one response to another, from one reaction to another, if this is how international issues are to be dealt with and resolved, by reacting to an offence with another offence, the road to mutual destruction is short, in any case, we are certainly on the road to massacre and genocide. We are witnessing this already.

In response to the ISIS terrorist attacks in Paris on November 13, 2015, France responded two days later by bombarding the city of Raqqua in Syria, considered to be the capital of the Islamic State: "more than thirty raids by 10 Rafale and Mirage 200: a shower of fire." On the occasion, mass-media and public opinion focused on the question of whether the bombs had really been inscribed with the missive "From Paris with love": in other words, whether the response was a good one, whether it really was "teaching them a lesson," so to speak, with the language of revenge.

The linguist Michael Halliday undersigned our open letter (January 31, 1991) to the UN Secretary and accompanied his signature with a text. He clearly foresaw the consequences of that type of (supportive) *reaction*—as was the immediate *response* to the invasion of Kuwait by Saddam Hussein—

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[40] See Chomsky (2001).

which opened the war(s) in the Persian Gulf. Halliday clarified that we do not forgive Saddam Hussein, and he expressed sympathy for all those peoples—Iranians, Kurds, Kuwaitis, Israelis—who had suffered violence and aggression by his will. At the same time, however, he also declared that he deplored the military action that had been undertaken against Iraq by US-led coalition forces. Such action was considered to be immoral, criminal and stupid: immoral because the intention was to destroy the material life and social network of the Iraqi people, he foresaw that masses would be annihilated and their habitat would be mostly destroyed; criminal and stupid because it would push millions of people to become bitter enemies of the West – mainly Muslim populations (especially Arabs), with the addition of many other fronts of hostility. All this would push back the difficult processes through which people of different cultures learn to mutually understand each other over many generations. It was criminal and stupid for another reason as well: US-led coalition military action was destroying the environment and consequently the life of many species. In fact, at the time, the experts warned that the quantity of petrol spilling out of the earth would transform the whole Persian Gulf into a death zone; and this was only a small part of the disasters that we could expect from the war.

These considerations are exemplary still today as a warning against immediate and un-meditated reactions.

In the meanwhile, from the beginning of August 2016, the raids continue ("Raid" is also the name of an American household insecticide), US-led raids in Libya, against ISIS, authorized by Barack Obama (a thirty-day mission), and declared to be in line with UN resolutions insofar as they are requested by governments representing national unity. For her part, the Italian Defense Minister, Roberta Pinotti, has declared that the government is ready to consider positively the eventual request of using Italian military bases and air space if this favors a faster and more efficient conclusion to the operation in course.

Simultaneously, beginning already from July 2016, the UN sent out alarms concerning the population trapped in the Syrian city of Aleppo, crushed to the West by the regime of Bashar al-Assad and to the East by the opposition forces: two million civilians under siege. The UN has requested an armed truce of 48 hours to allow entry into the zones at the center of the conflict in order to provide the population with water, food, electric lighting and medicines.

S.P.: In the popular imaginary, the connection between terrorism and religion, terrorism and Islam, terrorism and the Muslim world, is now immediate (and in fact the victims of terrorist attacks are mostly Muslims). Just as once upon a time the story was that communists eat children, today the great narrative recites that (Islamic) religiousness and terrorism are inextricably interconnected. Yet again, religion is exploited as an alibi to mask economic and political reason, with the consequent recruitment of soldiers and sacrifice of human lives, and this is in line with the type of logic on the basis of which difference becomes a pretext for conflict, whether a question of ethnic, linguistic, cultural difference, class difference, sexual difference, difference in skin color, and so forth.

In spite of slaughter and ruin accomplished by "humans" and "institutions," by a certain official order, we know that religion, Islam included (but we know that the argument involves all

religions) has very little to do with terror and war, if not as a deviation, as an alibi and instrument of manipulation.

A.P.: I think the volume edited by yourself with Gaetano Dammacco, *Fedi, credenze, fanatismo* (Faiths, beliefs, fanaticism) for the "Athanor" series (XXVI, 19, 2016),[41] is an important contribution to the problem and, in fact, it has attracted the attention of scholars from different disciplines, in Italy and internationally.

Respect for the Other is part of the very make-up of monotheisms, of their texts, respect for one's neighbor, for the foreigner. This emerges very clearly from the texts collected in the "Athanor" volume I edited in 2012, under the title *Linguaggi del monoteismo e pace preventiva* (Languages of monotheism and preventive peace),[42] with its juxtaposition to "preventive war," an expression coined by the USA against the threat of "rogue states."

Religions have been used and continue to be used as a justification for violence, genocide, massacre, war. Is this intrinsic to religion itself, or is it an instrumentalization, an "abuse" of religion? As I observed in a dialogue with Gaetano Dammacco,[43] what or who cannot be used as an instrument to kill? The most peace-loving person ever "called to arms," put into a uniform, is ordered to destroy "the enemy." Even love can be used as a reason for murder: "I killed her for love."

What does all this mean? That what counts is the social set up. It's not so much on the individual that we need to act–behave yourself! It's the social that we need to change. For there to be a religion of peace, the social must change. Again, for there to be people of peace, "peacemakers," the social must change. So long as identity exists, belonging, the "work community," difference that discriminates on the basis of skin color, origin, language, religion, where one religion is set against another, the current situation will not change. So to work in a future anterior (future perfect), today, for a better future means to commit to citizenship in a new world, to citizenship of a new world.

In today's world, media contributes to spreading the idea that religion and fanaticism are connected. Illustrative is the comment made by a person interviewed by a journalist (among other neighbors and acquaintances) à propos the eighteen year old author of the massacre at McDonald's commercial center in Monaco: "And yet, he wasn't religious."

S.P.: It would seem that there is a two-way movement in the world, two opposing tendencies that contradict each other, one that goes in the direction of unity, and the other, perhaps today the stronger tendency, that pushes in the direction of its fragmentation.

We look for unity and end up being overwhelmed and dominated, even recruited by economic reason, which today largely means the corporate logic of multinationals and their short-sighted self-interests. But a movement that is just as strong in the direction of political and cultural unity, with at least some degree of constructive critical sensibility, is altogether lacking. Indeed, the

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[41] Dammacco and Petrilli (2016).
[42] Ponzio (2012).
[43] In, *La cittadinanza del mondo nuovo* (Citizenship in the New World), included in *Fedi, credenze, fanatismo* (Dammacco and Petrilli eds.)

European Union is instead witnesses to the "Brexit" phenomenon you mentioned, that is, the United Kingdom's exit from the European Community.

But the will to separate among states seems to be resurfacing everywhere, the voices are numerous and alarming, think of relations between Ireland and England, but also the movements in Scotland, the independence movements in Spain, not to speak of the wars of the 1990s' in the Balkans that led to the end of the Federal Socialist Republic of Yugoslavia. Among the various motivations for the fragmentation process of the economic, political, ethnic, religious orders, nationalism would seem to be the strongest. It would seem that the logic of closed identity, barricaded in itself, obsessed with its own being to the exclusion of the other, is making its way in the world.

Historically, with respect to the feudal system, formation of the nation state signified the formation of a larger community that with its constitution and its laws would safeguard the interests and the health of its people, up until then subject to the whims and abuses of their rich and powerful masters, the noble class. At the foundations of modern civilization there have been placed values that exalt man as an end and not as a mere instrument, a means—freedom, equality, fraternity. The ideology of national independence was asserted and therefore a vaster sense of solidarity against the foreign oppressor. At its origins, the nation state with its economic and political institutions is at the service of the needs and desires of its citizens. As such it becomes a motor for progress and favors the circulation of people and merchandise.

Instead, today in the "global communication" world—an expression that from the perspective we are now delineating is mystifying given that it leads us to think of a situation of opening and relation, of transnational and intercontinental interconnectedness—the nation state would seem to be governed by the ideology of small nationalisms and their closures, short sightedness, thereby presenting itself as the stronghold of identity self-interests, articulated into the separatist interests of class, religion, ethnic group, etc., which moreover very easily enter into contrast, whether internally to the same nation, or externally on an international level in the relation among different nations. The germs of capitalist imperialism have developed through to the formation of totalitarian states and the tragedy of two world wars.

So, if the nation was connoted originally as the place for the organization of collective life and peaceful cohabitation among its citizens, subsequently, instead, the concept of nation dominates as a value in itself, as an end in itself, and no longer simply as a means to the benefit of its citizens. In this phase the nation is characterized by the will to dominate over other nations in defense of its own separate national interests, according to a logic that produces the condition of hierarchization among nations, with their citizens become "subjects" at the service of the internal needs of the single nation, and with the weaker states become subservient to the hegemonic state on an international level. The power of the state is measurable in terms of its potential for war, and peace is no more than a momentary truce between one war and another, a momentary repose in function of the "day." In many nations, the will of the military order prevails over the civil and renders the good functioning of free political and cultural orders ever more difficult, including education, scientific research, the arts, cultural life generally, the production and circulation of merchandise, administrative systems, social services, and so forth.

The current world order has been established through war. After all, there is not one national boundary that has not been traced in blood. The nation itself arises from the ashes of fratricide wars: we know that the storming of the Bastille inaugurated a new era, but it did so by sacrificing the life of its brother-oppressors in the struggle between nobility and the new bourgeois class, from this point of view thus inaugurating a new reign of terror.

And, again, in line with our theme, the new "world order" inaugurated by the Gulf War of 1990-1991 institutes a new world order of terror, global terror, with a US-led coalition of 34 countries against Iraq, "shock and awe," as we recalled earlier.

But where is the world going? Do you think the concept of nation has a future, is it desirable? Can we imagine a world without national barriers? Can we imagine political, economic, and legal systems that are truly international, transnational, as envisaged by theorizers of the "open community," such as the American semiotician Charles Morris? Organisms already set up according to such a vision of the world do not seem to be very effective. I'm thinking of such organisms as the United Nations, NATO, the European Community even. In any case, looking towards the future, for a world of peace, if this be our aim, we need a world order capable of looking beyond short-sighted self-interest and of responding to the Other, and not simply of reacting, as you were saying before, a world order that is not only capable of turning its gaze towards the Other, but that is ready to answer to the Other and for the Other, this I believe is our only hope.

A.P.: The question of the relation between nation, national unity, citizenship, belonging, identity is among the most complex today whether because of multinational states that are disaggregating, or because of the situation of interculturalism, or because of the dilemma of whether or not to continue being part of unions like the European, or lastly because in one way or another globalization calls for relations and accords in spite of any claims to isolation. The concept of citizenship no doubt needs to be revisited and connected to a renewed sense of "human rights." Migration, interculturalism, human rights require as much. As I said, an author I have been reading and studying all my life, Emmanuel Levinas, entitled one of his essays, "Human rights and the rights of others," where he is clearly maintaining that the "rights of others" are not included in "human rights." "Human rights" are the rights of the Self, of the I, the Ego, the rights of self-interest. Pope Francis used an expression that describes to good effect how things stand: "Globalization is the globalization of indifference." Each for oneself, nor is there any need to add: and God for all, because this addition is of no interest to anybody, including the fact that there be one and the same God for all. Each one with his own self-interest, with his own business: "mind your own business!" Each focused on his own identity, on asserting his own identity.

Let me recall "Athanor" once again – the name of the Alchemist's burner thanks to which even base metals could be transformed into gold. An important part of my work has revolved around "Athanor" to the extent that, in a sense, every volume is a balance of every year in my life's work since 1990, when the series was inaugurated. So forgive me if I refer to another issue I edited in the series, *La trappola mortale dell'identità* (The mortal trap of identity).[44]

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[44] "Athanor" XX, 13, 2009, Ponzio (ed., 2009b).

Inevitably, any genre, any community to which an identity is affiliated—ethnic, sexual, national, associated with some credo, role, profession, social status—is *opposed* to another genre, to another identity as in the oppositional pairs: white / black; man / woman; communitarian / extra-communitarian; compatriot / foreigner; professor / student. The genre, like all kinds, sorts, groups, classes, and systems *homologates the elements belonging to it indifferently*, it cancels any differences among its members. And as a homologated block it implies opposition to those who indifferently in just as *uniform* a way belong to the opposite genre, with respect to which it must indifferently assert its own difference. All difference-identities, all differences belonging to the genre, which are internal to it, imply the cancellation of unique difference, of singularity. As such these difference-identities are *indifferent differences*. In this case, the relationship with the other, as the relationship between two identities, is always a relationship among *relative Alterities*, mediated, indirect, conditioned, instrumental, interchangeable, not a relationship of Alterity that is absolutely such, among absolute Alterities, a direct relationship, *face-to-face* relationship, of *un-indifferent difference*. "Uniform," used as a noun, is a word from military language, similar to "general," "official:" all three words in one way or another are connected to the *uniformity* of genre, to an identity, to general worth and to the order of discourse. Being based on indifference and opposition, any genre—which an identity always presupposes—is put into a uniform, is prescription, foresees conflict, is called—whether literally or metaphorically – to arms. And the risk (now real), is finding that we must deal with the "*absolute weapon*," in other words, with that weapon that, as Günther Anders says, can no longer be called so: the nuclear bomb. As history testifies, identity is a trap and a mortal one at that, escaping which is effectively a condition (a fundamental one among the many) for us to look towards the future, as you were saying before, and foster hope in a world of peace.

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