



With, Against and For the Other

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Abstract

Democracy should not be understood as a new synthesis that characterizes modern societies as heralded by Francis Fukuyama in *The End of History and the Last Man*, as an “end of history” homogenizing and harmonious reaching its apex in the “Market Democracy” after the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989. For it is by finding unity, the dreamed harmony that history closes and protects itself in eternal stability. End of conflicts, end of confrontations, end of new ideas, and end of progress.

Democracy thus presents itself as a perpetual conflict movement, this conflict ensuring the nourishment of a dynamism that maintains a certain tension within the self, living with the other. The self is thus constructed with, against, and for the other in an anxious confidence taking into account both the vulnerability and the menace of otherness. Thus democracy is for those who wish to care for the other. Our call is to dissent to anything that might hinder the flourishing of human ideals. “With the other” is the good will to be part of a social and political co-living. “Against the other” expresses the inevitability of conflict and dissent.” “For the other” is the reason for which dissent becomes necessary.

Keywords

Democracy, end of history, posthumans, consensus, resistance, cooperation

Democracy should not be understood as a new synthesis that characterizes modern societies as heralded by Francis Fukuyama in *The End of History and the Last Man*, as an “end of history” homogenizing and harmonious reaching its apex in the “Market Democracy” after the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989. The ideal of consensus thus promises only one thing, the end of history. For it is by finding unity, the dreamed harmony that history closes and protects itself in eternal stability. End of conflicts, end of confrontations, end of new ideas, and end of progress.

Democracy is not a synthesis; it is by definition a delicate tension between persons willing to lead a social and political life of co-living. Without this tension, the very spirit of democracy is extinguished, and in its extinction, happens the end of ethics itself. The end of debating ideas definitively signals the death of ethics itself insofar as there is no longer any need to question oneself. In order that ethics continues to be as moral interrogation and reflection, we should be constantly weighing all possibilities from ethical perspective. Therefore we need to evaluate the shared benefits of our social and political life. The power of ethics manifests in actualizing solicitude, which alone can ensure the success of different possibilities. Heidegger takes up the idea of Nietzsche to justify the need for openness to new possibilities: “The devaluation of the highest values hitherto first of all makes the world seem valueless. These values are indeed devalued, but beings as a whole remain, and the need to establish a truth concerning beings simply grows more pronounced. The indispensability of new values becomes obvious. The positing of new values is announced ... even though the presence of a new world of values has been detected and—albeit unwillingly—already acknowledged. This intermediate state, in which the historical peoples of the earth must decide on their destruction or on a new beginning...” (Heidegger 1991, 204)

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“With, against and for the other” therefore means a desire to build a world together, with all its promises and potential threats. The tension with otherness is maintained: on the one hand it shows the desire to come closer to the other, but on the other hand it resists the other when threat is perceived. It is essential to state living together in terms of “with and against” because the fluctuation of the interests of each other is far from stable. Finally, it should order the formula giving an end to this tension “with and against” that combines hospitality and strength: the power gained by this approach must ultimately be deployed by the return to the other, by the solicitude “for”. We have an approach that is organized with, and against each other.

Therefore, it is in assuming from the outset the dynamics of “with and against” that the self can attempt to transcend itself, in order to make right decisions showing solicitude “for” the other. This transcendence done with, against, and for the other through free action should produce new ethics.

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There is a constant conflict of the dynamics “with and against” is essential aspect in the process of socialization. “The struggle for modern subjectivity passes through a resistance to the two present forms of subjection, the one consisting of individualizing ourselves on the basis of constraints of power, the other on attracting each individual to a known and recognized identity, fixed once and for all.” (Deleuze 1988, 105-106) Deleuze further adds that the struggle for subjectivity is “the right to difference, variation and metamorphosis.” (Deleuze 1988, 106) Deleuze speaks of these irreducible forms which are both irreconcilable and necessary to work for a common cause invites us to think of the immanence. “The duality of forms or formations does not exclude a common immanent cause which works informally.” (Deleuze 1988, 33) We are very much part of an energy where divergent forces both visible and expressible, according to Deleuze build what is common. It

is in this sense that dissent is a part. “There is only a relation of forces which acts transversally and finds in the duality of forms the conditions for its own action and its realization.” (Deleuze 1988, 34)

Necessity to Challenge Consensus

What is problematic is to admit that the cessation of conflict is the culmination of desire. Therefore, the end of desire, the end of the conflict is seen as the ideal tranquillity of a society. Having reached this ideal form of tranquillity, society would arrive at a political state

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of supreme good, without desire, without passion, any deviance being severely reprimanded or even eliminated. Increased surveillance and the constant threat of punishment make it possible to verify the stability of this tranquillity. Here we fall back to Orwell’s 1984, to the terrifying totalitarian transparency. The avoidance of conflict is the specialty of consensus politics, and these politics of discipline deviates from democracy. “Our society is one not of spectacle, but of surveillance. [...] We are neither in the amphitheatre, nor on the stage, but in the panoptic machine.” (Foucault)

The consensus allows for the elimination of conflict, control the action of the society in order to its security. The deviants are excluded, since by definition they are absorbed into a single thought validated by all. The dissenting life forms will have great difficulty in carrying out their project. They will suffer many frustrations if not directly repressed or eliminated. When the ruling power proclaims that it wants our happiness, any singular attempt to gain access to this happiness outside of this, to say the least, is not well perceived, if not considered seditious.

This self-censorship that we are capable of inflicting on us comes in the form of seek safety in a group, in the sameness of others. Like Cain trying to flee his conscience, we lock ourselves in the group,

thinking that its walls will be thick enough not to expose us to our conscience.

“Please,” Cain said, “put me underground,
those men of solitude below don’t bear the sound
nor sight of anything around them anymore.”

Let us note here that the desire not to see anything like that of not being seen remains very close to a place that would be transparent so that everything is seen by all.

“From a city of cloud to a city of bone
Cain walked down the tower steps, alone
And once in the dark of that eternal tomb
The eye stared back from the end of the room.”

(Victor Hugo’s poem “Conscience”)

If no refuge shelters us from our conscience, how can we bear this voluntary submission as a sufficient redemption? We see this voluntary servitude as a lesser evil and we are too easily satisfied with its mediocrity as with a reassuring and redeeming normality. To wade in the slightest evil is good for most: who has not already played this role in an airport, a train station, a bank, finally one of those places monitored by cameras, so that the image we give to be seen by those who watch, is consistent with what is expected of an abstract citizen? This expected image of conformity makes it possible to pass the security check without encumbrance, without questions, without exacerbated search, the good compliant citizen who wants to fly, will be faster served than the one who displays a deviant behaviour. The abstract citizens under surveillance *force* on themselves expected behaviour pattern to avoid the risk of being suspected. We become suspicious for ourselves.

The greatest danger would be to think that the ethics of a democracy must emerge collectively in order to permeate into the individual. It is exactly the opposite path that must be followed: to construct the “we” with the “I” so that democracy is at work in the tension created by the flux between attraction and resistance.

Integration today is conceived politically in the stripping a person of his/her singularity and to dress him/her up in the societal uniform. It is about the grand finale of the advent of Robert Musil's *The Man without Qualities*, Ulrich who depends on the outer world to form his character. Consequently, the demonization of the dissident is accomplished, the hunt is now open. It is not by a politics of integration of all or nothing that a democracy can be constructed, but by a politics of nuance. This understanding of the integration of "all or nothing" amounts to a *disintegration* of singularity in favour of conformity and disciplinary standard. Either the deviant becomes conformed to the group, or the group is forbidden to him. If the ethics of a society is based on the *disintegration* of the singular, it would be necessary to enter into resistance to challenge the ethics of consensus.

Resistance and Cooperation

These two words resistance and cooperation bring back to our memory the historical events during the Second World War. Resistance and Collaboration express two contradictory forms of engagement shared by people of that period. These forms of engagement relate to ease and simplicity, two concepts which determined the mode of action of the subject when faced with an obstacle. It is easier to adopt the logic of confrontation than conflict but simpler to adopt conflict than confrontation. "Simplicity is bound up with the real, contradictory process, while facility is bound up with identities and certainties with which a certain lack of courage, laziness lead us willingly."

In the logic of confrontation, we just react to the actions of the opponent or suffer the effects of these actions. Facility submits the injunctions of the opponent, fights them or flees from them. This triptych behaviour only calls for immediate potential reaction, however crediting the fleeing with a form of superiority vis-à-vis fight or submission. The fleeing makes the subject access effectively another reflection thus allowing him/her to take distance from the cause. In the logic of conflict, unlike that of confrontation, we can accommodate possible contradictions; at this stage, the *epoché* (bracketing) makes room for constructive contemplation of these

possibles. There can emerge challenges to be addressed in order to make the right decision and to do the right action. There is some risk in the conflict in the fact of situating oneself vis-à-vis the other in his/her otherness and difference. Hence there is a need to approach the other with courage and confidence, with anxiety and with care, that is, with, against and for the other.

It is easier to cooperate than to resist, rather, it is easier not to resist. It's the easy way. Michel Benasayag says that it takes great effort to "turn back on the desire to resist. [...] When we cursed twenty times on the same day humiliations and complications imposed by a rule, it takes great strength to subdue in us that which drives us to revolt." By this surprising but profound remark, the author insists on the daily effort required to find a justification for not to resist. The "collaborator" is the archetype of voluntary submission. This legitimacy will lead the collaborating subject to a habit of indifference and to a situation no longer tenable. His/her world will become so complicated that he/she will no longer be able to maintain an easy decision.

There is another solution, that of simplicity. It consists rather in assuming dissent than avoiding it. Since avoiding it implies a refusal, avoiding dissent seems more complicated than assuming it from the outset. Although the simplicity to assume dissent is more natural than to repress it, this obvious choice is nevertheless difficult; it involves courage, a virtue which is not immediately accessible and which exposes us to the risk of the choice to be a collaborator. But in this life, any complex thought (which admits the association of opposites as natural) becomes suspect. The deviant returns a form of insecurity to the group, which shakes up the comfort and safety of the protective system, yet progress can only come through it. We need to accept the path of simplicity, which assumes conflict and which agrees to deal with, against and for the other. Preparedness is essential for anyone who wants to try the adventure: "to be prepared beforehand for any contingency is the greatest of virtues." Sun Tzu wrote his Art of War nearly 2500 years ago in which he rationalized the strategy of war in three basic principles: - act as quickly as possible to win without protracted operations, - save maximum lives and if possible without bloodshed or even without

pulling the sword, - cause the least possible damage. “Your aim must be to take All-under-Heaven intact. Thus your troops are not worn out and your gains will be complete.”

The most stunning victories are the ones won without the need to fight. Thus knowing oneself in terms of strengths and weaknesses, is at least as important as knowing one's opponent. “Know the enemy, know yourself; your victory will never be endangered. If you know the enemy and know yourself, you need not fear the result of a hundred battles. If you know yourself but not the enemy, for every victory gained you will also suffer a defeat. If you know neither the enemy nor yourself, you will succumb in every battle.”

Dissent is this form of conflict that Karl Popper described in the language of scientific discovery, where words take the place of swords in the art of argumentation. Sun Tzu, gives us a real philosophy of war which advocates a priority to the preparation of war and ensures victory ever before war is fought, an idea not conceived by Clausewitz did not conceive according to whom war “is an act of violence to compel our opponent to fulfil our will. [...] and to introduce into the philosophy of war itself a principle of moderation would be an absurdity.” For this reason, it seems interesting to retain in Sun Tzu the possible involved in his philosophy. If it is rational to consider war as a bloody conflict, the fact remains that the nuances that integrate the ability to win wars without actually being fought seem to move towards a form of excellence.

This presents the process of emancipation, prepares a courageous attitude of openness to a thought of complexity, which assumes conflict to protect oneself and try for a social and political life with, against and for the other which is opposed. Confrontation must be considered possible, even if it is the most boorish form of conflict. To think that it is not possible is to place us in danger by negligence, and for this reason, it is better to understand conflict in terms of the coexistence of the opposites. The African tradition inscribed contradiction positively terms in its palaver. This is also true of American national identity: “Dissent is not something that is uttered once and for all. It is part of a conversation that reaches moments of reconciliation. These moments come as temporary

compromise and consensus. These principles have been embedded in American ways of life since America's founding; for even as the Founders sought a democracy capable of consensus, they were committed to the proliferation of dissent" (Sarah Marie Stitzlein). The argumentation strategies are not far removed from these meanings, they refer to a discursive conflict and if sophistry lends itself to the logic of interests of one party, Aristotle's Rhetoric fully complies with the demands of attitude of excellence that demand the approach of selfhood. Based on the spirit of the rhetorician, bent on the pathos of the opponent and in awaiting the *Kairos* for an opportune moment to decide on the right action, rhetoric seems to place firmly the symbolic of excellence to build a dynamic of emancipation.

Retrieving and Debunking *Urbarmensch*

The conflict is inscribed in a natural logic, which means that the conflict is not anthropocentric. The elements are combined in this world by contingencies and it is our responsibility to conceive this contingency as directing the possibles. The opposition of these different elements that meet give rise to new conflicts. Is not human person the result of a natural conflict in which every being, at some point, draws on its own determinations to "persevere in its being" as Spinoza suggests? Many arguments that connect us to the continuity of nature places beings in conflict with one another; in the context of this cruel reality that depicts Clément Rosset, is there not a link with this contemporary crisis that provides for the emergence of a new human, a post-human? The post-human will probably remain a utopia. I mean by this that the expected evolution is less than biological physiological and philosophical. "The greatest thing in the world is to know how to belong to oneself." (Montaigne) We cannot expect this post-human to descend from a flying saucer with alien appearance; this post-human is similar to what is imagined by like Nietzsche: what we are capable of becoming. It is up to each one of us to make a change or not, the beginning of the process, as stated by Montaigne that is to know how to belong to oneself. Again, this disposition must not be understood in terms of egoistic swelling, rather it is an

unfolding of our singularity out of the sameness, aimed at the goal of solicitude in tension with, against and for the other.

This understanding is particularly important given that we now know that solicitude is what we can offer better. But the threat of mediocrity exhorts us to excel. The subject of solicitude has to commit to excellence. This way of excellence passes through the overcoming of this dreary humanity. Foucault says that there is nothing to cry over the death of the human person. On this point, he approximates Nietzsche for whom the human person had imprisoned life and that it is up to the overhuman to liberate life. We know what Hitler has made of the concept of overhuman, distorting it into a superior race. This was an attempt to draw some superficial criteria for the development of an ideal society, criteria that served to eliminate deviant elements including the Jews, people with special needs, gypsies and homosexuals. This is why vigilance to keep in sight the goal of solicitude must be ensured.

Nietzsche, in this regard, did not mind that slavery be restored; it is an assurance of the brightness of a civilization. "Culture and art rest on a terrible foundation. In order that a wide, deep and fruitful soil may exist for their development, the vast majority must be in the service of a minority, must labour beyond the measure of their individual needs, be slaves of poverty. At their expense, by means of their surplus labour, must the few rise to freedom." (Nietzsche) Let the antidemocratic Nietzsche be the insurmountable limit for us. We shall prefer an attitude of solicitude, subscribing neither to the elimination nor to the subjugation of the mediocre. The challenge before us is to turn mediocrity into excellence.

The dissent is what must be assumed but never exceeded! Democracy can be guaranteed only by this. "If the forces within man compose a form only by entering into a relation with forms from the outside, with what new forms do they now risk entering into relation and what new will emerge that is neither God nor man?" Deleuze reasons with Foucault on the idea that would exceed the idea of covering or uncovering of human person and in this, both of them come up with reflection that simultaneously retrieves and debunks the overhuman of Nietzsche. This overhuman, by freeing himself/herself, will be able to act with, against and for

the other, he/she will free life by bringing his/her internal forces in relation to the external forces. It is an act of dissent and in this dissent would be born other forms of conflict. "With and against the other" becomes formula inseparable from "for the other," so as to build a life together from self-transcendence; this self-transcendence makes sense only if it aims to place one's power in the service of the vulnerability of the other. This becomes imperative as soon as we imagine its opposite that could produce an inverse thought. Arendt rightly notes that evil consists in not thinking what I would feel if what I inflict on the other is inflicted on me. If the dissent is ethically unsurpassable, it admits compromises but it has nothing to do with consensus. Compromises contain within them the initial conflict by virtue of the existence of two parties in truce, while consensus sign the evacuation of the conflict. The latter displays a pretentious unanimity that would be elusive when we attempt to verify it.

The surpassing of the self begins from setting in motion of the inner forces toward the outside forces so that a new form appears from the resulting action. It is precisely in this new form, crystallized by the results of the act of the meeting of the inside and the outside of the self, the ethicality of what was liberated will be expressed. Speaking of those who hid the Jews during the Second World War, Michel Terestchenko holds that their act did not reveal a forgetting of themselves, rather a commitment of the whole being investing with all force one's will and intelligence in a helping deed.

These reflections are meant for everyone who wishes to care for the other. Our call is to dissent to anything that might hinder the flourishing of human ideals. "With the other" is the good will to be part of a social and political co-living. "Against the other" expresses the inevitability of conflict and dissent." "For the other" is the reason for which dissent becomes necessary.

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