
GLOBAL IDEAS FROM YAROSLAVL FORUM

Yaroslavl Global Policy Forum (for more details see p. 140) is a permanent international platform for on-going intellectual discussions and practical definition of directions of development of the modern state and its role in ensuring security and stability of the modern world. The Forum is traditionally held in Yaroslavl (Russia) under the auspices of President of the Russian Federation Dmitry A. Medvedev.

FROM AGORA TO THE MARKETPLACE, AND WHERETO FROM HERE?*

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*Beneath the present 'globalization of inequality' lies the current repetition on a planetary scale of the emancipation of business interests from all extant socio-cultural institutions of ethically inspired supervision and control and, consequently, the immunization of business pursuits against all values other than the maximization of profit. The state is today less and less able, and willing, to promise its subjects existential security. On the fears that saturate the present-day society, politicians as much as the consumer markets are eager to capitalize. The disastrous side-effects and 'collateral damages' of global *laissez faire*, cannot be effectively dealt with separately from the rest of the planet in one corner of the globe. 'Social state' is no longer viable, only a 'social planet' may take over the functions that the social states tried, with varying success, to perform. There are valid reasons to suppose that on a globalized planet, on which the plight of everyone everywhere determines the plight of all the others while being determined by them, one can no longer assure and effectively protect democracy 'separately' – in isolation, in one country, or in a few selected countries only. The fate of freedom and democracy in each land is decided and settled on the global stage; and only on that stage it can be defended with a realistic chance of a lasting success.*

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Democracy is form of life of the *agora*: of that intermediate space which links/separates the two other sectors of the polis – *ecclesia* and *oikos*. In Aristotle's terminology, *oikos* stood for the family household, the site inside which private interests were formed and pursued; *ecclesia* stood for the 'public' – for the popular council composed of the elected, appointed, or drawn-by-lot magistrates, whose function was to care of common affairs that affect all citizens of the *polis*, like matters of war and peace, defense of the realm and the rules governing the cohabitation of citizens in the city-state; having

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originated from the verb 'kalein', meaning 'to call, to summon, to gather' – the concept of *ecclesia* presumed from the beginning the presence of agora, the site of democracy.

In a city-state, agora was a physical space to which the *boule*, the council, summoned once or several times each month all the citizens (heads of households) to deliberate and decide the issues of joint and shared interests – and to elect, or draw by lots, its members. For obvious reasons, such procedure could not be sustained, once the realm of the polis or the body politic grew far beyond the borders of a city: agora could no longer mean, literally, a public square in which all citizens of the state were expected to make themselves present in order to participate in the decision-making process. This does not mean, though, that the purpose underlying the establishment of the agora, and the function of the agora in pursuing that purpose, had lost their significance or needed to be forever abandoned. History of democracy can be narrated as the story of successive efforts to keep both the purpose and its pursuit alive after the disappearance of its original material substratum.

Or one could say that the history of democracy was set in motion, guided and kept on track by the *memory of agora*. One could, and should, say as well that preservation and resuscitation of the memory of agora could not but proceed along varied paths and take different forms; there is no single exclusive way in which the job of translation between oikos and ecclesia can be accomplished, and hardly any single model is free from its own hitches and stumbling blocks. Now, more than two millennia later, we need to be thinking in terms of *multiple democracies*.

The *purpose* of the agora (sometimes declared but most of the time implicit) was and remains the perpetual coordination of 'private' (oikos-based) and 'public' (ecclesia-handled) interests. And the *function* of the agora was and remains to provide the essential and necessary condition of such coordination: namely, *the two-way translation between the language of individual/familial interests and the language of public interests*. What was, essentially, expected or hoped to be achieved in the agora, was the re-forging of private concerns and desires into public issues; and, conversely, the re-forging of the issues of public concern into individual rights and duties. The degree of democracy of a political regime may be therefore measured by the success and failure, smoothness and roughness of that translation: to wit, by the degree to which its principal objective has been reached – rather than, as is often the case, by the staunch obedience to one or another procedure, viewed wrongly as the sufficient condition of democracy.

As the city-state model of 'direct democracy', with its chance of an on-the-spot estimate of the success and smoothness of translation just by the number of citizens partaking in flesh and in voice of the decision-taking process, was clearly inapplicable to the modern, resurrected concept of democracy (and in particular to the 'great society', that admittedly *imagined*, abstract entity, beyond the reach of the citizen's experience and impact), modern political theory struggled to discover or invent alternative yardsticks, by which the democracy of a political regime could be assessed: indices which could be argued and shown to reflect the likelihood that the purpose and the function of agora has been adequately met and performed. Most popular among those alternatives have been, perhaps, the quantitative criteria: the percent of citizens taking part in the elections which in the 'representative' democracy replaced the flesh-and-voice presence in the law-making process. The effectiveness of such indirect participation tended to be however a contentious issue, particularly since popular voting started to turn into a sole acceptable source of rulers' legitimacy, while the obviously authoritative, dictatorial, totalitarian and tyrannical regimes tolerating neither public dissent nor dialogue could

easily boast much higher percentage of the electorate at the election booths (and so, by formal criteria, much wider popular support for the policies of the rulers) than the governments careful to respect and protect *freedoms of opinion and expression*. No wonder that whenever the defining features of democracy are currently spelled out, it is to the latter criteria that the emphases tend to shift from the statistics of electoral attendance and absenteeism. Drawing on Albert O. Hirshman's concepts of 'exit' and 'voice' as the two principal strategies which the consumers may deploy (and tend to deploy) in order to gain genuine influence on marketing policies (Hirshman 1970), it has been often suggested that the citizens' right to voice dissent in the open, the provision of means to do so and to reach the intended audience, and the right to opt out from the sovereign realm of the detested/disapproved regime, are the conditions *sine qua non* which political orders must meet to have their democratic credentials recognized.

In the subtitle of his highly influential study, Hirshman puts sellers – clients and state – citizens relations into the same category, subjected to the same performance-measuring criteria. Such a step was and remains legitimized by the assumption that political freedoms and market freedoms are closely related – needing, as well as breeding and reinvigorating, each other; that freedoms of the markets which underlies and promotes economic growth is in the final account the necessary condition, as well as the breeding ground of political democracy – while democratic politics is the sole frame in which the economic success can be effectively pursued and achieved. This assumption is however, to say the least, contentious. Pinochet in Chile, Syngman Rhee in South Korea, Lee Kuan Yew in Singapore, Chiang Kai-Shek in Taiwan, or present rulers of China, were or are dictators (Aristotle would call them 'tyrants') in everything but their offices self-adopted names; but they presided or preside over outstanding expansion and fast rising power of markets. All named countries would not be today an epitome of 'economic miracles', if not for the protracted 'dictatorship of the state'. And, we may add, it is not by accident that they are such epitome.

Let us remember that the so-called 'primitive accumulation' of capital invariably leads to unprecedented and deeply resented social upheavals, expropriations of livelihoods and polarization of life conditions; it cannot but produce potentially explosive social tensions, which the up-and-coming entrepreneurs and merchants need to be suppressed by a powerful and merciless, coercive state dictatorship. And let me add that the 'economic miracles' in post-war Japan and Germany could be to a considerable extent explained by the presence of foreign occupation forces that took over from the native political institutions the coercive/oppressive functions of state powers, while effectively evading control by the democratic institutions of the occupied countries.

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One of the most notorious sore spots of democratic regimes is the contradiction between the formal universality of democratic rights (accorded to all citizens equally) and less than universal ability to exercise such rights effectively. In other words, the gap separating the legal condition of a 'citizen *de jure*' from the practical capacity of a citizen *de facto*; a gap expected to be bridged by individuals deploying their own skills and resources, which, however, they may be lacking.

Lord Beveridge, whom we owe the blueprint for the post-war British 'welfare state' later to be emulated by quite a few European countries, was a *liberal*, not a socialist. He believed that his vision of a comprehensive, collectively endorsed insurance for *everyone* was the inevitable consequence and indispensable complement of the liberal idea of

individual freedom, as well as a necessary condition of *liberal democracy*. Franklin Delano Roosevelt's declaration of war on fear was based on the same assumption, as must have been also Joseph Seebohm Rowntree's pioneering inquiry of the volume and causes of human poverty and degradation. Liberty of choice entails after all uncounted and uncountable risks of failure; many people would find such risks unbearable, fearing that they may exceed their personal ability to cope. For most people, the liberal ideal of the freedom of choice will remain an elusive phantom and idle dream, unless the fear of defeat is mitigated by the insurance policy issued in the name of community, a policy they can trust and rely on in case of personal defeat or a blow of fate.

If democratic rights, and the freedoms that accompany such rights, are granted in theory but unattainable in practice, the pain of hopelessness would be surely topped with the humiliation of helplessness; daily tested ability of coping with life challenges is after all that very workshop in which individuals' self-confidence and also their self-esteem, are cast or melted away. Little or no rescue from individual indolence or impotence would be expected to arrive from a political state that is not, and refuses to be, a *social state*. Without social rights *for all*, a large and in all probability growing number of people would find their political rights being of little use and unworthy of their attention. *If political rights are necessary to set social rights in place, social rights are indispensable to make political rights 'real' and keep them in operation.* The two rights need each other for their survival; that survival can be only their *joint* achievement.

Social state has been the ultimate modern embodiment of the idea of *community*: that is, of an institutional reincarnation of such idea in its *modern* form of an '*imagined totality*' – woven of reciprocal dependence, commitment, loyalty, solidarity, and trust. Social rights are so to speak the tangible, 'empirically given' manifestations of that imagined communal totality (that is, the frame into which the democratic institutions are inscribed), which links the abstract notion to daily realities, rooting imagination in the fertile soil of daily life experience. These rights certify veracity and realism of the mutual person-to-person trust, and of the trust in the shared institutional network that endorse and validate collective solidarity.

About sixty years ago T. H. Marshall (1950) recycled the popular mood of that time into what he believed had been and was bound to remain a universal law of human progress: from *property* rights to *political* rights, and from them to *social* rights... Political freedom was in his view an inevitable outcome of economic freedom, while itself giving necessarily birth to social rights – rendering thereby the exercise of both freedoms feasible and plausible to all. With every successive extension of political rights, so Marshall believed, agora will grow more inclusive, voice will be given to more and more categories of people heretofore kept inaudible, more and more inequalities will be leveled up, and more and more discriminations effaced. About quarter of a century later John Kenneth Galbraith (see among other John Kenneth Galbraith's works his *Culture of Contentment* [1992]) spotted however another regularity, bound to seriously modify, if not downright refute, Marshall's prognosis: as the universalization of *social* rights begins to bring fruit, more and more bearers of *political* rights tend to use their voting entitlements to support the individuals' initiative with all its consequences: of growing, instead of diminishing or leveled-up, inequality of incomes, standards of living, and life prospects... Galbraith ascribed this trend to the sharply different mood and life philosophy of the emergent '*contented majority*'. Feeling now firm in the saddle and at home

in the world of great risks but also of great opportunities, the emergent majority saw no need in the 'welfare state', an arrangement which they increasingly experienced as a cage rather than safety net, and a constraint rather than an opening – and as a wasteful largesse, which they, the contented, able to rely on their own resources, would in all probability never need and from which they are unlikely ever to benefit. For them, the local poor were no longer the 'reserve army of labor', and money spent on keeping them in good shape was money wasted. The widespread, 'beyond left and right' support for the social state, seen by T. H. Marshall as the ultimate destination of the 'historical logic of human rights', started to shrink, crumble and vanish with accelerating speed.

Indeed – the welfare (social) state would have hardly come to be if not for the factory owners' considering the care of the 'reserve army of labor' (keeping the reservists in good shape in case they are called back to active service) to be a profitable investment. The introduction of the social state used to be a matter 'beyond left and right'; now, however, the turn has come for its limitation and gradual dismembering to be made into a 'beyond left and right' issue. If the welfare state is now under-funded, falling apart or even actively dismantled, it is because the sources of capitalist profit drifted or have been shifted from the exploitation of factory labor to the exploitation of consumers. And because the poor people, stripped of the resources needed to respond to the seductions of consumer markets, need currency and credit accounts (not the kind of services provided by the 'welfare state') to be of any use in the consumer capital's understanding of 'usefulness'...

More than anything else, the 'welfare state' (which, I repeat, is better called by the *social* state name, that shifts the emphasis from the distribution of material benefits to the community-building motive of their provision) was an arrangement invented and promoted as if in order to prevent the present-day drive to 'privatize' (a shorthand for the promotion of essentially anti-communal, individualizing patterns of the consumer-market style – patterns that set individuals in competition with other): the drive that results in the weakening and taking apart the web of human bonds and undermining the social foundations of human solidarity. 'Privatization' shifts the daunting task of fighting back and (hopefully) resolving the *socially* produced problems onto the shoulders of *individual* men and women, in most cases much too un-resourceful for the purpose; whereas the 'social state' tends to unite its members in an attempt to protect all and any one of them from the ruthless and morally devastating competitive 'war of all against all'.

A state is 'social' when it promotes the principle of the communally endorsed, collective insurance against individual misfortune and its consequences. It is that principle – declared, set in operation and trusted to be working, that lifts the 'imagined society' to the level of a 'genuine totality' – tangible, sensed-and-lived community – and thereby replaces (to deploy John Dunn's terms) the mistrust-and-suspicion-generating 'order of egoism' with the confidence-and-solidarity-inspiring 'order of equality'. And it is the same principle which makes the political body democratic: it lifts members of society to the status of *citizens*, that is it makes them *stake*-holders, in addition to being *stock*-holders of the polity; *beneficiaries*, but also *actors* responsible for the creation and decent allocation of benefits. In short, citizens defined and moved by their acute interest in their common property and responsibility: the network of public institutions that can be trusted to assure solidity and reliability of the state-issued 'collective insurance policy'. Application of that principle may, and often does, protect men and women from the triple bane of *silencing*, *exclusion* and *humiliation* – most importantly,

however, it may (and by and large does) become a prolific source of social solidarity that recycles 'society' into a common, communal good.

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Presently, however, we ('we' of the 'developed' countries on our own initiative, as well the 'we' of the 'developing' countries under the concerted pressure of global markets, IMF and the World Bank) seem to be moving in an opposite direction: 'totalities', societies and 'communities' real or imagined, become increasingly 'absent'. The range of individual autonomy is expanding, but also burdened with the functions once viewed as responsibility of the state but now ceded ('subsidiarized') to individual self-concerns. States endorse the collective insurance policy half-heartedly and with mounting reservations, and leave the task of achieving well-being and making it secure to individual pursuits.

Not much prompts people, therefore, to visit agora – and even less prods them to engage in its works. Left increasingly to their own resources and acumen, individuals are expected to devise individual solutions to socially generated problems, and to do it individually, using their own individual skills and individually possessed assets. Such expectation sets individuals in mutual competition, and renders communal solidarity, (except in the form of temporary alliances of convenience: that is, of human bonds tied up and untied on demand and with 'no strings attached'), to be perceived as by and large irrelevant, if not downright counter-productive. If not mitigated by institutional intervention, such 'individualization by decree' renders the differentiation and polarization of individual chances inescapable; indeed, makes the *polarization* of prospects and chances into a self-propelling and self-accelerating process. The effects of that tendency were easy to predict – and now can be counted. In Britain for instance, the share of the top 1 per cent earners doubled since 1982 from 6,5 % to 13 % of the national income while chief executives of the 100 FTSE companies have been (up to the recent 'credit crunch' and beyond) earning not 20 as in 1980, but 133 times more than the average earners.

This is not, however, the end of the story. Thanks to the network of 'information highways', rapidly growing in its extension and density, all and any individual – man or woman, adult or child, rich or poor – are invited, tempted and induced (compelled rather) to compare one's own individual lot with the lot of *all other* individuals, and particularly with the lavish consumption of public idols (celebrities constantly in the limelight, on TV screens and the first pages of tabloids and glossy magazines) and to measure the values that make life worth living by the opulence they brandish. At the same time when the realistic prospects of satisfying life continue to differentiate sharply, the dreamed-of standards and coveted tokens of 'happy life' tend to equalize – whereas the driving force of conduct is no longer the more or less realistic desire to 'keep up with Joneses', but the infuriatingly nebulous idea of 'keeping up with celebrities', catching up with super-models, premier league footballers and top-ten singers. As Oliver James has recently suggested, the truly toxic mixture is created by stocking up 'unrealistic aspirations, and the expectations that they can be fulfilled'; but great swaths of British population 'believe that they can become rich and famous', that 'anyone can be Alan Sugar or Bill Gates, never mind that the actual likelihood of this occurring has diminished since the 1970s' (see his 'Selfish Capitalism is Bad for our Mental Health' in *The Guardian* of 3 January 2008).

The state is today less and less able, and willing, to promise its subjects existential security ('freedom from fear', as Franklin Delano Roosevelt famously phrased it). To a steadily

growing extent, the task of gaining existential security – obtaining and retaining legitimate and dignified place in human society and avoiding the menace of exclusion – is now left to the skills and resources of each individual on his or her own; and that means carrying enormous risks, and suffering harrowing uncertainty which such tasks inevitably include. The fear which democracy and its offspring – the social state – promised to uproot, has returned with a vengeance. Most of us, from the bottom to the top, fear nowadays a threat, however vague, of being excluded, proved inadequate to the challenge, snubbed, refused dignity and humiliated...

On the diffuse and misty fears that saturate the present-day society, politicians as much as the consumer markets are eager to capitalize. The merchandizers of consumer goods and services advertise their commodities as foolproof remedies against the abominable sense of uncertainty and ill-defined threats. Populist movements and populist politicians pick up the task abandoned by the weakening and disappearing social state, and also by much of whatever remained of the by and large bygone social-democratic left. But in a stark opposition to the social state, they are interested in *expanding*, not *reducing* the volume of fears; and particularly in expanding fears of the kind of dangers that can be seen on TV to be gallantly resisting, fighting back and protecting the nation from. The snag is that the menaces most vociferously, spectacularly and insistently displayed by the media seldom, if ever, happen to be the dangers that lie at the roots of popular anxiety and fears. However successful the state might be in resisting the advertised threats – the genuine sources of anxiety, of ambient and haunting uncertainty and social insecurity, those prime causes of fear endemic to the modern capitalist way of life, will remain intact and if anything emerge reinforced.

As the bulk of the electorate is concerned, political leaders, present and aspiring, are judged by the severity they manifest in the course of the 'security race'. Politicians try to outdo each other in the promises of being tough on the culprits of insecurity – genuine or putative, but such as are near, within reach, can be fought and defeated or at least deemed to be conquerable and presented as such. Forza Italia or the Lega may win elections promising to protect the hard-working Lombardians against being robbed by lazy Calabrians, to defend both against the newcomers that remind them of the shakiness and incurable frailty of their own position, and to defend all and any voter against obtrusive beggars, stalkers, prowlers, muggers, and of course the Gypsies. The most awesome threats to human decent life and dignity, and thus to democratic life, will emerge from all that unscathed.

These are the reasons for which the risks to which democracies are currently exposed are *only partly* due to the state governments desperately seeking to legitimize their right to rule and to demand discipline through flexing their muscles and showing their determination to stand firm in the face of endless, genuine or putative, threats to human bodies – instead of (as they did before) protecting their citizens' social usefulness, respected place in society, and insurance against exclusion, denial of dignity and humiliation. I say 'partly', because the second cause of democracy being at risk is what can only be called a 'freedom fatigue' – manifested in the placidity, with which *most of us* accept the process of the step-by-step limitation of our hard-won liberties, our rights to privacy, to defense in court, to being treated as innocent until proven guilty... Laurent Bonnelli coined recently the term 'liberticide' to denote that combination of the states' new far-fetched ambitions and the citizens' timidity and indifference.

A while ago I watched on TV thousands passengers stranded on British airports during another ‘terrorist panic’ – when flights were cancelled after announcement that the ‘unspeakable dangers’ of a ‘liquid bomb’, and a world-wide conspiracy to explode aircrafts in flight, had been discovered... Those thousands grounded by cancellations lost their holidays, important business meetings, family reunions. But they did not complain! Not the least... Neither did they complain of having been sniffed all over by dogs, kept in endless queues to security checks, submitted to body searches they could surely consider normally offensive to their dignity. On the contrary, they were jubilant – and beaming with gratitude: ‘we have never felt so safe as now’, they kept repeating. ‘We are so grateful to our authorities for their vigilance and for taking such a good care of our safety!’

At the extremes of the present-day tendency, we learn of keeping prisoners incarcerated for years on end without charge in camps like Guantanamo, Abu Ghraib, and perhaps in dozens more, kept secret and for that reason yet more sinister and less human; what we learned has caused occasional murmurs of protest, but hardly a public outcry, let alone an effective counteraction. We, the ‘democratic majority’, console ourselves that all those violations of human rights are aimed at ‘them’, not ‘us’ – at different kinds of humans (‘between you and me, are they indeed human?!’) and that those outrages would not affect us, the decent people. We have conveniently forgotten the sad lesson learned by Martin Niemöller, the Lutheran pastor and a victim of Nazi prosecutions: first they took the communists, he mused – but I was not a communist, so I kept silent. Then they came after trade-unionists, and as I was not a trade-unionist, I said nothing. Then they came after Jews, but I was not a Jew... And after Catholics, but I was not a Catholic... Then they came for me... By that time there was no one left to speak up for anyone.

In an insecure world, security is the name of the game. Security is the main purpose of the game and its paramount stake... It is a value that in practice, if not in theory, dwarfs and elbows out from view and attention all other values – including the values dear to ‘us’ while suspected to be hated by ‘them’, and for that reason declared the prime cause of their wish to harm us and our duty to conquer and punish them. In a world as insecure as ours, personal freedom of word and action, right to privacy, access to truth – all those things we used to associate with democracy and in whose name we still go to war – need to be trimmed or suspended... Or at least this is what the official version, confirmed by the official practice, maintains.

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The truth which we can neglect only at democracy's peril is, nevertheless, that *we cannot effectively defend our freedoms here at home while fencing ourselves off the rest of the world and attending solely to our affairs here at home...*

Class is but one of historical forms of inequality, nation-state but one of its historical frames, and so ‘the end of national class society’ (if indeed the era of the ‘national class society’ has ended, which is a moot question) does not augur ‘the end of social inequality’. We need now to extend the issue of inequality beyond the misleadingly narrow area of the income-per-head to the fatal mutual attraction between poverty and social vulnerability, corruption and accumulation of dangers, as well as the humiliation and denial of dignity, that is to – the attitude-and-conduct-shaping and group-integrating (more correctly in their case, *disintegrating*) factors, fast growing in importance in the age of the globality of information.

I believe that what lies beneath the present ‘globalization of inequality’ is the current repetition, though this time on a planetary scale, of the process spotted by Max Weber in the origins of modern capitalism and dubbed by him ‘the separation of business from household’: in other words, the emancipation of business interests from all extant socio-cultural institutions of ethically inspired supervision and control (concentrated at that time in the family household/workshop and through it in the local community) – and consequently the immunization of business pursuits against all values other than the maximization of profit. With the benefit of hindsight, we can view the present departures as a magnified replica of that original two-centuries old process. The same outcomes: rapid spread of misery (poverty, falling apart of families and communities, tapering and emaciation of human bonds to Thomas Carlyle’s ‘cash nexus’), and a newly emergent ‘no-man’s land’ (a sort of ‘Wild West’ later to be recreated in Hollywood studios) – free from binding laws, administrative supervision and only sporadically visited by itinerant judges. The original emancipation of business was followed by a long and frenetic, uphill struggle of the emergent state to invade, subdue, colonize and eventually ‘normatively regulate’ that land of the free-for-all, to lay institutional foundations for the ‘imagined community’ (dubbed ‘nation’), meant to take over the life-sustaining functions previously performed by households, parishes, craftsmen guilds and other institutions imposing community values on business, but now fallen from the weakening hands of local communities robbed of their executive power. Today we witness the ‘Business Secession Mark Two’: this time it is the turn of the *nation state* to be cast in the status of ‘households’ and ‘ramparts of parochialism’; to be frowned on, desecrated and charged as the modernization-impeding, irrational and economy-hostile relics.

The essence of the second secession is, just as the essence of the original one, the *divorce between power and politics*. In the course of its struggle to limit the social and cultural damages of the first secessions (culminating in the ‘glorious thirty’ years following the World War II), the emergent modern state managed to develop institutions of politics and governance made to the measure of the postulated merger of power (*Macht, Herrschaft*) and politics *inside* the territorial union of nation and state. The marriage of power and politics (or rather their cohabitation inside the nation-state) ends now in divorce, with power partly evaporating upward into the cyber-space, partly flowing sideways to the militantly and ruggedly a-political markets, and partly ‘subsidiarized’ (forcibly, ‘by decree’) to the ‘life politics’ of newly ‘enfranchized’ (again by decree) individuals.

The outcomes are very much the same as in the case of the original secession; only this time on an incomparably grander scale. Now, however, there is no equivalent of the postulated ‘sovereign nation-state’ in sight, able (or hoped to be able) to envisage (let alone to implement) a realistic prospect of taming the heretofore purely negative (destructive, institutions-dismantling, structures-melting) globalization, and re-capture the running amuck forces submitting them to an ethically-informed and politically-operated control. Thus far, at least... We have now *power free from politics*, and *politics devoid of power*. Power is already global; politics stays pitifully local. Territorial nation-states are local ‘law and order’ police precincts, as well as local dustbins and garbage-removal-and-recycling plants for the globally produced risks and problems.

There are valid reasons to suppose that on a globalized planet, on which the plight of everyone everywhere determines the plight of all the others while being determined by them, one can no longer assure and effectively protect democracy ‘separately’ – in isolation, in one country, or in a few selected countries only. The fate of freedom and democ-

racy in each land is decided and settled on the global stage; and only on that stage it can be defended with a realistic chance of a lasting success. It is no longer in the power of any singly acting state, however resourceful, heavily armed, resolute and uncompromising, to defend chosen values at home while turning its back to the dreams and yearnings of those outside its borders. But turning our backs is precisely what we, the Europeans, seem to be doing, when keeping our riches and multiplying them at the expense of the poor outside.

A few examples would suffice. If 40 years ago the income of the five richest per cent of the world population was thirty time higher than the income of the poorest five per cent, 15 years ago it was already sixty time higher, and by 2002 it reached the factor of 114.

As pointed out by Jacques Attali in *La voie humaine* (Attali 2004), half of the world trade and more than a half of global investment benefit just 22 countries which accommodate 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 per cent share of the global product – just about the same as the summary income of the three wealthiest men of the planet. 90 per cent of the total wealth of the planet remains in the hands of just one per cent of the planet inhabitants.

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.

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. As Joseph Stiglitz reminded the trade ministers preparing for their Mexico meeting (Stiglitz 2003), the average European subsidy per cow ‘matches the 2 dollars per day poverty level on which billions of people barely subsist’ – whereas America’s 4 billion dollars cotton subsidies paid to 25 thousand well-off farmers ‘bring misery to 10 million African farmers and more than offset the US’s miserly aid to some of the affected countries’. One hears occasionally Europe and America accusing each other publicly of ‘unfair agricultural practices’. But, Stiglitz observes, ‘neither side seems to be willing to make major concessions’ – whereas nothing short of a major concession would convince others to stop looking at the unashamed display of ‘brute economic power by the US and Europe’ as anything else but an effort to defend the privileges of the privileged, to protect the wealth of the wealthy and to serve their interests – which, in their opinion, boil down to more wealth and yet more wealth.

If they are to be lifted and re-focused at a level higher than the nation-state, the essential features of human solidarity (like the sentiments of mutual belonging and of shared responsibility for the common future, or the willingness to care for each other’s well-being and to find amicable and durable solutions of sporadically inflamed conflicts) need an *institutional* framework of opinion-building and will-formation. The European Union aims (and moves – however slowly and haltingly) towards a rudimentary or embryonic form of such institutional framework, encountering on its way, as most obtrusive obstacles, the existing nation-states and their reluctance to part with whatever is left of their once fully-fledged sovereignty. The current direction is difficult to plot unambiguously, and prognosticating its future turns is even more difficult in addition to being unwarranted, irresponsible and unwise.

We feel, guess, and suspect what need to be done. But we cannot know in which shape and form it eventually will. We can be pretty sure though that the ultimate shape will not be familiar. It will be – it must be – different from all we have got used to in

the past, in the era of nation building and nation-states' self-assertion. It can hardly be otherwise, as all political institutions currently at our disposal were made to the measure of the *territorial sovereignty* of the nation state; they resist stretching to the planetary, supra-national scale, and the political institutions serving the self-constitution of the planet-wide human community will not be and cannot be 'the same, only bigger'. If invited to a parliamentary session in London, Paris or Washington, Aristotle could perhaps approve of its procedural rules and recognize the benefits it offers to people whom its decisions affect, but would be baffled when told that what he has been shown was 'democracy in action'. It is not how he, who coined the term, visualized a 'democratic polis'...

We may well sense that the passage from 'inter-national' agencies and tools of action to 'universal' – global, planetary, humanity-wide – institutions must be and will be a *qualitative*, not merely a *quantitative* change. So we may ponder, worryingly, whether the presently available frames of 'international politics' may accommodate the practices of the emergent global polity or indeed serve as their incubator; the UN, for instance – briefed at its birth to guard and defend the undivided and unassailable sovereignty of the state over its territory? The *binding force* of *planetary* laws – can it depend on the (admittedly revocable!) agreements of sovereign members of the 'international community' to obey them?

* * *

At its earlier stage, modernity raised human integration to the level of *nations*. Before it finishes its job, modernity needs to perform, however, one more task, yet more formidable: raise human integration to the level of *humanity*, inclusive of the whole population of the planet. However hard and thorny that task may yet prove to be, it is imperative and urgent, because for a planet of universal inter-dependency it is, literally, a matter of (shared) life or (joint) death. One of the crucial condition of this task being earnestly undertaken and performed is the creation of a *global* equivalent of the 'social state' that completed and crowned the previous phase of modern history – that of the integration of localities and tribes into *nation-states*. At some point, therefore, resurgence of the essential core of the socialist 'active utopia' – the principle of collective responsibility and collective insurance against misery and bad fortune – would be indispensable, though this time on the global scale, with *humanity as a whole* as its object.

At the stage which the globalization of capitals and commodity trade has already reached, no governments, singly or even severally, are able to balance the books – and without the books having been balanced the continuation of the 'social state' practices effectively cutting at the roots of poverty at home is inconceivable. It is also difficult to imagine the governments able, singly or even severally, to impose limits on consumption and raise local taxation to the levels required by the continuation, let alone further expansion, of social services. Intervention in the markets is indeed badly needed, but will it be a *state* intervention if it does happen, and particularly if in addition to mere happening it will also bring tangible effects? It looks rather that it will be the work of *non-governmental*, state-independent and perhaps even state-dissident initiatives. Poverty and inequality, and more generally the disastrous side-effects and 'collateral damages' of global *laissez faire*, cannot be effectively dealt with separately from the rest of the planet in one corner of the globe (unless at a human cost that North Koreans or the Burmese have been forced to pay...). There is no decent way in which a single or several territorial states may 'opt out' from the global interdependency of humanity. 'Social state' is no

longer viable; only a 'social planet' may take over the functions that the social states tried, with varying success, to perform.

I suspect that the vehicles likely to take us to that 'social planet' are not the territorially sovereign states – but rather the admittedly extra-territorial and cosmopolitan non-governmental organizations and associations which reach directly to people in need above the heads and with no interference of the local 'sovereign' governments...

NOTE

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