A NOTE
NO THE DIFFERENCE
BETWEEN VIOLENCE AND POWER

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The basic question raised, I think, in the invitation to the workshop, is how to conceptualize violence as being constructive: when and how does violence become socially constructive? In this paper I shall equate 'socially constructive' with formation of state structures only (it could also refer to other social structures from the family and outwards).

Violence has been related to the state externally as war between sovereign states, and internally as rule of subjects. Traditionally war has been the reserve of realist international relations theory, while rule has been the reserve of political science and to some extent of anthropology. Michel Foucault, Allan Feldman, Renato Rosaldo, Deborah Poole, Michael Taussig, Frank Graziano, and others, have approached the problem of constructive violence from the perspective of the human body. A plurality of agencies are seen to construct and deconstruct the unified individual person in multiple relations of power, dominance, and violence. However, this post-structuralist and deconstructivist writing on the problem of rule have led to an unfortunate blurring of the actual spatial and historical limits to state rule imposed by the conditions for survival in a competitive system of states. To discuss the practice and representation of violence in social theory it is necessary, I will argue, to be spatially and historically specific about the state as the interface between war and rule.

a) Violence and power.

Frank Graziano's analysis of the Argentine "dirty war"[1] is an example of insights uncovered by a shift in focus from what is traditionally understood as historical content to the discursive forms that produce rather than represent an order of past events. He argues that the acts and discourse of the 'dirty war "constitute a single cultural artifact." (Graziano 1992:3). However, I have a problem with his concept of the 'single cultural artifact'. While his study convincingly uncovers violent dynamics at the point where state met human body, he cannot explain why this 'divine violence' constituted a single cultural artifact confined to the territory of Argentina and limited to

some six years in time. It is highly problematic to deduct the historical constitution of the state from psychoanalytical arguments on the level of how individuals are constituted. It is not, I think, appropriate to use psychoanalytical figures to explain actions of the state and Graziano's Lacanian approach cannot account for the borders both in time and space of the 'artifact' or what constitutes the totality of the national narrative. He can uncover the micro structures of state-rule but not the dynamic of change. In a certain sense this is a pure reversal of the shortcomings of the realist view of the state: instead of a silent state without discourse struggling to survive in a bleak and realist universe of states we get an emotional state without boundaries confronting its citizens in a carnival of deadly erotic impulses.

Allan Feldman's book on political violence in Northern Ireland 2) is extremely subtle and persuasive in lying bare how violence generates its own universe, yet he almost totally ignores how the British state (and the Irish state) frames the conflict by reflecting pressure from the system of states into the local dynamics. In one of the few references, Feldman refers to world wide attention becoming an 'embarrassment' to Westminster (Feldman 1991:40), a word void of the theoretical sophistication informing his analysis of the local formations of violence. His discussion of the territorial fragmentation of Belfast into ethnic-sectarian sanctuaries separated by violent interfaces can be read almost as a functional equivalent of a state system with international borders, but not fully because the sanctuaries are not structured like states. They do not in themselves reproduce the complex nation state-interpellation of citizens; they are interpellated by the state.

For Althusser interpellation is the process by which the state creates its subjects as subjects. He writes in his famous article from 1970 3), "As a first formulation I shall say: all ideology hails or interpellates individuals as concrete subjects." (Althusser 1970:130) and he provides the well-known example of the police hailing: "Hey, you there!" The individual in the street will turn around. "By this... he becomes a subject. Why? Because he has recognized that the hail was "really" addressed to him, and that "it was really him who was hailed."" (ibid., p. 131). He becomes a subject for state because he recognizes himself in the hail. This recognition is what Althusser calls ideology. "The existence of ideology and the hailing or interpellation of individuals as subjects are one and the same thing." (ibid., p. 131). Now the policeman is not hailing as an individual, he is the voice of the state, of what Althusser terms the central Subject interpellating everybody. This is a formulation of how the whole or the one-ness of the state exists; we may say that the central Subject only exists when everybody are interpellated even if this is realized only in ways contested by local resistance. The ideology of the British state or the idea of the Irish nation exists only insofar as the state interpellates its subjects in Northern Ireland. In Althusser's notion of

interpellation the state can hail its subjects both by ideology (in the 'ideological state apparatuses belonging both to the public and private spheres) and repression (in the state apparatuses centrally commanded by the state).

Althusser then remarks, "I might add: what thus seems to take place outside ideology (to be precise, in the street), in reality takes place in ideology. What really takes place in ideology seems therefore to take place outside it... Ideology has no outside (for itself), but at the same time that it is nothing but outside (for science and reality)." (ibid., 130-31). What is the crucial point here? Not so much the science-ideology opposition, which Althusser himself stresses, but something which is obscured completely by his general concept of class struggle. The outside which ideology does not have for itself, and the reality of which it is nothing but outside, is the violence which in the first place creates the topography of the state. In a note Althusser defines topography as "a definite space [representing] the respective sites occupied by several realities: thus the economic is at the bottom (the base), the superstructure above it.." (ibid., 139, em. L.A.). Of course, a topography can be structured differently from base-superstructure. In a moment I shall suggest a non-abstract topography based on the relation between human body and space.

However, the crucial point is that the space of the state, of interpellation, is limited, and the violence creating the limits in reality, are outside of ideology, of interpellation. The policeman's hail works only inside the cultural sphere of the national community, within the reach of the law. We see that in Belfast, where the interface between Republican and Loyalist neighborhoods ultimately can be understood as extensions of a contested border between two national communities.

The boundary is contested and created by the war amongst states. Althusser locates the ultimate social contradiction in class struggle; the neo-Hegelians in the struggle between states; this allows for a much more satisfactory, I think, understanding of interpellation. Having stated that, let us return to the violence between state and citizens 4).

It is unfortunate that Neither Graziano, Feldman nor Althusser defines what they mean by 'violence' or 'power'. I will adopt John Keane's restrictive definition of violence 5), because it is specific (unlike Johan Galtung's) and in line with a spatial understanding of power, "[violence is] the unwanted physical interference by groups and/or individuals with the bodies of others.. [and] death is the potentially ultimate consequence of violence." (Keane 1996:67) . Violence is not everywhere; there are sanctuaries and there are battle-zones. But the absence of violence in places should not be understood as a purely differentiated spatial distribution of violence.

Hannah Arendt points to a more profound difference in her book "On violence"6). "Behind the apparent confusion [of the precise meaning of power and

violence] is a firm conviction in whose light all distinctions would be, at best, of minor importance: the conviction that the most crucial political issue is, and has always been, the question of Who rules Whom? Power, strength, force, authority, violence - these are but words to indicate the means by which man rules over man; they are held to be synonyms because they have the same function. It is only after one ceases to reduce public affairs to the business of dominion that the original data in the realm of human affairs will appear, or, rather, reappear, in their authentic diversity." (Arendt 1970:43) and she continues, "To sum up: politically speaking, it is insufficient to say that power and violence is not the same. Power and violence are opposites; where the one rules absolutely, the other is absent. Violence appears where power is in jeopardy, but left to its own course it ends in power's disappearance... By this, I do not mean to equate violence with evil; I only want to stress that violence cannot be derived from its opposite, which is power..."(ibid., p. 56).

With Hannah Arendt's important distinction between power and violence, we can see that political violence cannot be a continuation of power in Foucault's sense but rather it's opposite. Hannah Arendt would not agree that power is "a multiform production of relations of domination" (Foucault 1980:143) 7), stressing that power springs from "the human ability to act in concert" (Arendt 1970:44). She evokes the Athenian polis and the Roman civitas and the eighteenth century revolutionaries that "had in mind a concept of power and law whose essence did not rely on the command-obedience relationship ..[but] constituted a form of government, a republic, where the rule of law, resting on the power of the people, would put an end to the rule of man over man, which they thought was 'a government fit for slaves.'"(ibid., p. 40). Foucault's understanding of the genesis and reproduction of the group as a group acting in concert is very different from Arendt's, and he writes, "One might thus contrast two major systems of approach to the analysis of power: in the first place, there is the old system found in the philosophes of the eighteenth century. The concept of power as an original right that is given up in the establishment of sovereignty, and the contract, as the matrix of political power, provide its point of articulation... In contrast, the other system of approach no longer tries to analyze political power according to the schema of contract-oppression, but in accordance with that of war-repression... On this view, repression is none other than the realization, within the continual warfare of this pseudo-peace, of a perpetual relationship of force... the pertinent opposition is not between the legitimate and illegitimate, as in the first schema, but between struggle and submission." (Foucault 1980:91,92).

Michel Foucault develops Althusser's 'topography of power' into a tangible universe of strategy and combat. He insists that the starting point for discussing violence should be the relation between human body and territory, but he conflates

violence and power and internalizes it in the relationship of state-citizen. The distinction between power and violence will not negate the concept of the territoriality of power but contribute a necessary precision. What we need to do then, is to reconnect violence and power without conflate them. Hannah Arendt separates correctly violence and power, but then externalizes violence from the political sphere. I think a very simple model can illustrate this and perhaps illuminate the point I have been trying to make on the difference between violence and power.

The state creates and recreates its borders by violence perpetrated against human bodies because "Violence obstructs subjects' bodily motion." (Keane 1996:69). Discursive power develops inside these boundaries and produces justification of state violence as legitimate; it is a circle, a never-ending historical process turning over and over. For the individual the circle starts in the second movement, from the position of interpellated object in the always-already marked out symbolic space. But for the state it is opposite. For the state the circle starts with the first movement, from the position of interpellating Subject positioned as it is, in the ever on-going war with other states, that is the never-ever marked out space of real violence. All revolutions, all new spaces of meaning have limits, borders, rubbing against other older spaces of meaning. The first movement in the circle is silent, coercive violence bounding the community, the second is talking, discursive power imagining the community. It may be easier to record talk than silence, and that may explain why so much more has been written on the second movement than on the first (on discursive communities, on nationalism etc. rather than on war).

Arendt says, "Power springs up whenever people get together and act in concert, but it derives its legitimacy from the initial getting together rather than from any action that then may follow," (Arendt 1970:52), with a problematic notion of an 'initial getting together'. She is thinking only of the second movement, of an initial 'big-bang revolution', but I doubt there ever was a primordial revolution. All revolutions, all new spaces of meaning have limits, borders, rubbing against other older spaces of meaning. And remember, the house and the state are not just symbolic spaces, but always space both in the symbolic and the territorial sense. Both 1776 and 1789, the two great eighteenth century revolutions, took place within boundaries created by previous colonial or absolutist violence (and the revolutionaries themselves used violence to extend the boundaries). The first movement in the circle is silent, coercive power bounding the community, the second is talking, communicative power imagining the community. It may be easier to record talk than silence, and that may explain why so much more has been written on the second movement than on the first (on discursive communities, on nationalism etc.). The practice of violence in my understanding is the first movement, the marking of territorial divides by use of violence. Violence is the

obstruction of the movement of human bodies. The creation of a discourse within these territorial limits is the second movement. This is the reflection of violence, producing legitimacy for the renewed use of violence (potentially or explosive), to recreate the territoriality of power.

b) Territories of power.

Now, the modern nation state cannot be understood as a single power space, or as a single symbolic space. It is structured as several superimposed grids that all have their distinct spatial realities. Each marked in space by violence, producing borders, and each bounding a discursive community. I will argue that we can discern a four-layered grid of power relations in any nation-state. The units in each of the four grids are: (i) states; (ii) ethnic space; (iii) towns; (iv) household space. It is important not to lose sight of the fact that the spaces we are talking about all are territorial realities ordering and bordering human bodies. Each grid is defined by a specific relation between territory and the essential markers of the human body. The relation between nation-state space and human body is pragmatic: practically everybody living on the state-territory are part of the nation; it is an inclusive relation, nation follows state. The ethnic space can range from small groups to religious and ethnic communities. The relation between 'ethnic' space (I use this as a catch-all term) and human body is essential: whatever references are used to index bodies - race, creed, language, descent, purpose - only the pure, the clean bodies has the inherent right to live on the soil; it is an exclusive relation, state follows ethnicity. The relation between urban space and human body is functional: there is no state and no nation, but only the infinite exchangeable relations of producers and consumers of commodities, that is classes. The relation finally between household space and human body is organic: revealed by birth and defined by society as sex and age.

Any single individual person lives in all spaces at the same time: in a house, in a town, in an ethnic space, and a state. My point, yet unproved, is that inside each space a particular discourse is hegemonic: in the house the discourses of gender and age; in the town discourses of class and function; in ethnic space discourse of ethnicity (including religion); and in the state, when confronted with other states, the discourse of nationalism. For the state to maintain its defensive capability in this environment it must polarize social power between the fronts of the state and the house: that is at the border of the 'private sphere', and at the international boundary. And it must reduce power at fronts of the town and the ethnic space, which always threaten state power with 'class-struggle' and ethnic rebellion.

The grids are superimposed on each other and interact both on the level of historical events and long wave structure. The nation state interpellates not just free-

floating individuals, but individuals structured by several other historic forces than the state. The point is that they have different historical roots and trajectories and cannot be reduced to one overriding logic like 'modernity', 'class-struggle, 'ethnicity'; quite distinct historical forces are at work simultaneously, with different origins, different mores of interpellating the individual and very different promises for the future.

Interpellation is always violent in the last instance. When it comes to survival the state will use violence against its citizens. Between the state and the citizen or any group of citizens, a condition of potential or explosive violence reigns. If we look closer at the power-relations between state, ethnic space, town, and house we will notice a fundamental hierarchy: state at the top, house at the bottom, and ethnic space and town in the middle. In periods of peace and tranquillity there is an equilibrium of power, but ethnic space, town, and house must always be ready to defend themselves against attacks from the state.

It is essential to distinguish between attack and defense. Attack is conditional, but defense is unconditional. As the nation state has grown during the last two hundred years the sub-state spaces have proved their will to exist variously from country to country by defending themselves against state encroachments. However the attacker/defender relation can be reversed if the meaning of violence is reversed. We call it political violence, terrorism, crime, rebellion, subversion, revolution; the actual shot in the street can be the same, but the meaning is contested. The notions of 'defender' and 'attacker' originates in discourse, not in violence. It is only by analyzing the full historical cycle of violence-boundary-discourse-violence that the positions of defender and attacker can be ascertained. When house, town, and ethnic space attack the state, and violently contest interpellation they reverse the meaning of violence between state and citizens; they wage civil war [8].

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Notes.

[1] **Graziano**, Frank (1992), Divine Violence. Spectacle, Psychosexuality & Radical Christinity in the Argentia "Dirty War". Westview Press, Boulder and Oxford.

[2] **Feldman**, Allan (1991) Formations of Violence. The Narrative of the Body and Political Terror in Northern Ireland. The University of Chicago Press.Chicago and London.

[3] **Althusser**, Louis (1970) Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses (Notes Towards an Investigation), in Zizek, Slavoj ed. (1994) Mapping Ideology. Verso. London and New York.

4) Althusser's notion of "interpellation" has been linked to Hegel's theory of "struggle for recognition" and Clausewitz' theory of war by the late Anders Boserup and a small band of his neo-Hegelian students. Thomas **Højrup's** book "Omkring livsformsanalysens udvikling" Museum Tusculanums Forlag. Københavns Universitet. 1995. [Towards the development of the analysis of life-forms] is the most elaborate, if hermetic, formulation of this neo-Hegelian anti-realist and anti-sociological standpoint yet published in Denmark. In the English summary he writes: "From considering the state as an association of individuals, classes or institutions, based on the maintenance of internal functions in the individual society, a basic idea since Hobbes reintroduced functionalism in the social sciences, the state should rather be seen as a sovereignty-maintaining and recognised member of a state system. Instead of viewing the state from below and from inside out, it must be viewed from without and above... Without the struggle for recognition or defensive war, there is no mutual recognition of sovereignty or state system. Without sovereignty there is no state. The state concept's other theoretical determinants, its predicates, presuppose this defence capability and from a theoretical point of view derive from it." (Højrup 1995:211). In my view however, the notion of interpellation can support a theory of civil war; and it is possible to transport this notion from Althusser's theoretical environment of class struggle to a neo-Hegelian environment of a state-system totality.

5) **Keane**, John (1996) Reflections on Violence. Verso. London and New York.

6) **Arendt**, Hannah (1970) On Violence. New York.

7) **Foucault**, Michel (1980) Power/Knowledge. Selected interviews & other writings 1972-1977. Ed. Colin Gordon. Pantheon Books. New York.

8) See also my **Tin**, Hjalte (1996) Winnie Mandela's Banning Order and the Territoriality of Power and Political Violence. Working Paper 34-96, Centre for Cultural Studies, Århus University, 1996; and **Tin**, Hjalte (1997) A Typology of Civil War; unpublished.