The Face of the Other: Ethics and Intergroup Conflict

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> Je dis seulement qu'il y a sur cette terre des fléaux et des victimes et qu'il faut, autant qu'il est possible, refuser d'être avec le fléau.
>
> —Albert Camus, *La peste*[1]

Introduction

The present article derives from the need felt by a practitioner to pause and reflect, after twenty-eight years of diplomatic work, on the ethical foundations of international relations, taking conflict (the most ethically problematic, ethically charged aspect of the discourse on international matters) as the object of analysis.

But why, if this is the case, does the term "international" not appear in the title of the present article? Why is it replaced by "intergroup"? The reason is not superficially semantic, but has conceptual and even political roots on which I feel it necessary to linger briefly.

In the first place, it would be practically impossible, in the present world situation, to include or exclude concrete instances of conflict on the basis of the recognition or denial of the status of a nation-state to a specific group. This sort of scholastic dogmatism is unfortunately widely practiced, and not only by international lawyers, who at least have both practical and conventional justifications for applying such an abstract and unrealistic taxonomy. Let us take an example from another ethically charged area: human rights violations. Since "only states can violate human rights" (thus goes the conventional wisdom of most experts in the area), rebels, insurgents, (still) unsuccessful separatists are to be considered, when they commit outrages against people, common criminals, and not violators of human rights. The theoretical absurdity and practical awkwardness of this approach seems evident, and yet the rearguard battle for the maintenance of exclusive subjectivity for nation-states, though with growing difficulties, will probably continue for a while longer.

The issue, on the other hand, is not only one of categorization. The fact is that the definition of a collective entity as being or not being a nation-state has never been considered ethically neutral in its consequences. In terms of conventional morals state-sanctioned group violence has been traditionally not only exempted from ethical stigma but has been morally exalted. The "my country, right or wrong" of an American patriot is only the naive verbal expression of a principle that is sheer blasphemy from the point of view of ethics (if one admits that "partial ethics"

is a contradiction in terms), but that is not considered wrong within the conte of nationalist culture. In order to consider the devastating effects of such parti ethics on ethics as such, it is enough to apply the same claim of irrelevance, nonapplicability of ethical judgment, to other collective levels to which the indivi ual may belong: Hitler's *Mein Kampf* may carry as a subtitle "My race, right wrong"; Banfield's Southern Italian peasants' may have waved a banner with th inscription "My family, right or wrong"; Communists from Lenin to Pol Pot (b also from Bukharin to Neruda) believed, wrote, and stated "My party, right wrong"—and behaved accordingly.

This is indeed the root of all violent conflict of a group nature. This is how th deafness to the rights of others is sanctified, made mandatory. How the huma individual's tendency to refrain from shedding the blood of others is overcom by group solidarity and its concomitant rationalizations. The cause need not b noble—and besides, who is to judge among competing and mutually contradictor claims to nobility? It can even be the identity and the aggressive "honor" of soccer team.[3] More significant still, the arbitrariness of ethically discriminatin (alternatively legitimating and delegitimating according to personal, political, idec logical preference) not only between causes—some of which are said to justif violence—but also between "moral" group violence and morally stigmatized individ ual violence does not withstand critical scrutiny.

In international relations, the followers of the realist school (by and large th dominating school, especially among professionals in the field) have traditionall been allergic to ethical issues, postulating instead the functioning of a systen composed of intrinsically amoral subjects (nation-states) engaged in the disembod ied pursuit of rational goals. What is singular is that this apparently Machiavellia approach eludes the explicitly ethical focus of Machiavelli's entire theoretical con struction, a focus that has been analyzed with definitive clarity by Isaiah Berlin: Realists in international relations, in other words, have the tendency to hide thei own ethical preference in favor of the nation-state (their own brand of partia ethics) under a supposedly neutral, "extraethical" cover.

Since violent group conflict takes place at the frontier of different spheres o partial ethics, the object of a reflection on conflict should be the sphere of applicabil ity of moral codes rather than their specific, culturally, and historically deter mined contents.

The premise on which this article is founded is that beyond all territorial issues economic rivalries, mutual fears (necessary, but not sufficient conditions), violen conflicts are made possible only by the existence of partial ethics. The corollary i that only on the basis of nonpartial ethical approaches can differences and tension be managed without recourse to group violence.

In the search for such nonpartial ethics we have found as the main point o conceptual reference the works of Emmanuel Levinas, who has rightly been define as "the thinker of otherness *par excellence*."[5] When trying to understand organize group violence we are necessarily led to focus on ethical attitudes, and in particula

on the exclusion of the nonmember of the group—the Other—from the scope of applicability of ethical principles. Levinas places instead the face of the Other at the very center of all ethics, and even goes beyond this with a bold shift from ethics to ontology that makes the Other the necessary condition for the identity of the Self (for Levinas, identity without the Other is a contradiction in terms).

The appearance (the "epiphany," to use his term) of the face of the Other is for Levinas the starting point for ethics insofar as it functions as an inescapable call to responsibility. We reach here the total antithesis of the partial ethics that is so functional—so indispensable, one may say—to extragroup violence: reversing Cain's sinister disclaimer of responsibility, Levinas states that we are all our brother's keepers, and that our brother is the Other.

2. Identity and Narcissism

In this post–Cold War, end-of-the-Millennium disorienting and disoriented historical phase, it is fashionable to talk about the irrepressible urge of groups—having not only to cope with the destructuring of the previous international system, but also with the disturbing prospects of globalization—to find solace and reassurance in a strengthened identity as a prerequisite not only of psychic health but also of survival itself and of effective common action. At the same time, we are witnessing the horrors perpetrated by the violent pursuers of identity, from ethnic cleansing in former Yugoslavia to genocide in Rwanda. What are we then to think, in both political and ethical terms, about identity? Is it "bad" or "good"? Or perhaps—as many nationalists will tell you—are we just facing excesses, exaggerations (practiced by people who are for one reason or the other "savage") in something that is essentially good?[6]

Actually the problem is not a quantitative, but a qualitative one. Not all identity is conflict generating. On the contrary, identity is the prerequisite even of altruism and love and, in group terms, of all kinds of positive interaction in terms of exchange and solidarity. What is conflict generating is not identity per se, it is what can be called "narcissistic identity," the kind of identity whose affirmation, pursuit, and defense form an integral part of the essence of nationalism (and of its lesser but not less murderous counterparts ethnicism and tribalism).[7]

Why is this so? In the first place, because at the root of group identity lies . . . a lie, or—put in less blunt terms—a cultural artifact, an intellectual construct produced by elites that have been very aptly defined by Pierre Bourdieu as "professional producers of subjective visions of the social world."[8] It is commonly believed (especially by nondemocratic political leaders) that in order to maintain the cohesion of a group it is not enough to define its identity in objective terms: all those born on the same territory, all those sharing the same religion, all those speaking the same language.

To be fair, finding objective criteria for group identity is indeed problematic. If we go hunting for what have been defined as "crucial markers of identity"[9] and

take for instance language, we see that on that basis no identity of post-Yugoslav entities would have been possible, since they all speak Serbo-Croatian; the same would happen in the case of Rwandan Tutsis and Hutus, all speaking the same language: in this case, not even the "crucial marker" of religion would work, since both Hutus and Tutsis are Catholic. More than hypothetical racial differences, or no longer intact social ones, often the deadly "crucial marker"—as in the case of the 1994 genocide of Tutsis—ends up being the most bureaucratic of all artifacts: a mention of ethnicity on identity cards.

For this reason, there must be what has been called "the invention of tradition,"[10] there must be the creation of "imagined communities"[11] there has to be a "founding myth."[12] The group must have in all cases noble, ancient origins (divine, if possible); it must bask in the past glories of invincible ancestors or it must brood over the historical injustice visited upon it by a military defeat or an alien invasion depriving it of previous power and well-being. The point is that such an artificial, ideological path to identity is inherently conflict generating: in the first place, because by abandoning factual, falsifiable criteria it opens the door to controversy that has no possible solution but force; in the second place, because myths are by definition not objects of possible compromise, especially when your neighbors hold about the same territory and the same history incompatible myths of their own[13]; in the third place, because the positive self-stereotyping that is an essential component of this narcissistic identity inevitably requires a negative stereotyping of the Other, of the neighbor. But, most of all, because narcissistic group identity, by making one's own group's value incomparably higher, qualitatively incommensurable with that of any other group, ends up denying the ethical relevance of the Other, i.e., expels the other from the scope of applicability of moral rules. Thus, when real or perceived conflicts of interests, real or perceived threats originate from another group, the human individual, who as a rule *abhorret a sanguine*, reacts together with the group in ways that are totally detached from the ethical standards that she or he would uphold as an individual without seeing, as a rule, any contradiction between being "a good person" and a ferocious soldier for the group (be it the nation state or the tribe).

We find in Nietzsche a description of this dichotomy of behavior—which Nietzsche finds totally natural, and not contradictory at all—that deserves to be quoted *in extenso*:

> The same men who are held so sternly in check *inter pares* by custom, respect, usage, gratitude, and even more by mutual suspicion and jealousy, and who on the other hand in their relations with one another show themselves so resourceful in consideration, self-control, delicacy, loyalty, pride, and friendship—once they go outside, where the strange, the *stranger* is found, they are not much better than uncaged beasts of prey. There they savor a freedom from all social constraints, they compensate themselves in the wilderness for the tension engendered by protracted confinement and enclosure within the peace of society, they go *back* to the innocent conscience of the beast of prey, as triumphant monsters who perhaps emerge

> from a disgusting procession of murder, arson, rape, and torture, exhilarated and undisturbed of soul, as if it were no more than a students' prank, convinced that they have provided the poets with a lot more material for song and praise.[14]

Moreover, the tragic destiny of narcissistic group identity (like the tragic destiny of narcissistic individual identity), is that by denying the Other it ends up not giving confidence but disorienting, not building but destroying identity, since in a vacuum there can be no identity.[15]

The result is inevitably violence. In the end, identity is no longer sought in the hypothetical common blood shared within the group but in the real alien blood that is spilled outside it.

3. Erasing the Face of the Other

Iver Neumann has written that foreign policy is about "making the Other," i.e., nourishing ontological enmity toward those who are external to the nation-state.[16] The effect of the presence of an external enemy on internal cohesion of any group—not necessarily with reference to a nation-state—is in fact part of politicological conventional wisdom. It is a point that would be hard to challenge, but one that is in need of some more refined definition.

If we want to try to explain from an ethical point of view the phenomenon of bellicose foreign policy or bellicose "group policy" it is not enough to stop at the "creation of the Other." Not all identity, not every self-definition is necessarily conflict generating and murderous. What we have to explain is *"la transformation—ou la non-transformation—du voisin en assassin."*[17] Besides, what is at stake here is not an attempt to explain individual violence that finds its roots in personal passions, desires, hate, greed. On the contrary, it is significant that the mechanisms of the two kinds of violent action (individual and group) are different and manifest themselves differently in the same individuals, who may have a radically different propensity to have recourse to group versus individual violence. To take one example, analysts of the Holocaust from Hannah Arendt to Susan Zuccotti have been impressed by the reluctance of individual Italians (even true believers in Fascism, even soldiers in war zones) to participate in the roundup of Jews, and their propensity, on the contrary, to give them assistance in escaping the Nazi machine of deportation and extermination.[18] Now, it would be a mistake to believe that those same individual Italians were less prone than individual Germans participating in the Holocaust to exercise violence, if we conceive it in individual and not group terms. On the contrary, very probably those same Italians would be much more likely than the individual "ordinary" Germans examined in studies on Nazi violence[19] to kill an unfaithful spouse or an obnoxious neighbor, but found it absolutely absurd and inhuman to participate in killing or even just harming unknown persons because of their belonging to an abstract category.

The point is that whereas individual violence is concrete, often intimate, group violence is by definition abstract. The Other—for the purpose of organized group

violence—is not a real individual, whom you might in concrete terms and for specific reasons hate or love, but an abstraction. Xavier Bougarel's essay on Bosnian traditions of interethnic relations[20] supplies some very interesting elements. The analysis is not based upon an idyllic image of interethnic coexistence, but on the contrary reflects the awareness of the recurrent conflictuality that is historically inherent in the cohabitation of different groups on the same territory. What the article says is that in multiethnic communities coexistence is the fragile but possible fruit of conscious mechanisms of rapprochement, a sort of systematic "good neighbor policy" finding its concretization in almost ritualized inclusion of the "different" neighbor, thus bringing about familiarization and appeasement, in intimate ceremonies like weddings or funerals. Again: real individual neighbors are not necessarily loved, but they are loved or hated for concrete, not abstract reasons. And especially they are not hated en masse. On the contrary, in order to apply group violence to the neighbor as belonging to a category, the concrete individual's face has to be erased[21]: the person must become an abstraction.

Here is where the role of violent, militaristic political leaders comes in. Here is where group violence loses its alleged "naturalness" to become a patent political creation. Differences as such are not sufficient to break through the resistance that average human beings feel when confronted with the use of group violence. One still needs what has been called "the reinforcement of differences"[22] and, even more important, the erasing of the face of the Other. The modalities and the degrees of sophistication of such processes can differ, but ethically and politically they are functionally the same.

Coexistence of different groups is indeed problematic and fragile, but at the root of violent group conflict (not simple tensions, not simple divergences, not simple controversies) we almost inevitably find the conscious, systematic, intellectually dishonest endeavor of political leaders aimed at convincing the group of: (a) its own uniqueness and nobility; (b) the despicable, treacherous nature of the rival group, stereotyped in abstract terms that leave no space for individual difference and exception; (c) the objective nature of certain group interests defined as "unavoidable goals" combined with the denial that—as Hoffmann writes—"there are . . . always choices"[23] and that they are also determined by subjective values and not only by objective interests; and (d) the absolutely "zero-sum" nature of the rivalry often to the point of mutually exclusive survival (*mors tua, vita mea*). According to such terrorist technique, all issues (the use of a name or a flag, a few square miles of territory, the bank of a river or the top of a mountain) are presented as "vital" to the very survival of the group. To use Thomas Nagel's simile,[24] "the last eclair on the dessert tray" is always described, in nationalist propaganda, as "the last life jacket for your own child."

With this last point we reach a very crucial aspect of the ethical discourse: the incompatibility of ethics—any ethics—with the absolutization of a primordial striving for survival, what Spinoza calls *conatus essendi*.[25]

Here we are not just facing a variant of possible ethical options, but something much more radical. In fact, whereas ethics is by definition exclusively human

conatus essendi (i.e., the striving for the preservation of being) is, according to Spinoza, a property of "things" in general. In other words, if *conatus essendi*—a naturalistic law on a par with the laws of thermodynamics—is the only or the absolutely overwhelming guiding principle for action (both individual and group) we are in a dimension where only causality reigns. Actions may not be traced back to the subject accomplishing them by the process of "imputation," the necessary connection to responsibility. This evidently makes all ethics—and also legality[26]—inconceivable.

The tension between causality and imputation (i.e., between necessity and freedom) is another essential element for the definition of the field of ethics. One could say that, just as in premodern cultures even causation of natural events tends to be interpreted in terms of imputation and human responsibility (magic and witchcraft)[27] in the postmodern world human action tends to be "naturalized" and read in terms of causality. In the former instance the ethical discourse is distorted by hallucination, absurdity, and arbitrary assignation of guilt; in the latter, the universalization of causality to cover human action means the end of responsibility, in other words, of the very possibility of ethics. Only a never-resolved tension between causality (creating the framework, the limits, and the conditioning of human action) and imputation (allowing the attribution of responsibility) can leave space for a complex ethical discourse in which causality justifies compassion, but imputation legitimizes judgment.

Opting for an ethical approach means, in essence, opting for Humanity against mere Being. Emmanuel Levinas states this point with great clarity:

> Ontology—that is, the intelligibility of being—only becomes possible when ethics, the origin of all meaning, is taken as the starting point. Humanity must irrupt into Being: behind the perseverance, in being, of the beings or worlds—of men, too, insofar as they are themselves simple worlds—behind their *conatus essendi* or their identity, affirming its own ego or egoism, there must figure, somewhere, in some form or other, the responsibility of *the one for the others*.[28]

The primitive, vulgar brand of politics that puts the survival of the group as *suprema ratio* can boast noble politicological ancestors, and is often the vulgarized, cheap version of serious political works (just like the intellectual roots of Hitler's *Mein Kampf* can be found in much more respectable nineteenth- and early twentieth-century German theory). One could call such an intellectual tendency—cutting across epochs, countries, cultures—"reductionist political theory." Facing the complexity, the multicausality, the contradictory nature of the behavior of humans in groups, reductionist political theory finds a monocausal explanation in the friend/enemy dyad, to which all other aspects are subordinated. Thus violent conflict becomes "natural," and in a sort of perennial *jihad* of all versus all, peace is seen as a mere armistice of a temporary and somewhat artificial nature. Of course, this pseudorealistic approach is a way of smuggling in one's own ideological preference under the guise of an objective discourse, and yet if we want to refute it we will

have to prove not that conflict is not possible (a patently absurd statement), but that it is not more "natural" than coexistence among different groups. And we will also have to linger on the conditions of coexistence, not only in terms of security, economics, territory, and politics, but also of ethics.

In other words, we will have to deal with the ethical premises of intergroup coexistence.

4. The Ethical Premises of Intergroup Coexistence

A. Away from Dialectics

The dialectical mode of thinking is shared far beyond the narrow circle of Hegelians (both "right-wing" and "left-wing," including Marxists). It is almost conventional wisdom—even for people with no philosophical training or concern—to believe that "stages" have to be "overcome," that historical reality proceeds through the spirallike ascension defined by the triad thesis/antithesis/synthesis.

The dialectical mode is, however, a conflictual mode, and it is conflictual in a very special way. Dialectical thinking tends to deny the right of existence of whatever—and, one could add, whoever—is "overcome." Actually, as the end point—the "final stage" in both Hegel's and Marx's philosophy reveals, dialectics originates from a nostalgia for Unity, a striving for fusion that eliminates alterity, and from the refusal of contradiction, seen as a temporary imperfection of reality (especially human reality), that has to be eventually eliminated in the framework of a Higher Reality (Fukuyama's overly famous "end of history" is but a younger and less brilliant offspring of the same family).[29]

Paradoxically, the rejection of group violence as an inevitable mode of human existence is not compatible with visions of a conflictless "Kingdom of Heaven" (or classless society), but only with a philosophical interpretation of difference and contrast as irreducible. Coexistence of different cultures, different groups, is compatible only with the abandonment of a dialectical mode of thinking and its replacement with a "dialogical" one.[30] Only if "thesis" and "antithesis" can never be subsumed and annulled into a higher "synthesis," but are instead destined to constitute the *permanent poles of a noneliminable tension*,[31] controversy and contrast between human beings (individuals and groups) do not need to be necessarily turned into zero-sum violence, into the denial and annihilation of the Other.

The goal cannot be, realistically, one of "perpetual peace"[32], an unrealistic and also dangerous goal. When facing the reality of conflict, however, we should instead proceed by degrees, first by distinguishing contrast and difference (inevitable) from violent conflict (not inevitable). But then, facing the possibility of violent conflict, we should distinguish between types of conflict that are different not only in magnitude and material consequences, but also from an ethical point of view. It can be said that contemporary intergroup conflict is a much more direct challenge to ethics than classical international conflict—which recognized the adver-

sary's right to exist—ever was. The victim of organized violence, today, is often someone with a real and familiar face. Violence, in this case, is the result of the urge to get rid of an intolerable familiar but different face, a face that creates a permanent tension one is unable to withstand. It is, in short, the path to a narcissistic, if not autistic, synthesis where the Self (the collective self) is alone and unchallenged because the Other has been eliminated.

B. Away from Myths

Conflict requires bad philosophy, but it also requires bad history. More specifically, it requires what can be called a "pathology of memory." Conflict-prone groups (and especially political leaders who want to foster such proneness) manifest historical memory that is pathological, simultaneously, in excess and in default. The former for one's own glories (all princes)[33] or sufferings (all martyrs) and the latter for one's neighbor's dignity or rights. It would be enough to leaf through books used to teach history in our countries in not too distant times (and through history books presently used in countries that have not developed our more recent qualms and self-restraint) to gather an endless anthology of sometimes hilarious self-serving travesties of factual history.[34] The fact is that, being historical sufferings, injustices, horrors, and victimizations only too real, there is only an *embarras du choix* for anyone wanting to justify present injustice and violence practiced with past injustice and violence suffered. It is indeed a game anyone may play. The trouble is that just as abused individuals have a tendency to repeat as victimizers the same acts of violence of which they were the victims[35], there may be a tendency of "abused groups" (or—which is the same—those that convince themselves that they were historically abused) to exert violence on others whenever they gather sufficient power.[36]

In any case, the capacity of individuals to elaborate self-justificatory mechanisms that make collective violence not only admissible, but "sacred" is astonishingly boundless: in *War and Peace* Tolstoy quotes Napoleon's *Memoirs* in which the by then defeated and exiled Emperor, musing on his Russian adventure, claims (with Orwellian shamelessness) that his invasion was a *"guerre pacifique."*[37]

And yet historical distortion is not inevitable. It is enough to consider the post–World War II evolution of the reciprocal image of "traditional enemies" as the Germans and the French or the Italians and the Austrians to come to the conclusion that history (and the teaching of history) need not be pathological, but can be developed critically to include a healthy and honest (if not "objective") recount of rights and wrongs, glories, and miseries, violence practiced, and violence suffered.

C. Away from Narcissism

Ethics requires accepting that "one is for the other what the other is for oneself" and that "there is no exceptional place for the subject."[38] The same can be translated

in group terms, leading to the recognition that there is no exceptional place, on moral grounds, for one's own: be it nation, ethnos, gender, race, class, party, or religion.

In other words, ethics requires impartiality.[39] There is no doubt, on the other hand, that in practice this is an extremely difficult endeavor. Suffice it to say that Levinas himself, when dealing with the State of Israel, has given ethically privileged status to "his own," i.e., Israel, that he refuses to consider it as "a state like any other."[40] It is the everyday experience of all human beings to be confronted with choices in which they are almost inevitably led to favor their own. And yet, the point about the essential ethical value of impartiality cannot, and should not be abandoned. In the first place, there is a substantial difference between favoring one's own by exercising the discretionary margin of choice that exists in most ethically relevant situations and favoring one's own by breaking ethically relevant rules and thereby harming others. If I give my only apple to my child instead of to another one I exercise my discretionary margin of choice. The same is true for the dramatic situation envisaged by Barry, in which an individual is confronted with the choice of saving either his own wife or another woman from a burning building.[41] But if I cut a line to a water fountain in order to let my child drink before the other children in line—or, on a more dramatic level, if I load my spouse onto a lifeboat reserved for children—I go beyond such margin and infringe upon someone else's right to see a rule respected. In the second place, what is especially dangerous in the partiality exercised in favor of one's own tribe, nation, or ethnos is not just its practice, but its theorization. No mother would theorize that her child, qua hers, has a preferential right to drink before the other children; and this works as a built-in limitation to possible claims and to the violence that, facing resistance, can be put to work in order to make them effective. But when one speaks of "morally sacred" rights of a community, such restraint is nowhere to be seen. The fact of partiality is transformed into the right, even the duty, of partiality and from that the step to the use of violence is a very short one.

What does this have to do with narcissism? If narcissism is the denial not of the physical reality of others, but of their moral reality (i.e., of their relevance in terms of our ethical choices), then ethical partiality is tendentially narcissistic, insofar as it eliminates the Other as a moral subject, leaving the Self—and "one's own," actually an extension of the self—[42] as the only morally relevant reality. When—as Buber says—the Thou has been turned into an It, the Self is alone. Narcissistically so.[43] Contrary to what Levinas says, one can actually remove or cancel the face of the Other. Only thus, as a matter of fact, can the Other be killed as an abstraction for collective reasons and in a collective, organized mode of violence.

But how can the face of the Other be brought back against all narcissistic blindness? In cultural-pedagogic terms, one could point at intercultural experiences and initiatives, be they student exchanges or other ways of familiarizing the individual (especially the young individual) with the Other. In political terms, we are talking, for example, about what is called "preventive diplomacy" or "postconflict

peace building." One could say indeed that both instances should be aimed at such construction or reconstruction of the face of the Other. And yet, in order to avoid all overly optimistic, *illuministe* illusions, one should not think that knowing the Other is enough to prevent the erasing of his face and the narcissistic concentration on oneself and one's own. Tzvetan Todorov, in analyzing one of the historically more significant encounters with the Other, the discovery of America, has clearly and convincingly pointed out that knowledge ("the epistemic level") is only one component of the recognition of the Other (one could venture to say that cognition does not necessarily imply recognition), to which one should add the value judgment ("the axiological level") and the action of getting closer or distancing in relation to the other ("the praxeological level").[44] But if this is so, then, though we have clearly defined the problem, we cannot hope to find easy solutions. We will have to conclude that the ethical urge (and its devastating eclipses) remain largely mysterious, or alternatively say—which actually amounts to the same thing—that the production of ethical phenomena is subject to such a plurality of causal elements that it is practically impossible to decipher them in their origins, evolution, and possible reversal.

D. For an Ethics of Responsibility

Recognition of the Other is the essential, antinarcissistic "passage to ethics." Yet, it does not completely define the essence of ethics. Again, let us go back to the lesson of Emmanuel Levinas: *L'Autre me regarde,* in the double meaning of "looks at me" and "concerns me." The relationship that is thus established is not just one of acceptance, recognition, or tolerance, respect. It is one of responsibility.

Having said that the concept of responsibility is an essential component of the ethical discourse, we should also be aware of its possible distortions.[45] Responsibility, as a matter of fact, can be the last refuge of the political scoundrel, in the sense that it can supply a handy all-purpose justification for ethically horrendous action, especially in matters of peace and war. Levinas's responsibility for the Other is the exact opposite of that "responsibility" to the nation-state or to the group that is employed as a justification of injustice and violence.

E. Ethics and Legality

Having said that ethics (ethics that inhibits the recourse to group violence) requires cognizing and recognizing the face of the Other, making the Other concrete and not abstract—we should be very much aware of the fact that there are some faces we will never see. The problem of the use of group violence, in other words, is not only limited to the violence used literally against the neighbor (see the cases of Bosnia or Rwanda), but also the violence visited upon distant peoples by our own group (the case of America's Vietnam War).

How do we deal with the anonymous, distant Other? The ethical premise of our refraining from using or condoning violence can remain the same. Yet it will not

take us far enough, and risks establishing a perverse proportionality between the geographical and cultural remoteness of a specific Other, the possibility to really *regarder son visage* and the degree of applicability of ethical standards. (Colonial violence was a clear example of this proportionality.)

For an orientation in the solution of this problem we can find interesting guidance in Levinas:

> Indeed, if there were only two of us in the world, I and one other, there would be no problem. The other would be completely my responsibility. But in the real world there are many others. When others enter, each of them external to myself, problems arise. Who is closest to me? Who is the Other? Perhaps something has already occurred between them. We must investigate carefully. Legal justice is required. There is need for a state.[46]

Thus the relevant pronouns are not only "I" and "Thou," but also "They." For a complete ethical cosmos, one needs to start from the freedom of the Self (an essential prerequisite of all moral action), but then move on to a respect of the "Thou" based on recognition and leading to solidarity. But there is a third component: for "Them," for those who are inevitably "third parties," since they do not concretely come into contact with us, we have to apply rules, we have to be guided by justice. All law, including international law, belongs to this level.[47]

What is important is that these three levels be constantly interconnected. Let us reflect, to prove this point, on the possible consequences of their disconnectedness. What is freedom of the Self without respect of the Other or justice? It is very significant, here, to see that the most radical defenders of extreme, nihilistic individualism—from Nietzsche[48] to Bataille—utilize a term that is characteristic of the discourse on international affairs: *sovereignty*.[49] Like the sovereign state, the sovereign individual is self-referential even in the realm of ethics. Like the sovereign state, the sovereign individual claims the right to kill in order to pursue specific ends.[50]

But what is the recognition of the Other without justice? Here we have to go back to the essential concept of impartiality. The Other that cannot be the object of a direct relationship, that cannot be "individualized," risks being relegated to the outskirts of moral responsibility. Risks being treated unfairly vis-à-vis the more immediate, more concrete Other. Only justice can be a sort of moral safety net allowing for the inevitable limitations of concrete experience, for the objective difficulties we encounter in the search for the face of the Other.

But, also: what is justice—what is the Rule—without the freedom of the "I," if not ethically precarious submission to rulers? And what is it without the concrete "Thou"? Justice without solidarity, and without compassion, turns into the opposite of ethics. Since the writing and the application of the rule require a system, specifically a nation-state, then abstract justice, the abstract rule, can be (has been, historically) the path leading to violence against those who are "outside the rule." If not checked, relativized by the "I" and the "Thou," the rule embodied in the state is indeed one of the mainsprings of group violence: violence that is abolished

internally by the application of the rule and that is discharged externally, since the applicability of the rule (and of the justice that the rule is supposed to apply) is only coextensive to the legal system, that is, to the state. In this respect it would be of course absolutely absurd to maintain that German philosophy and political science (from Hegel to Schmitt, i.e., from the absolutization of the state to the centrality of the friend/enemy dichotomy) "produced" the Nazi phenomenon: but we can say that that philosophy and that political science were fully compatible with it.

I have said that group violence requires a narcissistic mindframe. One could also put it differently: violence requires *idolatry*,[51] meaning the absolutization of the group, its rights, its needs, its status, its glory. And in our historical times this absolutization is vested upon the nation-state, both in its defense and furthering when it exists and in its creation when it does not. Conversely, only a plurality of allegiances (therefore a plurality of identities) can be compatible with a nonidolatric view of the nation-state and of the group in general.[52]

To sum up, ethics and justice are distinct but interconnected: distinct because ethics needs a concrete Other, whereas justice is impersonal; because ethics is substantial, justice procedural; because ethics is independent from institutions, while justice can only be applied in their framework; because, as pointed out above, ethics and justice need each other as a limit.

On the one hand, we must avoid the paradox of "unjust ethics": not only the arbitrary privilege given, against justice, to a more proximate Other, but also the injustice of total self-sacrifice, forgetting that, as Jankelevitch says, justice must be even for oneself.[53] Without justice as an external limit, ethics can indeed go to the extreme of stating "The Other, right or wrong."

On the other hand, we must avoid the perversion of "unethical justice." It has to be noted, here, that this expression is not an oxymoron, since the term "justice" is used in this article as equivalent to "legality," and not with the moral connotation that is frequently attributed to it. Opposing justice to legality is just another way of shifting the former term into the field of ethics, and—I feel—of confusing the issue.

How does all this relate specifically to the problem of intergroup (and international) conflict? Both ethics and legality (justice) should be addressed in this context. In the first place, insofar as possible, the goal of those who want to prevent conflict should be one of the "ethicization" of relations, implying the attempt to shift from the abstract to the concrete, the effort to "give face" to the Other through political and cultural means. But if this is in part possible in the field of intergroup relations, once we shift to international relations ethicization runs the risk of becoming a well-meaning utopia. The main effort in this case can only be one of gradual "juridicization," not meaning of course the denial or ignorance of the realities of power, but the channeling and limitation of that power within rules, and necessarily also within institutions. The realistic goal cannot be that of "world government," and even less of "world democracy": power differentials will continue

to weigh upon the different capacity of individual states in terms of rule setting; what is to be hoped is that gradually they will not affect the equal submission of all to rules. The latter, and not the former, is the real prerequisite of legality.

And yet not even in the case of international relations is ethics out of the picture. Even imagining the consolidation of legality beyond the borders of individual states—in other words, the strengthening of international law—ethics would remain as a necessary counterweight to pure legality. In terms of substantiality versus formality, individuality versus abstraction, or compassion versus intransigence. For example, sanctions imposed on a country by the Security Council on the basis of Chapter VII of the Charter are certainly "just"—but it remains to be seen case by case, in the light of actual consequences on concrete human beings and not just governments, whether they are ethically defensible. Or, again: no one could question the legitimacy, under international law, of the sinking of the Argentinian cruiser *Belgrano* by the British during the Falklands War, but it definitely was something that could (and was) questioned from an ethical standpoint.

Conclusions

Though, as we have seen, a complete ethical cosmos requires the three aspects I have mentioned (I for freedom; Thou for solidarity; They for the rule), one can say that the specific realm of ethics resides in the moving and contested territory lying between absolute freedom and absolute rule. Both absolute freedom and absolute justice (the absolutely sovereign individual and the absolutely sovereign state), in fact, are nonethical in their essence and violent in their potential.[54] Ethical individuals as well as ethical coexistence of groups require therefore a permanent, insoluble, nondialectic tension between the two polarities of freedom on one side and the rule on the other.

This theoretical approach has a practical corollary. If our agenda is strengthening the possibility of ethically inspired (or at least ethically compatible) life in a given society and/or intergroup relations, then our action should not inevitably and systematically orient itself on either one of the two poles (freedom/the rule) Instead, it should operate in a compensating mode in order to prevent either one from prevailing to the point of unduly invading and erasing the exposed and precarious territory of ethics.

Concretely, in situations of despotism and imperial domination (i.e., where an overwhelming absolute rule eliminates the possibility for ethical action) we should enlarge the territory of ethics by giving weight to freedom; where, on the contrary, anarchy destroys any possibility of ethical behavior by universalizing murderous sovereignty (both within a community or nation-state and in the international field) then ethics can be rescued only by working for the application of rules, i.e., for the strengthening of local, state, and international institutions.

But the ethical discourse can be developed following yet another bipolar approach. Vladimir Jankelevitch locates the territory of ethics in the space between

absolute love—self-denial to the point of self-destruction—and absolute being, totally indifferent to ethics ("A being totally deprived of love is not even a being; a love without being is not even a love"). Only an unstable tension between these two poles can allow for an ethical dimension whose goal, according to Jankelevitch, is attaining the utmost level of love compatible with a minimal preservation of being (*"le plus d'amour possible pour le moins d'être possible"*),[55] in other words, striving for "ontological minimum" and "ethical maximum."[56]

The implications of this approach for international (and intergroup) relations are quite evident: ethics does not necessarily imply absolute pacifism (which, in the presence of an aggressor, might mean the end of being itself); nationalism or tribalism are not "ethics-compatible" because they posit the existence and interest of the group in maximalistic, not minimalistic terms (so that being destroys the possibility of love, compassion, and humanity: in other words, destroys the ethical dimension). In concrete terms, ethically compatible group policies must steer a difficult and changing course—not lending itself to schematic formulas and prescriptions—between the need for survival (being) and the moral imperative of the recognition of the Other (love).

We can thus conclude by saying that, though admitting the mysterious complexities of ethical (or nonethical) behavior of humans both as individuals and as members of a group, we are not condemned, when facing intergroup violence, to fatalism and passivity (that some like to call realism).

In spite of all the intricacies of complex causation of human behavior, indeed the ethical premises of intergroup coexistence are far from obscure: certainly not obscure enough to relieve us of both political and moral responsibility.

Notes

1. "The only thing I want to say is that on this earth there are scourges and there are victims, and —that one must, insofar as possible, refuse to be on the side of the scourge."
2. Edward C. Banfield, *The Moral Basis of a Backward Society* (Chicago: The Free Press, 1958).
3. "People fight because people like to fight. Soccer is the vehicle they use because they can justify violence as the defense of their team, town, or reputation." ("Hooliganism: An Ancient, and Still Lucrative, English Export?", *International Herald Tribune*, May 30, 1996.
4. Isaiah Berlin, "The Originality of Machiavelli," in: *Against the Current. Essays in the History of Ideas* (London: The Hogarth Press, 1980), pp. 25–79. Berlin argues very convincingly that Machiavelli's view of politics was not amoral, but was centered, instead, on a "higher morality" placing the supreme interest of the *res publica* above all other considerations.
5. Iver B. Neumann, *Collective Identity Formation: Self and Other in International Relations*. European University Institute, Florence, Working Paper RSC no. 95/36.
6. Nationalists have the amusing tendency to consider good only their own nationalism, which they often like to call "patriotism" to distinguish it from the nationalism of the Other, usually deplorable and threatening. On the dubious nature of the distinction between "good" nationalism and "bad" nationalism see Pierre Hassner, *La violence et la paix. De la bombe atomique au nettoyage ethnique* (Paris: Editions Esprit, 1995), pp. 297–98. One is tempted to suggest that the only possible distinction could be made, in clinical terms, between "mild" and "acute" nationalism.

7. Neumann, op. cit., p. 20; Gilles Lipovetsky, *L'ère du vide: Essais sur l'individualisme contemporain* (Paris: Gallimard, 1983). Lipovetsky, who explicitly mentions "collective narcissism" (p. 21), describes the "more and more narrow feeling of belonging to a group and the parallel increase of exclusion" (p. 93); he adds that "at the end of History we find Hobbes's state of nature," with "narcissism advancing in step with ever more barbaric and conflictive human relationships" (p. 99). Analyzing the roots of contemporary nationalism Michael Ignatieff has spoken of "the narcissism of minor differences" (*The Needs of Strangers* [London: The Hogarth Press, 1984], pp. 130–31).
8. Quoted by Valery Tishkov, *Nationalities and Conflicting Ethnicity in Post-Communist Russia*, United Nations Research Institute for Social Development, Discussion Paper DP50, March 1994, p. 2. Tishkov (p. 6) speaks also of "illusions that see theoretically constructed classifications as objectively existing groups of people or as laws of social life."
9. Neumann, op. cit., pp. 4–6.
10. Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger (eds.), *The Invention of Tradition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992).
11. Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities. Reflections on the Origins and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso Press, 1983).
12. Eric Hobsbawm, "The New Threat to History," *The New York Review of Books*, December 16, 1995, pp. 62–64. On the flimsiness of "objective" criteria to define ethnicity, Colin Renfrew has stated: "How precisely would one define a Serb living in Bosnia? And what if he were a Muslim by religion? How, precisely, would one define the ethnic identity of the Muslim population of Bosnia? Should the inhabitants of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia call themselves Macedonians? It is my point that these, and others of this kind, are difficult questions, which cannot be answered satisfactorily in historical terms. Even when we understand properly the genetic, linguistic, cultural, and religious background, there is no good answer, because ethnicity is a matter of self-identity as much as a historical fact. It is to a large extent a matter of choice. To claim otherwise, and to place the responsibility for the decisions of today upon claims of historical truth is a fraudulent undertaking." ("The Roots of Ethnicity: Archeology, Genetics and the Origins of Europe," Conference at the Accademia dei Lincei (Rome), January 8, 1993, unpublished paper, p. 3.) Tishkov (op. cit., p. 4) expresses the same concept as follows: "Nationality or ethnic identity is not an innate human trait, although it is most often perceived as such. Nations are also created by people, by the efforts of intellectuals and by the state's political will. 'Nation' is an in-group definition: it is not possible to assign it strictly scientific or legal formulae. This also concerns the more mystical category of 'ethnos.'" Tishkov (p. 9) also quotes Karl Popper: "The attempt to uncover certain 'natural' state borders and, accordingly, to see the state as a 'natural' element leads to the principle of the nations state and to the romantic fictions of nationalism, racialism and tribalism. However, this principle is not 'natural,' and the very thought that natural elements such as nation, linguistic or racial groups do exist is simply fabrication." See also I. William Zartman, "Self and Space: Negotiating a Future from the Past." Paper presented to the International Studies Association, San Diego, CA., April 1996.
13. "The list of injustices committed against ethnic groups in the former Soviet Union is long and extremely painful. Therapy for past traumas may necessarily be lasting and costly, especially if resources and energy are directed to reconcile the past and to return the 'norm' of existence once lost. For some groups and leaders this might mean the moment before the collapse of the Soviet Union or before 1917 (groups of Russian national patriots), for others, before the start of massive deportations (the Ingush, Volga Germans, Crimean Tatars, and others), for a third group, before the prewar annexations (the Baltic peoples, Moldovans), for a fourth group before the Civil War and Red Terror (the Transcaucasian peoples), for a fifth group, before their inclusion in the Russian empire and colonization (the peoples of the Volga region), and for a seventh group, before the period of ancient state formations or even ancient cultures. In any case, the ideal is represented by that historical period from which the most arguments in favor of the currently desirable territorial borders, political status, and cultural conditions can be derived. The further one looks for the roots in the past, the more mythologized the concepts of 'historical territories,' 'nation state' and 'cultural traditions' become." (Tishkov, op. cit., p. 8) "In the same historicist rationale heard from Sarajevo to Tajikistan, the people defend their land-grab. 'It belonged to us once, whether 50 or 500 years ago, so we are taking it back now.'" (Alexandra Tuttle, "Europe's Other War: A View from Kelhajar," the *Wall Street Journal*, May 18, 1993)

14. Friedrich Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morals*, in *Basic Writings of Nietzsche*, Walter Kaufmann (ed.) (New York: Modern Library, 1968), p. 476. Alain Finkielkraut, in his book on Levinas, writes something that could be considered a direct answer to Nietzsche: "Realism is not realist; it is simplistic: it eludes the problem of Evil by conferring upon it the status of a natural datum. Now, in man it is not nature that is homicidal or barbaric, but the aspiration to return to nature. Facing the Other, my life is indicted, the world is no longer my own home, there comes about an obligation that pushes back the sweet duty of preservation and flourishing of the self. Thus my existence is condemned not to find a justification in itself. Through Evil I appeal against this sentence. I express simultaneously both the resentment and nostalgia prompted by its severity. Nostalgia for a life that is no longer moral, but organic, that obeys only to its own internal dynamic. Nostalgia for *élan vital* and irresponsibility. Dream of a return to nature." (Alain Finkielkraut, *La sagesse de l'amour* [Paris: Gallimard, 1984], p. 146).
15. Lipovetsky, op. cit., p. 108. Or, as Neumann writes (op. cit., p. 10) quoting Mikhail Bakhtin's "dialogism": "'The Other' has the status of an epistemological as well as an ontological necessity, without which there can be no thinking self."
16. Neumann, op. cit., p. 18.
17. Xavier Bougarel, "Voisinage et crime intime," *Confluences Méditerranée* (Paris), n. 13, Hiver 1994–95, p. 75.
18. Hannah Arendt, *Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil* (New York: Viking, 1963); Susan Zuccotti, *The Italians and the Holocaust* (New York: Basic Books, 1987).
19. Daniel J. Goldhagen, *Hitler's Willing Executioners: Ordinary Germans and the Holocaust* (New York: Knopf, 1996); Christopher R. Browning, *Ordinary Men: Reserve Police Battalion 101 and the Final Solution in Poland* (New York: Harper Collins, 1992); Robert Jay Lifton, *The Nazi Doctors* (New York: Basic Books, 1986).
20. Bougarel, op. cit. *Komsiluk*, a Turkish-origin term meaning good neighborliness, is the term used in Bosnian culture to describe this mode of intergroup coexistence.
21. Finkielkraut, op. cit., pp. 164–65.
22. Stuart Hampshire, *Morality and Conflict* (Cambridge, Ma.: Harvard University Press, 1983), p. 175.
23. Hoffmann, op, cit., p. 10.
24. Thomas Nagel, *Equality and Partiality* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), p. 24.
25. Spinoza, *Ethics*, Part III (Of the Origin and Nature of Feelings), Propositions VI, VII, VIII and IX. French translation: *L'Ethique* (Paris: Gallimard, 1954), pp. 189–91.
26. On the essential replacement of causality by imputation for the very concept of law see Hans Kelsen, *Pure Theory of Law* (Berkeley, CA.: University of California Press, 1978).
27. Lipovetsky, op. cit., p. 262.
28. Emmanuel Levinas, "Prayer without Demand," in *The Levinas Reader*, Sean Hand (ed.) (Cambridge, MA.: Blackwell, 1989), p. 231.
29. "Beginning with Plato, the social ideal will be sought for in the ideal of fusion." (Levinas, "Time and the Other," in *The Levinas Reader*, cit., p. 53). Levinas also writes of "the gathering together of the world's diversity within the unity of a single order that left nothing out; an order produced or reproduced by the sovereign act of Synthesis." ("Revelation in the Jewish Tradition," ibid., p. 208).
30. Michael Holquist, *Dialogism: Bakhtin and His World* (London: Routledge, 1990); Tzvetan Todorov, *Mikhail Bakhtin: The Dialogical Principle* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1981); Aileen Kelly, "Revealing Bakhtin," the *New York Review of Books*, September 24, 1992, pp. 44–48.
31. Levinas writes: "The idea that the Other is the enemy of the Same is an abuse of the notion; its alterity does not bring us to the play of the dialectic, but to an incessant questioning, without any ultimate instance." (Levinas, "Revelation in the Jewish Tradition," cit., p. 209).
32. Here we should head Hoffmann's warning: "Next to cynicism, the greatest threat to morality is disembodied idealism." (Hoffmann, op. cit., p. 18).
33. "The man of the people is almost invariably, in our land, a *déclassé* aristocrat." (Ernest Renan, quoted in Tzvetan Todorov, *Nous et les autres. La réflexion française sur la diversité humaine*, Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1989, p. 159).
34. "National histories, encyclopedias and cultural research often have little in common with the people's factual history and ethnography." (Tishkov, op. cit., p. 3).
35. "One study of a group of American rapists has established that as many as 80 percent were abused children. These men grew up with feelings of martyrdom, self-pity, and distrust, and characteristi-

cally lacked all compassion for other people." ("The Mind of the Rapist," *Newsweek*, July 23, 1990, p. 46.)

36. On the contrary, if violent conflict is to be avoided "identity must go beyond memory if it is not to be forever mired in the past, turning into a pathological view of the world which has no room for other people's sufferings." (Kunan Makiya, *Cruelty and Silence* (New York: Norton, 1993), p. 260).
37. L. N. Tolstoy, *Voina i mir* (Moscow: Sovremennik, 1979) Vol. II, p. 262.
38. Levinas, "Time and the Other," in *The Levinas Reader*, cit., p. 47.
39. Brian Barry, *Justice as Impartiality* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995).
40. Emmanuel Levinas, "Zionisms," in *The Levinas Reader*, cit., pp. 267–88. For a harsh—but difficult to challenge—criticism of this philosophically inconsistent "exception," a clear case of partiality see Neumann, op. cit., pp. 14–16: according to Neumann, "Levinas makes the political choice of being a nationalist first, and the philosopher of alterity who ostensibly has a responsibility to bear witness second." It is indeed remarkable that a thinker that can be considered as one of the most perceptive, most interesting of Levinas's disciples, Alain Finkielkraut, has shown the same kind of partiality when dealing with "his own," France. In an interview on self-determination and the end of Yugoslavia, the interviewer, puzzled at his blanket endorsement of separatist causes, asked him whether he was not afraid of sponsoring "less legitimate movements," such as that for the independence of Corsica from France. Finkielkraut's answer, indignantly rejecting any parallel between France and less glorious nations, deserves to be quoted: "France, do not forget it, is a republic that is one and indivisible .... our country is an ancient nation." ("Le reveil des petites nations. Entretien avec Alain Finkielkraut," *Politique Internationale*, Printemps 1992, p. 56. In his French "patriotic exceptionalism," on the other hand, Finkielkraut is in good historical company: in Todorov's review of French thought on human diversity (*Nous et les autres*, cit.) we find Peguy upholding self-determination as an absolute principle but making an exception for *"la République une et indivisible"* (pp. 326–27); Michelet referring to "organic unity": *"Un seul peuple l'a—la France"* (p. 293); Tocqueville defending the right of Native Americans to be free while approving French colonization of Algerians (p. 279); and, finally, Chateaubriand, who "does not see any incompatibility between his criticism of the misdeeds of colonization, such as carried out in America, and the search for new colonies for the benefit of France." (p. 395).
41. Barry, op. cit., pp. 228–33.
42. Erich Fromm, *Man for Himself. An Inquiry into the Psychology of Ethics* (New York: Fawcett Premier, 1965).
43. Martin Buber, *Je et Tu* (Paris: Aubier, 1969), p. 98; Daniel Warner, "Levinas, Buber and the Concept of Otherness in International Relations: A Reply to David Campbell," *Millennium: Journal of International Studies*, Vol. 25, No. 1, 1996, p. 111.
44. Tzvetan Todorov, *The Conquest of America: The Question of the Other* (New York, NY: Harper, 1992 p. 185). Todorov remarks that Cortés knew much more about the Indians than de Las Casas, but definitely did not love or "recognize" them from an ethical point of view.
45. Roger Epp, "The Limits of Remorse: McNamara Kissinger and the Ethics of Responsibility," paper presented to the Conference of the International Studies Association, San Diego, CA, April 16–20, 1996. Epp warns that Weber's "ethics of responsibility" can actually be turned into its opposite whenever the state, its monopoly of violence and the citizen's allegiance to the state are brought into the picture. Epp notes: "As Weber himself put it, 'Luther relieved the individual of the ethical responsibility for war and transferred it to the authorities.'"
46. Levinas, "Ideology and Idealism" in *The Levinas Reader*, cit., p. 247.
47. Paul Ricoeur, *Soi-même comme un autre* (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1990); *Le Juste* (Paris: Editions Esprit, 1995).
48. Nietzsche speaks of "the sovereign individual, like only to himself, liberated again from morality of custom, autonomous and supramoral (for "autonomous" and "moral" are mutually exclusive)" (op. cit., p. 495).
49. Finkielkraut writes that violence aimed at the total annihilation of the Other is the product of the revanchism of an ego wanting to reconquer its "full powers," its sovereignty that has been made morally impossible by the presence of the face of the Other (op. cit., p. 155).
50. There is also a significant coincidence between arguments used by "realists" in international relations and defenders of the concept of the sovereign individual. The latter, smuggling their own ideological preference into an allegedly objective discourse (and ignoring all psychological and anthropological complexities) try to peddle "the phantasy that morality marks the spot where human beings discard

human nature.'" (Richard Wollheim quoted in Thomas Nagel, "Freud's Permanent Revolution," *The New York Review of Books*, May 12, 1994, p. 36)

51. According to Levinas, the state is also "the site of corruption par excellence and, perhaps, the last refuge of idolatry" (op. cit., p. 274). On the very important Jewish concept of idolatry see Moshe Halbertal and Avishai Margalit, *Idolatry* (Cambridge, MA.: Harvard University Press, 1992).
52. Zartman, op. cit., p. 3. It is interesting to note, in the same context, that the ethics and the aesthetics of pluralism and coexistence versus group-centered intolerance tend to coincide, from Bakhtin's "poliphony" (aesthetics) and "dialogism" (ethics) to Salman Rushdie's both ethical and aesthetical concept of *métissage*. On the latter, see Annie Montaut, "Les mensonges de la pureté ou l'Inde de Rushdie (à propos du *Dernier soupir du Maure*)" [The Lies of Purity or Rushdie's India (about *The Moor's Last Sigh*)], *Esprit*, April 1996, p. 108.
53. Jankelevitch, op. cit., p. 44.
54. "Absolute freedom is the right of the strongest to dominate. It therefore fosters conflicts that favor injustice. Absolute justice implies the suppression of all contradiction: it destroys freedom." (Albert Camus, *L'Homme revolté* [Paris: Gallimard, 1951], p. 345. A recent, extreme case of anomie proves this point: "Today Liberia more than ever is living up to its name: it is the freest place on earth—a place where anyone can give full vent to criminal instincts without suffering the least punishment." (Alfonso Armada, "Liberia, morir por nada" [Liberia, to die for nothing], *El Pais*, May 19, 1996.
55. Vladimir Jankelevitch, *Le paradoxe de la morale* (Paris: Seuil, 1981), pp. 88–90.
56. Ibid., p. 119. Also for Pierre Hassner (op. cit., p. 362) the essence of possible coexistence and avoidance of conflict is the maintenance of a never-resolved tension between the universal rule and particularistic needs.