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TOLERANCE, DEMOCRACY AND FUNDAMENTALISM(S): CHALLENGES IN TIME OF SYSTEMIC BIFURCATIONS

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The globalising and unsettling forces of capitalism, technology, climate changes, mass media and popular culture, chart a reality marked by fleetness, disorientation and rapid social change. Millions of people have reacted by identifying themselves with religious fundamentalist views. While this phenomenon cannot be reduced to a single factor, it nonetheless signals a state of distress suffered by those marginalised by the global economy, many of whom also feel culturally threatened by the "materialist" and "secular" values of late modernity.

Although fundamentalism in its many forms is certainly not keen on democracy, it is also true that the economic and political forces of late modernity are steadily driving existing (liberal) democracies into "states of exception", posing also a peculiar threat to democratic principles. Hence democracy as a political system resting on values such as freedom, equality and the rule of civil law, is likely to be the real casualty of the struggle between fundamentalisms and globalization. Yet, democracy may also be facing today a new opportunity stemming from below, where new modes of relationships and power link – locally and globally – different religious identities, cultures, forms of labour, ecological concerns, ethnicities, and gender groups and issues. These new relation-

ships disclose a common bio-political desire that rests on a pro-active exercise of tolerance as an affirmation of life in its multiple expressions. Tolerance, therefore, becomes a key "weapon" in democratic solutions to systemic problems.

While as moral beings we are always faced with ethical choices, our times on the verge of a "systemic bifurcation" accelerate the urgency to reach wide consensus over the values that will govern our lives. Freedom and equality have been focal *desiderata* of modernity, yet the historicist and progressive myth that cocooned these values is on the wane. Since values are not abstractions but always are embedded into mythical narratives, it is crucial to understand the modes of knowledge and cultural mutations which are coupled with socio-political and systemic changes. Today, with an increasing pluralisation of societies and consciousness, tolerance appears not only as a desirable moral virtue, but as a necessary systemic quality which, once grafted with freedom and equality, makes of democracy the best arrangement for shaping our collective and global fate. Within this horizon, religion(s) seems again to be poised to play a critical role – either for or against tolerance, democracy and peace.

1. From the Republic to the Empire

(a) Symptoms of a transition

When approaching the relation between fundamentalism, tolerance and democracy, we may be tempted to fall into the vice of binary thought. Media, news, reports and discourses can lead to the conclusion that democracy – broadly defined[1] – is today at peril because of the

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[1] Democracy understood as a set of institutional and legal principles and practices such as: the rule of law and equal access to justice; division of powers; guarantees of human and civil rights that are upheld and independently monitored; free and fair elections involving a genuine competition of ideas, permitting

"external" and "evil" forces of religious fundamentalism (especially Islamic). Samuel Huntington's highly influential theory of the clash of civilisations, for example, has given an academic veneer to a political paradigm that compartmentalises in antagonist camps what actually are inner dimensions of the contemporary world-system. This creates a false impression and consciousness, for the real danger to "democracy" may lie not only with those who, for whatever reasons, express their grievances against the hypocrisy of core "democratic" countries, but also with those forces which in the name of democratic values are increasingly committed to intolerant and vigilant practices. Obviously, inherent to the different forms of fundamentalism is the prospective establishment of regimes of intolerance, thus creating a formidable challenge to democracy as a system as well as a cultural horizon. But this cannot hide the fact that "democracies" around the world are increasingly sliding toward a perennial "state of exception" where freedom is curtailed in the name of freedom – as once Latin-American dictatorships curtailed democracy in the name of democracy.[2]

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consensual, non-violent changes of government; freedom of speech, press and media; healthy, autonomous civil society institutions and networks, independent of the state; accountability of authority and transparency of decisions; entrenched property and economic rights; social justice and basic security; an ethos of dialogue, questioning, trust, and moral awareness; widespread, free access to the information needed to discuss, scrutinize, make choices about and uphold all these components of a democratic society. Behind these principles lay certain core values such as the political equality of all citizens; open deliberation before decision-making so that all can voice their interests and concerns; a high degree of citizen participation in the processes of democracy, that respects and encourages the different views of others; a pluralism of institutions and the independence of critical voices that maintain the long-term health and openness of democratic societies.

[2] In *Stato di eccezione*, the Italian philosopher Giorgio Agamben shows how Western democracies become effectively invested with the need of turning emergency into the foundation of their existence. The military and the economic "state of emergency" often merge into one, employing war metaphors as main currency in public speeches. He states that "The principle according to which necessity defines a singular situation in which the law loses its *vis obligandi*... is inverted into that according to which necessity constitutes, so to speak, the

In order to situate the dynamics linking fundamentalism with the contemporary neo-conservative "states of exception", it is essential to have a systemic view of the present globalised world-system. This allows us to perceive fundamentalism – evangelical, Islamic and integrist – as symptoms marking the passage to a new state of affairs.[3] As Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri argue, fundamentalisms signal a refusal of modernity, democracy and secularity, which – rightly or wrongly – are conceived as weapons of "liberal," foreign or Western hegemony.[4] But fundamentalist movements are not simply pre-modern remnants, but a late-modern outcome of contradictions triggered by modernity and its oppressive underside. They are late- or post-modern in a double sense: in that chronologically they follow and oppose modernity, and in that culturally they ride on the waves generated by the falling walls of modern (and Western) philosophical theories which placed religion in an interdict.[5]

The late-modern condition of fundamentalism requires that we take a look at the long-term economic, political, cultural and epistemological dynamics that characterise the present "world-system." In doing so we understand why democracy and tolerance acquire today a new urgency, for we face a critical moment of systemic oscillations that points to an imminent bifurcation. Inspired by chaos theory, the social scientist Immanuel Wallerstein[6] maintains that an existing system which can no longer function adequately within its defined parameters faces a bifurca-

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ultimate foundation and the very source of the law." *Stato di eccezione* (Torino: Bollati Boringhieri, 2003), p. 37.

[3] See Antonio Negri & Michael Hardt, *Empire* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 2000), pp. 137ss.

[4] See Ibid., p. 149.

[5] This notion is developed by yet another Italian philosopher, Gianni Vattimo, in "La huella de la huella," Jacques Derrida and Gianni Vattimo, eds, *La religión* (Madrid: PPC, 1996), p. 111f.

[6] Immanuel Wallerstein, *World-System Analysis: an Introduction* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2004); and Id., *The Uncertainties of Knowledge* (Philadelphia: Temple University press, 2004).

tion where a "choice" is pressed upon it. It is not that one of the present antagonistic camps within the system will prevail, but that the system as a whole will change. In this junction, institutions and social arrangements face a new set of possibilities: either a radicalisation of democratic principles and practices, or the adventurous falling into new hierarchical and intolerant tutelages. These are the main contenders, and the outcome will depend upon the micro-decisions or small actions that people take in times of wild oscillations. History – we have come to learn – does not have any moral vector; it is not necessarily a tale of increasing humanness, tolerance, liberty or equality. Our "evolution" seems to be a highly improvised affair, where values are subject to endless psychological, philosophical, ideological, existential and religious variables, emerging and competing as we face the challenges of living.

Therefore we find ourselves in the crucible of uncertainties, and yet this period in our lives has a tremendous and extraordinary importance because the intellectual, moral and political decisions made will have exponential effects. For this reason fundamentalism cannot be dismissed as a romantic reversal of history, destined to fail because history always "progresses". Actually, it must be seriously considered as one of the possible outcomes of late modernity – although we may question its long term adaptive value. In times where interdictions against religion are falling, this dimension of human living may be destined to play a critical role in democracy's demise or, on the contrary, in its flourishing.[7]

(b) The longue durée: tolerance, intolerance, and violence

A systemic view posits as unit of analysis a "world-system", namely, a spatial/temporal region that cuts across political and cultural units, creating an integrated zone of activity with institutions that obey certain

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[7] It is ironic that modern democracy, whose roots can partially be traced to a reaction against religious intolerance (Locke et al.), may today require the mystique and conviction given by religion.

systemic rules. The modern world-system, which traces its origins to the European expansion beginning in the 16th century, is not bound by a unitary political structure – although after the second world war, liberal democracy purported to be the desirable political regime. In fact, there can be and there are many political units within a world-system since its unifying factor is not a political regime or a culture, but the division of labour that results from the pursuit of gain. The endless accumulation of capital, which splits the system along a core and a periphery, in turn determines the nature or kind of this division. [8]

During the 19th and 20th centuries the political history of the modern world-system, radiating from its core, became the history of a debate about the line that divides the included from the excluded, as well as about the tenor, extent and limits of tolerance. It must be noticed that this debate was occurring "within the framework of a geo-culture that proclaimed the inclusion of all as the definition of the good society".[9] This geo-culture was Liberalism, which proved to be a formidable ideological force, acquiring a solid hegemony around 1848. Not only did it establish the juridical and institutional foundations to be emulated by most of the countries in the world, but it also had the plasticity to absorb the anti-systemic movements originated under its sway. Inside the nation-states, attempts by groups to achieve inclusion as full citizens were the central focus of radical movements. First it was the turn of industrial workers, who once organised in unions and syndicates then sought po-

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[8] The core, the "comfort zone," does not necessarily have to coincide with nations or states, but with the dominant sectors of the production process cutting across them. However, since monopolies need the patronage of strong states, there is a geographical consequence of the core-periphery relationship. It is also the case that the same country or nation may present a mix of core and peripheral conditions. Usually, core-products and services are monopolies or quasi-monopolies, while peripheral products and services are truly "competitive", that is, abundant and diverse. Thus, when there is exchange for core products and services felt as critical and crucial for the advancement of well being of populations, an unequal or asymmetrical situation develops.

[9] Wallerstein, *World-System*, p. 60.

litical power. After decades of struggle, the outcome was the compromise represented by the Welfare State. After that, beginning in the 1960s, the "excluded" from full participation and decision – ethnic and sexual minorities, oppressed majorities in the colonies, youth and women – voiced their anti-systemic claims through "cultural" strategies that sought the decolonisation of the psyche and political autonomy. All these movements were more or less successful in achieving full citizenship and/or independence, but did not succeed in terms of fully redressing systemic dynamics of exclusion.

In the case of the present world-system, the 1960´s marked the end of the liberal supremacy, thereby dislocating the geo-culture that had kept the political institutions intact.[10] Decolonisation, women's movements, youth culture and labour, gender issues, vindication of difference and minorities, concern for the environment, have unhinged the underpinnings of the capitalist world-economy and exposed it to the full force of political and cultural shocks from which it has hitherto been sheltered.[11] During the same time, previously existing fundamentalist trends started to gain cultural, social and political ascendancy in different corners of the world.[12] Cultural transformations soon lead to a new self-esteem and political demands, which in turn put new pressures upon the system through the expansion of lineal trends. The result is that in the last fifty years there has been a growing squeeze on the average rate of profits, for costs of production have been rising while the margin of surplus is narrowing in core and some peripheral regions. Capitalist

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[10] This corresponds to what Eric Hobsbawm calls the end of the "golden age." See *The Age of Extremes: a History of the World, 1914-1991* (New York: Vintage Books, 1994).

[11] See Wallerstein, p. 77; Hobsbawm, p. 343.

[12] In the case of Islamic Fundamentalism, the 1967 Israeli-Arab war signals a turning point. See Bassam Tibi, "The worldview of Sunni Arab Fundamentalism: Attitudes toward Modern Science and Technology," in Martin Marty and Scott Appelby, eds, *Fundamentalisms and Society: Reclaiming the Sciences, the Family and Education* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1993), p. 81.

production had to face increasing costs in remuneration and salaries, inputs (infrastructure and raw materials), and taxation. Especially the first and the third trend can be said to be a consequence of increasing socio-political demands expressing new expectations regarding standards of living, education, health and prospects for the future.

Of course, capitalist endeavours will always attempt to maintain oligopolistic conditions; our present neo-liberal phase – which in Latin America was enacted by a capitalism of dispossession geared mostly to the "enclosing the commons"[13] – is an example. The "Washington Consensus" gave new impetus to institutions such as the IMF, WTO and the WEF (Davos), which in turn exercised pressure for a type of globalization which consisted in the opening of all frontiers to the free flows of goods and capital – but not of people and/or labour.[14] In the midst of this process, 9/11 served to legitimise the more conservative sectors within some "core" states by giving them new political clout. These events allowed for a drastic cut of its links with the more moderate centre and so undo the cultural and social transformations dating from the 1960s. The most dramatic result of this process has been the replacement of neo-liberalism by neo-conservatism – a force supported by a religiously sanctioned view that is culturally and politically at war with the freedoms and social conquests of the last four decades.[15]

But these reactions, far from setting "order" and restoring "equilibrium" to the system, have in fact accelerated the cycle of crisis leading

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[13] A Marxist notion developed by David Harvey to refer to the reversion of common property rights and the commodification of cultural forms, histories, intellectual creativity, the environment, genetic information, public works, health and education. Capitalism resolved its cyclical crisis by expanding its secular trends; but in the new era of globalization the possibility of overflowing towards an "other" (land, population, and market) decreases. *The New Imperialism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), p. 137ff.

[14] See Néstor García Canclini, *La globalización imaginada* (Buenos Aires: Paidós, 1999); Zygmunt Bauman, *La globalización: consecuencias humanas* (Buenos Aires: FCE, 1999).

[15] See Harvey, p. 184.

to a general global state of war. The secular trends are moving to a asymptotic point blocking the unrestrained continuation of an endless accumulation of capital, the engine of capitalist development. We are thus treading upon a territory whose horizon shows great social turmoil, responding to various factors: first, the very fluctuations of the system; second, the decline in legitimacy of state structures, and third, the cultural crisis of prevailing symbolic systems, all of which leads to a great conflict about the nature of the successor arrangement. As Eric Hobsbawm asserts, "The world of the third millennium will ...almost certainly continue to be one of violent politics and violent political changes. The only thing uncertain about them is where they will lead."[16]

What sectors, forces and ideologies will dominate in the upcoming arrangement? Shall we speak of a system or multi-systems? What values will be paramount? One thing is certain: the present world-system, ideologically dominated by a centre-liberal outlook, has now achieved its full maturity. It will do anything possible to ameliorate the crisis, even adopting conservative discourses to suit the demands of electorates determined to behave in customary ways in the pursuit of short-term benefits.[17] Precisely because the fluctuation and uncertainties are becoming more acute, the demand for security will be stronger – and so, too, the violence.[18] "States of exception" are slowly erected as para-

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[16] Hobsbawm, *The Age of Extremes*, p. 460.

[17] It is unrealistic to think that most people would willingly change their work patterns, technology and methods of exchanging goods and services in anticipation of a crisis whose results are utterly unknown. Anthropologically there is ample evidence to support the notion of "improvised evolution," which assumes that there is a general unwillingness in most peoples in all societies to deal with crisis. We often wait, and then choose short-term minimal strategies. See Marvin Harris, *Culture, People and Nature* (New York: HarperCollins, 1988).

[18] Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri link this form of security to the contemporary strategies of biopower: "Security requires rather actively and constantly shaping the environment through military and/or police activity. Only an active shaped world is a secure world. This notion of security is a form pf biopower, then, in the sense that it is charged with the task of producing and transforming social life...." *Multitude* (New York: Penguin Press, 2004), p. 20.

digms for political rule, where all citizens are placed under permanent suspicion and surveillance ("Patriot Act"). Moreover, as stated in the (in) famous ideological blueprint of the Bush's administration, Project for the New American Century (1997), military strength and foreign territorial control become necessary steps in the larger project of spreading "appropriate" codes of conduct upon the rest of the world.[19] This violence exercised in the pursuit of "security" – doubtful ends combined with immoral means – has received a strong "popular" backing and the ideological support from a growing social and cultural force – evangelical fundamentalism, a backbone of contemporary neo-conservatism.[20] In this fashion, liberty is curtailed in the name of security, which in turn exacerbates inequality.

"Discomfort zones", however, also spawn mirror images to this neo-conservative "state of exception." In these other zones, a similar phenomenon takes place through different forms of integrism and fundamentalism that promises a safer and more fulfilling world by submitting to new heteronomous codes and arrangements. Often this entails a rejection of the priority of universal rights and civil law, a refusal of the equality of men and women, a dismissal of the separation of "religion" and state, and a rebuff of general democratic values. Yet these are chiral, that is, they are not identical to their mirror image. While neo-conservatism, at least in the US, receives the backing of an evangelical fundamentalism thoroughly supportive of the system, Islamic fundamentalisms, on the other hand, present an anti-systemic bent that makes it one of the most formidable counter-systemic claims. This integrist project, however, also presents an insurmountable conflict of values, for liberty is curtailed in the name of equality, which in turn exacerbates insecurity

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[19] See Harvey, pp. 184s.

[20] See Walter Mead, "God's Country," in *Foreign Affairs* 85/5 (Sept.-Oct. 2006), pp. 24-43.

But whether we speak of (evangelical) neo-conservatism or Islamic fundamentalism, both phenomena possess a common pattern creating similar effects. Their common theme is either the lowering of tolerance or the open practice of intolerance, which puts in interdiction the very nature of democracy. Both neo-conservative "states of exception" as well as integrist Islamic fundamentalism have an in-built tendency toward intolerance and the negation of the other —in part because the illusion that a system can be stabilised by eliminating some of its components, in part because of the very epistemological limits inherent to their ideological view.

This systemic transition and bifurcation is, therefore, also a cultural and epistemological mutation, for the structures of knowledge constitute an integral —and dialectical— dimension of the cultural complex that undergirds any social formation. Technological innovation, mass media, socio-political reorganisation, demographic pressures and ecological imbalances, also change the way people reason, affecting thereby religious and ideological views and mores. The questioning of canons of rationality, the legitimating of certain modes of knowing, and the establishment or debunking of frontiers between different areas of living, are symptoms of the repositioning of social bodies which feel freer or urged to experiment and adopt views which hitherto have been marginal or rejected. Grievances voice the "insurrection of subjugated knowledges" against hegemonic ideologies (Foucault). As a result, times of bifurcation witness strong and intense cultural debate seeking to mediate the crisis by offering different strategies – symbolic environments – to manage instability, uncertainty and stress. Some will attempt to reinforce the cyclical state of equilibrium, while others will push the lineal trends into a state of imbalance.

We shall return later to this point. Before that let us look at an example of intolerance and counter-modernity stemming from another peripheral zone: the Latin American context. For a third phenomenon lies

between the outspoken intent to install a new regime of intolerance, as in some Islamic fundamentalist groups, and evangelical fundamentalism's efforts to effect a neo-conservative shift in family life and educational patterns. Roman Catholic integrism claims to navigate between the *Scylla* of an excessive focus on family and the *Charybdis* of a blatant overturn of social structures, seeking a middle course cutting across the intermediary associations of civil society. Yet, it shares with evangelical and Islamic fundamentalisms a common factor: they are all symptoms of a disease to which they purport to be the cure.

2. The Long and Winding Road of Catholic Integrism

Roman Catholicism (RC) is still the major religious force in most of Latin America. It is more than a religious denomination: it is a powerful social organization with an extraordinary cultural-formative power. Even though Protestants, Evangelicals and Pentecostals have experienced a steady growth during the last century, Catholicism still dominates the religious scene.[21]

Many assert that the category "fundamentalism" cannot be applied *stricto sensu* to Roman Catholicism. Fundamentalism –they say– is a valid description for a Protestant phenomenon whose origin is clearly located in the beginning of the 20th Century in the U.S., applicable today to the global evangelical movement that it has spawned. There are many elements that characterize evangelical (or Islamic) fundamentalism which are not present in the ultra-conservative sectors of Roman Catholicism.[22] Yet, while a functionalist approach to individual aspects of

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[21] The Muslim presence is reduced to few ethnic enclaves.

[22] Take, for example, inerrancy of Scriptures, something difficult to assert for a church that has stressed as normative sources both Bible and its ongoing interpretation by a *Magisterium* (tradition). Or consider the evangelical-subjective emphasis on rebirth (born again), an awkward concept for the objectivist and sacramental self understanding of Roman Catholicism.

both traditions may fail in providing a useful comparative scenario, a more structural perspective uncovers in fundamentalism and the ultra-conservative camp of Roman Catholicism a common regressive *gestalt* that attempts to undo the cultural revolutions stemming from the 1960s and thus discipline democratic demands.[23] They are, in this regard, a powerful ideological resource for the implementation of "states of exception".

As in evangelical fundamentalism, Catholic ultra-conservatism seeks to resituate church and traditional beliefs in the face of the crisis brought by *modernity* and *secularisation*. The efforts to preserve the traditional ideological and organisational traits, and arrest and reverse the waning of Catholic hegemony in the social, cultural and political spheres, are similar. Yet battle lines are drawn according to the specific cultural and social geography. In the case of evangelicals, scriptural inerrancy, creationism, virginal birth, pre-millennialism, etc. are the main themes that rally the strands of an ideology embracing a host of ethical issues ranging from public education to abortion. In the case of RC, the authority of the Pope, the strict hierarchical organization, the objectivity of dogma, and the discipline and control of (mostly female) sexuality, is at stake. Even their conception of the role of the church in society, and the means for Christian influence in culture, are as diverse as the Calvinist and Thomist roots of their political theologies. Yet their common thread is the combination of an unrelenting resistance to the disruptive changes brought by modernity, the attempt to re-create stable institutions, and a strong political vocation to "fight back" and re-establish a social order congruent with the conservative mores of their religious vision. Both

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[23] I understand regressive in the sense of attempting to preserve in contemporary milieu the beliefs and practices from a sacred past as normative for today. Yet, it must also be born in mind that it is not simply a romantic reaction, but a deliberate effort to re-create social and political order that is oriented to the future. Cfr. Martin Marty and Scott Appelby, *Fundamentalisms and Society*, p. 3. As to the reaction to gender issues stemming from the 60s, see Hardacre, in Ibid, p. 134.

traditions feel that legal and governmental processes must recognise the way of life they see as prescribed by God and set forth in Scripture or the *Magisterium*. The state must be subservient to God, thus disciplining a society that has lost its moral core and direction.

The particular Catholic conservative vision is nourished by two ideological streams that have significantly shaped the Catholic profile in many countries of Latin America: *integralism* and *integrism*.

Catholic *integralism* is the name given to the curial opposition in the late 19-century and early 20-century to the "heresies" of modernism. At that time these heresies included the critical-historical studies of Bible and dogma, the Darwinian theory of evolution, liberal democracy, socialism, trade unions, free masonry and Protestants. Above all it championed a Christendom model of social order and the close relation between church and state. In sum, it represented the static categorization of tradition and the defence of an objectivist view of truth. Only an integral Catholicism, that is, the upholding of dogma and *Magisterium*, guarantees an institutional strength and clarity of beliefs that can be applied to all challenges and needs of contemporary society. This view of Catholicism is total, unwavering and exclusivist, inviting to a sort of anti-modern crusade in the pursuit of a new social Catholicism (*Catolicismo Total* or *Integral*).

Integrism, on the other hand, is an expression coined by the French right-wing intellectual Charles Maurras denoting the aim of bringing all aspects of a nation within a single political organisation. In this view Roman Catholicism is regarded as an integral aspect of the political structure of the country, along with language, customs and tradition. This version of integrism came to Latin America mixed with Spanish *falangism* and Italian *fascism*, all characterised by a strong corporatist view of state and society.[24]

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[24] In Argentina many sectors that converged into Peronism, as well as the nationalist party within the military, have historically supported this view. During the

Today "integrism" and "integralism" are used indiscriminately to refer to those sectors within Catholicism that views the core beliefs of Catholicism as integral to the nation's – or the continent's – identity. This type of Catholicism proved to be quite strong in the first half of the 20th century, losing some positions in the 1950s and 60s, to gain a protagonist role during the military dictatorships (In Argentina, 1976-1983). Since then, an increasing pluralisation of the Catholic Church has been the norm, although the core ideological elements of integrism still colour vast sectors of this church – especially among clergy and bishops. During the 1990s, coinciding (paradoxically?) with the enforcement of neoliberal policies, several integrist "congregations" and religious societies were either created, or pre-existing ones spread with new vigour. Among these are: *Opus Dei, Miles Christi, Comunión y Liberación, Legionarios de Cristo (Juventud Misionera y Familia Misionera), Asociación Profamilia, Tradición-Familia-Propiedad* (although waning during the 1990s); *Instituto del Verbo Encarnado, Sodalitium Christianae Vitae, Comunidad Jerusalén, Camino Neocatecumenal, F.A.S.T.A.,* and many others.

Following an ultra-conservative interpretation of Vatican II, these organisations stress lay discipleship in society, education and the formation of leadership, full engagement in the "cultural wars" relating to abortion and homosexuality, confrontation with the "progressive" liberal values spread by the media, opposition to the ideology of public schools, and so on. They loudly declare allegiance to the Pope, a feature that distinguishes them from other parallel integrist associations, properly

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60s and 70s, it reached a gruesome "maturation" through the Doctrine of National Security, the ideological umbrella that supported the military dictatorship in its repression and disappearance of those "elements" considered subversive of the (Catholic) values and mores of the Argentine Nation. "Heresies" acquired social and political form, and culprits must be wiped out in order to purify the foundations of the *polis.*

called *traditionalists*.[25] Yet they belong to the same wave of religious and ideological discontent with modernity and the liberal (and liberationist) interpretation of Vatican II.[26]

3. Cultural and Epistemological Strategies: the Flight from Plurality towards a Post-modern Unum

Militancy, exclusivism, a "fight against the world" attitude, and a profound distaste for (philosophical) relativism and (ideological) pluralism appear to be a common mark uniting different forms of religious fundamentalism and integrism. Boundary setting, identification of enemies, proselytism, creation and strengthening of intermediate institutions stand out as important watermarks. They also share some common moral positions, such as patriarchal models of family, antiabortion and homophobic stances, promotion of religious education in schools, etc. In sum, a *counter-modern* and *anti-secularisation* attitude seems to galva-

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[25] In the line of Lefebvre and others, the latter are schismatic groups (mostly clergy) setting up their own *Magisterium*, questioning the reforms introduced by Vatican II regarding the Roman missal, collegiality of bishops, ecumenism and the recognition of religious freedoms.

[26] The argentine sociologist Fortunato Mallimaci distinguishes three strands in the integrist camp within the Argentine church. The first one is a small *ultra-nationalist* and anti-democratic minority that still cultivates a special relationship with the Military, the alleged institutional paladin of argentine and Latin-American identity. A second one, no doubt the majority, prioritizes the strengthening of the theological and ecclesial dimensions in order to face the modernist challenge in society and culture. Their main assumption is that a popular and ancestral *Catholic heritage* is today challenged not by atheism and communism, but by secularization, laicism, moral relativism, hedonism, consumerism, feminism, sects, and the liberal (or "progressive") message of the media. They also have strong qualms regarding democracy. Many bishops and clergy, as well as numerous lay associations advocating traditional family values, are ideologically identified with this line. Finally a more *populist* form of integrism is camouflaged with a public and vociferous defence of the poor and marginalized. With a language resembling the left-wing criticisms of globalization and capitalism, they are firm defenders of the social doctrine of the church. See Fortunato Mallimaci, "El Catolicismo latinoamericano a fines del milenio: incertidumbres desde el Cono Sur," *Nueva Sociedad* 136 (1995), pp. 154-176.

nise their focus. Yet there are some features in these movements that are clearly "late-modern" and even "post-modern": *Opus Dei* and most evangelicals, for instance, do not seem inimical to such "modern" phenomena as capitalism, bureaucratic organisation, mass communication technologies or higher education.[27] This indicates that they are not simply anti-modern, but rather critical of those aspects of the modern that are perceived to be threatening to their core beliefs, their social organisation and ideology. While capitalism is not considered such a threat, *cultural* developments leading to a pluralisation of consciousness and views certainly are.[28] This (late) modern pluralisation of the cultural realm is perceived as an insurmountable, inimical, and hostile stance against church, faith, nature and truth.

As a strategy facing pluralisation and secularity, fundamentalisms and integrism share a highly cognitive doctrinal religiosity marked by an objectivistic, dogmatic, legalistic and dissonant style. The claim to "objectivity" revamps a hermeneutical circle unaffected by human experience, interests and location. In a way they simply continue the "epistemological objectivism" of the West, with reality conceived as though it were composed by foundational blocks or bricks which possess a certain order and relationship. To uphold the truth means to respect this structure and order. This epistemological mapping (worldview) possesses an intrinsic appeal that is coupled with deep-seated tendencies of the human psyche. Such a worldview seems to infer no conflicting expectations or suggestions for human daily behaviour and ethical "decisions" As the anthropologist Anthony Wallace asserts, there is a predisposition to be infatuated with a worldview that promises order, for this is perceived as diminishing stress. It is associated with every satisfaction derived from life and with the maintenance and reproduction of life

[27] Cfr. Emilio Corbière, *Opus Dei: el totalitarismo católico*. Buenos Aires: Editorial Sudamericana, 2002.

[28] Cfr. Peter Berger, *Una Gloria lejana: la búsqueda de la fe en época de incredulidad* (Barcelona: Herder, 1994), p. 93.

itself.[29] Consequently any element that produces disturbances in this worldview implies, automatically, a disturbance in the rules of behaviour and therefore in the satisfactions expected from life. The cognitive and the moral are, at this point, indistinguishable, and the terrain for the struggle sweeps across the multiple cultural choices in an effort to streamline them according to a divine norm.

Yet, what (late) modernity has brought to the fore is that the nature of reality as such is complex, and therefore requires multiple metaphors and views in order to be understood.[30] Any monolithic conceptual system will soon prove inconsistent and unable of establishing congruence with the diverse metaphors and symbols required for life in complex settings. In the end fundamentalisms and integrisms prove not only incapable of surmounting dissonance, but they become fertile terrain for new crisis. This generates additional cognitive dissonance, which may at best be able to offer a "solution" for individuals within modernity, but not to the injustices brought about by modern arrangements. As much of late-modern trends, they offer biographical-individual solutions to systemic problems.[31]

· Integrism as fundamentalism expresses a cognitive strategy, which tries to homogenise what is radically plural. Against this background it can be considered as a form of superstition (super stare, standing over something that is a vestige from the past), to the extent that they intend to recreate conceptions of nature, society, culture and self which are thought or imagined as once having wide currency. Although to a certain point they share many of the traces of religious revitalisation

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[29] See Anthony Wallace, *Revitalizations and Mazeways: Essays on Culture Change*, vol. 1 (Lincoln, Nebraska: University of Nebraska Press, 2003), p. 182.

[30] Cfr. George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, *Philosophy in the Flesh: The Embodied Mind and its Challenge to Western Thought* (New York: Basic Books, 1999), p. 78

[31] Cfr. Zygmunt Bauman, *La sociedad sitiada* (Buenos Aires: FCE, 2004), p. 94. However, this is not the case with Islamic fundamentalism(s), which are mostly counter-systemic movements.

movements, that is, the deliberate, organised and conscious effort to construct a more satisfying culture and social environment,[32] they are epistemologically unable to produce what these movements successfully do: a widespread reduction and/or redirection of stress. Therefore it would be more adequate to consider fundamentalisms as truncated revitalisation movements, for they are constantly tempted to idealise a past in face of the perils of the present.

The integrist-fundamentalist cognitive incongruence and the psychological stress produced even on its own membership shows that its appeal can only be partial. Very few can bear the implications of transforming the self as is required and demanded by these movements. Moreover, in a pluralised scenario marked by "increasing reflexivity" questioning authority, globalization and an enhanced consciousness of diversity,[33] the chances to "discipline" both the religious and political body are increasingly difficult. This incapacity creates a loop-effect of pressure and tensions which cannot be resolved by the religious system as such. The temptation, therefore, is to seek to reduce incongruence not by modifying the symbolic system (which would imply a thorough revision of "objective" truth), but by confronting the societal and cultural conditions which generate such stressful stimuli. Sooner or later, violence – including its many subtle forms – would have to be exercised or legitimised in order to vindicate the truth of the religious-ideological system.

In sum, different fundamentalisms appear to share a common counter-cultural strategy that is linked to the social, cultural and economic conditions of globalization and late-modernity. Facing the dislocation created by capitalism and modernity, their aim is to influence societies and cultures by encouraging high uncertainty avoidance, sanc-

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[32] See Wallace, p. 10.
[33] See Peter Taylor, *Modernities: A Geohistorical Interpretation* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999), p. 133f.

tioning power distance, stressing the collective rather than the individual
and giving prominence to the masculine rather than the feminine.[34] In
this strategy stand prominently matters pertaining to sexuality, family
and above all, the role of women.[35] These issues not only have to do
with the enforcement of patriarchal property rights and male monopoly
of the labour market, but also with a definite notion of communal repro-
duction where women are perceived to be the most reliable agents in the
transmission of culture and religion. Because modern economic pres-
sures invariably change family patterns and gender roles, "womb" and
"school" appear as the battlefront of fundamentalist and integrist reac-
tion – the first term signifying the power to control reproduction (a sort
of container of male prerogative to fulfil an ironclad biological and
divine law), and the second representing the entrance gate into the pub-
lic sphere.

4. The Ethical Foundation of Tolerance

Cognitive, social and cultural uncertainties make of fundamentalisms
and integrism direct or indirect supporters of political regimes set to

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[34] Cfr. Geert Hofstede, *Cultures and Organizations: Software of the Mind* (New
York: McGraw-Hill, 1997), pp. 14ff.

[35] See Michael Walzer, *On Toleration* (New Haven and London: Yale Universi-
ty Press, 1997), pp. 64ff. This cognitive objectivism, distaste for pluralism, and
legalistic outlook is illustrated in the case of Roman Catholic integrism by its
militant opposition to issues ranging from the introduction of sexual education in
schools and the distribution of condoms in state hospitals, to gay rights (civil
union) and the decriminalisation of abortion. The war metaphor acquires new
currency, as denoted by the statements of integrist ideologues when referring to
feminism, one of the disturbing "dissonances" in late modernity. According to
Adolfo Castañeda, director of *Vida Humana Internacional* and a consultant for
the integrist circles in Latin America, we are facing a "cultural subversion,"
where "´gender perspectives` represent one of the most dangerous ideological
weapons mustered to destroy life and family, and therefore, society." That such
views exist in the pluralistic setting of late modernity must not alarm us; what is
cause for alarm is their active pursuit of political means to enforce their vision of
a *Catolicismo integral.*

curb the range of tolerant practices and democratic demands. Many times this position adopts the form of an open protest against globalization and its discontents, thus coinciding with other forms of protest stemming from the "left."[36] But their strategies for change pursue a rigid *cultural* reinforcement of religious and traditional values, which severely questions not only the actual shortcomings of "really existing democracies", but also the core values that inform and sustain democratic practices in any of its forms. When globalization, democracy and secularisation are lumped together as a threat, when pluralism and epistemological uncertainties are seen as equally eroding the very fabric of human society, then violence and intolerance appear as suitable weapons in an already violent and increasingly intolerant environment.

In effect, uncertainty, pluralism, relativity, radical difference, liquid boundaries, diffuse hierarchy, soft epistemology, in sum, that which culturally characterises late modernity, represents a dreadful and demonic horizon that true believers must avoid and fight at all costs. While these late-modern variables appear to be easier to digest for certain sectors of comfort zones, fundamentalist movements – especially Islamic and evangelicals outside the U.S. – seem to provide a consoling response to the losers, subordinated, excluded and/or threatened by global cultural and economic trends.[37] When differences of culture, ethnicity and religion coincide with class and/or geopolitical subordinations, the terrain appears particularly fertile for fundamentalist recipes. Here we face a monumental systemic challenge, pressing for new understandings of democracy, tolerance and the effective redressing of economic and social inequalities.

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[36] Cfr. Hard and Negri, *Multitude*, pp. 235f.

[37] Cfr. William McNeill, "Fundamentalisms and the World of the 1990s", in *Fundamentalisms and Society*, pp. 558ff. One problem of his account is that he does not pay enough attention to the systemic dimension of fundamentalism, and the class component of it. Rather, he sees it mostly as a strategy that minimises friction in the transition from rural to urban life.

But in spite of the somehow defiant nature of the fundamentalist phenomena, one cannot forget what Hardt and Negri have noted, namely, that these reactions are symptoms signalling a passage to a new social, political and economic arrangement. The tragedy is that fundamentalism purports to be a cure, encouraging its social base through a strategy that curbs democratic practices, labelling plurality, diversity or tolerance as a surrender to "materialism", "consumerism", the cultural "decadence" of the "West," or with the hypocrisy of neo-colonialism. Is it possible to decouple the waning forces of the "world-system" from the values associated with democratic practices? Is "democracy" indissolubly tied to the cultural and political history of the West? Can the value and practice of tolerance be proven to these popular movements as an equally effective way to redress social, cultural and economic grievances?

It is true that when we speak about tolerance there is a certain arbitrariness in our definition or, if you will, a definite cultural and social tradition that informs our understanding. "Intolerance" may well not be a label accepted by the members of fundamentalist or integrist movements. They may also conceive themselves as somehow tolerant, if tolerance is understood as a passive forbearance. Yet tolerance is not only a relational term referring to an attitude vis-à-vis other existences, but also a practice whose definition is relative to the consideration and balancing of other values and moral goods. Paramount among these is the moral valuing of difference and plurality, thorns difficult to withstand not only from a fundamentalist position, but also by other philosophies, practices and ideologies. Otherness, difference and plurality are realities certainly difficult to openly assimilate, for they imply a deconstruction and reconstruction of our own identities.

Tolerance, therefore, has received many definitions depending upon the social, political and cultural valuations of diversity, otherness and difference. It is not an absolute reality, but signifies different points on a

continuum, different possibilities and strategies that move from more passive to more pro-active understandings.[38] For example, when a moral good such as peace is set as a social desirable goal – which is not a minor issue – then tolerance may come as a resigned acceptance of difference for the sake of that ultimate goal. Tolerance is therefore instrumental to the persecution of another moral good. This attitude may come very close to one where tolerance results from its lack of moral weight, as when a relaxed benignity stems from sheer indifference towards differences as such. A third possibility poses tolerance as the appropriate attitude that must follow the recognition that others have the same universal rights that we do, similar to stoic and Kantian philosophy. Tolerance, therefore, is associated with the realisation of universal sameness.

All of these attitudes, however, appear today as quite brittle, fragile ways for facing a new phase in the collective history of humanity. Looking back to history, human experience shows different political arrangements to cope with difference and otherness – multinational empires, millet system, consociate nations, nation-states, immigrant societies, etc. But in these regimes tolerance has always been an instrumental and external achievement, something necessary in order to enforce other ends and goods –the rule by the few, peace as controlled violence, assimilation, economic exploitation, and so on. Yet the fragility of these regimes of tolerance was the latent or overt intolerant principle in-built, an intolerance that precisely made of "tolerance" a necessity of instrumental value.

These different attitudes regarding tolerance and its concomitant political regimes place difference and plurality in a shadowy spot, where tolerance becomes something that must be endured, ignored or made dependent upon a homogenising identity. Yet another two attitudes regarding tolerance are possible which can be envisioned as a pro-active

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[38] In what follows I follow Walzer's suggestions, although with certain modifications. See *On Tolerance*, pp. 10s.

response to the challenging globalised scenario. Here the issues of difference and plurality acquire a moral quality of their own, and where tolerance mutates from a simple negative or condescending forbearance to an active form of love. The first one corresponds to an attitude of curiosity toward the other that leads to a respect and a willingness to learn. Here tolerance would be a value subsumed under a behavioural and epistemological openness towards that which is different, that assumes the very incompleteness of our stories, traditions and being. Our identities are not final, but always in the making, as our epistemologies are ever soft, never closed.

A second one corresponds not only to a positive valuing of difference as such, but an embracing of the virtue of tolerance as a sheer and unwavering acceptance of the others – expressions of the largeness and diversity of human nature, God's plan, or evolution. From certain ideological and religious points of view, this last scenario would constitute the ideal to which humanity is called – a veritable state of grace and love. But in a pluralistic and globalised world, this position is almost certain to be confined to minorities inspired by the particular axiological pointers of their mythic narratives. For it is impossible for tolerance to have the same subjective meaning for all participants in society. Moreover, psychologically a normal and sane society is one in which people habitually strongly disagree, since general and homogeneous agreement is actually rare outside the sphere of instinctive human qualities.[39] But the main objection that can be levelled against unqualified acceptance is that it doesn't leave much room for a critical appraisal of the other which can squarely face the constant conflict of values and interests that marks human reality.

Since socially and politically it is desirable to avoid a sort of bad utopianism that purports to uphold lofty ideals without recognising its

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[39] See Carl Jung, ed., *Man and his Symbols* (New York: Dell Publishing, 1975), p. 46.

conflict with other values that we fear or dislike, we may favour the attitude represented by (critical) openness. Life always presses hard choices, which also have to be made in the larger and often conflicting arena of political life and arrangements. Therefore tolerance, as a moral practice, can be said properly to occur when we are open to communicate and interact with people whose beliefs we do not necessarily adopt, whose practices we often decline to imitate, in sum, when we coexist with an otherness that in spite of its right to be, still remains different, alien and strange. This is tolerance as an attitude of openness, thus recognising our ongoing incompleteness and relative truth. Yet it is also a critical openness which attempts to balance the moral weight of otherness with other values seen in correspondence to this respect for otherness – such as freedom, peace, equality, integrity, etc. It entails not only the recognition that the other, with his or her truth, will perhaps never come closer to ours or vice versa, but also that in the exercise of our choices as moral beings will often set a collision course with other choices, interests and axiological prioritisations.

Openness, a soft epistemology, and a critical engagement with the other, delineate a sound psychological, affective and cognitive approach for the contemporary social practice of tolerance. But a critical openness requires that tolerance must not restrict itself to its attitudinal dimension, but somehow must express itself in an institutional and political form. Otherwise, tolerance may just breed its own demise, naïvely sheltering its own negation. A point is reached where certain values and moral goods must be made effective in a social and political arrangement. Peace allowing for coexistence, for example, marks a limit and a horizon[40], and so do freedom, equality and justice.

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[40] See Hard and Negri, *Multitude*, p. 311; Walzer, p. 5.

5. Does Democracy have a Future? Tolerance as its Condition

Tolerance, therefore, is a multileveled compound of cognitive, social, institutional and psychological factors. For tolerance to be a successful practice, *three dimensions* must be addressed *in the search for a tolerant and democratic culture and social arrangement*:

a) As the anthropologist Hofstede has shown, *power distance and tolerance* are key dimension structuring any society and culture. Its patterns, however, are not something that fall from above but are constructed through dynamics learnt in family, school and workplace.[41] Acknowledging the complex ways in which subjectivities are formed and reshaped by the micro-dynamics of family, religion and affection (or lack thereof), we cannot dismiss the psychological and symbolic ground that instils certain views about tolerance. Background theories, social experiences and religious symbols are critical factors which set the parameters for an axiological universe which evokes different types of values.

(b) But in order for this micro-dynamic to flourish, a corresponding receptive environment is necessary, i.e., a *democratic horizon* and regime that gives sustenance to the bio-political network stemming from the communications and relationships of the multitude. While the patterns of true democracy are created in the collaborative and respectful cooperative practices from below, the institutional guarantees provided "from above" are also necessary.

(c) Finally, all that can be said about tolerance evaporates into thin air if the *grievances and sufferings* that may breed intolerant reactions are not redressed. Speaking about tolerance, therefore, implies the formation of a new world system where the services and resources involved in the business of reproducing and expanding life are more or less

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[41] See Hofstede, pp. 23ff.

equally shared and fairly exchanged. In other words, tolerance calls for new cooperative and communicative networks of labour and production.

Let's have a closer look at the three levels:

To (a) The first level has to do with the psychological and epistemological openness that is communicated through mythic narratives and/or hermeneutics – either sacred or secular. It is the most immediate filter through which psychological lives of individuals and communities are formed. Thoughts, feelings, intention and adaptive practices are drawn from the range of belief system a culture present to them. Given the late-modern lifting of philosophical and ideological interdicts on religion, its symbols, narratives and myths acquire a renewed vitality and interest. This poses the ethical and theological endeavour in a new light, considering the fact that values never appear in a vacuum, independent from mythic narratives. We do not know what the human is outside our telling a story that intertwines the challenges and conflicts of values that face the realisation of that which is the human condition. Most of these stories, however, have deep "religious" roots – either because they refer to a reality lying "beyond" the paramount one, or because they appear as "eruptions" and "gifts" from an unconscious level. Of course, these types of stories are effective to the extent that the primary caretakers not only socialise youth in this atmosphere, but are also committed to the realisation of values and prospects grafted into the myth.

Theological reflection offers here critical clues for the interpretations of these myths and symbols, enhancing thereby its formative powers. Notions regarding the nature of the divine, time, space, will, animals, plants, land, and the human condition, have a direct effect in the way people situate themselves in face of otherness, plurality, and difference. Thus one of the foremost challenges faced by a theological discourse committed with critical openness would be the deconstruction of monotheistic God-symbols inherited from the axial age, allowing for a vision of transcendence able to accommodate the integrity and substantial

difference of other beliefs and conceptions of the sacred.[42] Again, it is not a matter of simple and uncritical acceptance, a sort of "postmodern" embrace of everything in order to hold nothing, but a critical openness that is possible because of the non-exclusivist clues provided by the specific convictions of one's religion.[43] Values pointing toward openness and tolerance can and must be found within the integrity of one's own narrative –a veritable art considering that much of religious written sources were carved out from the corpse of a disparaged "other". But the craftsmanship of a theological endeavour will be measured by the ability to reconstruct a language of freedom, equality and tolerance by deconstructing texts that once served for legitimising oppressive dominion.

This is alchemy of sorts, yet it is an urgent task since the emphasis upon an absolute One, either ontologically or theologically understood, has served as the foundation for concepts of sovereignty and dominion forcing the heterogeneous multitude into a suffocating *Unum*: One God, one People, one Leader.[44] This level, therefore, is a key in the conformation of a spiritual and psychological otherness that would be the basis for any challenge to hegemonic and intolerant views. The recent history of Christian theology and ecumenical agreements, moving from intolerance towards pro-active tolerance, shows that it is possible for a religious outlook to discover new views. We must never close this possibility to other world religions, however rigid they may seem, to explore new dimensions of the sacred. At the same time, it is also true that to create this climate, other variables must come into play, that is, key grievances must be institutionally and socially addressed – as we will mention below.

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[42] Cfr. Mark Heim, *The Depth of Riches: a Trinitarian Theology of Religious Ends* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001), p. 6f.

[43] In the case of Christianity, the concepts of grace, agape or justification by faith, point to this reality.

[44] Cfr. Hard and Negri, *Multitude*, p. 329.

Of course, we are not only socialised through religious narratives – school (state) and Hollywood also possess an incredible formative power. Religious views are constantly intertwined with other narratives, "background theories" and experiences, which in turn slowly modify – or manipulate – the prospective tolerant dimensions found in religious stories. These contextual aspects can never be dismissed; pluralised scenarios already constitute a powerful enticement for reviewing any sorts of exclusivism and intolerance. But while for some this is a blessing in disguise since it catalyses values and behaviours seen as central to one's own religious outlook – as can be freedom, integrity, self-esteem, choice, diversity – for others, however, this same scenario is simply harrowing, cognitively and psychologically impossible to bear, thus encouraging an epic account that places the stressful conscience in the path of either a militant, apocalyptic or messianic release. In this fashion, intolerant attitudes are one of the possibilities that a confusing and pluralised semiotic context may elicit, seeking a sort of totalitarian order that promises to reduce stress by negating alterities.

To (b) Consequently the virtue of tolerance requires not only particular moral (and religious) sensitivities, but also of a political regime or arrangement providing the guarantees for a minimal climate of tolerance – which must accommodate different degrees of tolerance – precisely because of the crisis generated by diversity. Moral and religious sensitivities, as they are not independent of certain narratives, neither are they uncoupled from political and structural regimes. This is the second level to which we referred before, which points to democracy as both a cultural horizon for the containment of the multitude, as well as a political and institutional regime that aims to locate sovereignty in the hands of people.

Following the polarisation during the Cold War, the concept of democracy has been unanchored from its rigid moorings and set adrift,

providing a new opportunity for re-conceiving it.[45] In effect, the forces of globalization seem to pose formidable challenges, and opinions differ strongly as to the compatibility and future of democracy in the new globalised and late-modern scenario. From the *left*, social democratic arguments claim that democracy is debilitated or threatened by globalization, especially by its economic forces and fundamentalist reactions. The reassertion of the sovereignty of nation-states seems therefore the best strategy in the present global system. On the other hand, liberal cosmopolitan arguments stress that the forces of globalization, while not always beneficial at first, release the democratic potential of people by precisely promoting freedom from the rule of nation-states. From the *right*, neo-conservative ideologues stress that only the intervention by the coalition of the willing nations – lead by the U.S. – is able to foster democratic forces and institutions. Traditionalists, on the other hand, contest both the role of the U.S., and the compatibility of democracy with the cultural values of non-Western peoples.[46] None of these views, however, seem sufficient for confronting the new demands for tolerance, justice, peace and democracy. For democracy is confronted today with a leap of scale, where the local appears more intensively related to the global superseding the mediation offered by the boundaries of traditional nation-states. The present grievances against political, ecological and economic aspects, including the current state of war, are all symptoms of a crisis within the present world system, a rebellion against the formal mechanisms of sovereignty and its failing system of representation and decision making processes.

More than ever, local problems demand global solutions, and therefore tolerance as an active practice that signals openness to other expressions of the multitude is a key value in the conformation of a new biopolitical and democratic network capable of addressing and redressing

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[45] See Ibid, p. 232.
[46] See Ibid, pp. 233-237.

harmful, divisive, and exploitative scenarios. The tolerance that is expressed through this democratic network becomes thus a key factor for peace; for peace is not merely the absence of violence and war, but the basic precondition for reason, imagination, desire, emotions, feelings and affections, working its anarchic but lively ways through the maze of our world. Without tolerance, without peace, no cooperation, communication, forms of life and social relationships can emerge from the incredible potentiality of the swarming multitude. These are the weapons that signal the democratic critique of arms, launching a critique of the massive means of destruction at disposal of the core powers of the system, as well as of the equally disturbing weapons of the dispossessed, namely, the immolation of their own bodies. While these martyrdoms may well be considered a response to destruction and injustice, and a cunning strategy to deny sovereign exploitative powers of their object of sovereignty (the bodies of people), it is still a cog of intolerance that fits well in the grinding machine of the present world system.

To (c) as the theologian Reinhold Niebuhr once asserted, human capability for justice makes of democracy something possible; but its inclination to injustice makes of democracy something necessary.[47] The same can be said regarding tolerance. Therefore democracy should be measured both by its capability to voice grievance pertaining to a singular group as well as by the ability to connect different kinds of groups: economic, representation, poverty, human rights, education, ecology and health. These grievances give countenance to a multitude through which the future of democracy is at stake. This requires of a bio-political democratic ethics, that it bridge ideas, hopes and affection allowing an emotional yet also rational identification with a network of differentiated democratic power.

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[47] Cfr. Reinhold Niebuhr, *The Children of Light and the Children of Darkness* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1944).

With this we reach a third level that relates to how we redress global and local grievances, above all, of economic, social and ecological natures – different forms of intolerance that also generate intolerant reactions. If the "world-system" cannot show possibilities toward a more egalitarian arrangement, then the appeal of fundamentalisms will certainly be strengthened. For grievances and suffering bring us to the bedrock of human existence; it is the source of "local knowledge" that signals the inadequacies of ideological, social and economic systems.[48] Grievances, therefore, voice the "insurrection of subjugated knowledges" against hegemonic ideologies – which also include the different forms of fundamentalisms.[49] Of course, suffering is never without interpretation, but our bodies make of it a mediated immediacy, enclosing thus a negative universality challenging programmes and systems that thrive on elusive promises and concrete duress.

Deprivation and poverty may breed anger, indignation and antagonism, but revolt arises only on the basis of "wealth" – a *surplus* of intelligence, vision, experience, knowledge and desire that is generated by a shift in social practices and cultural patterns. Here lies, precisely, the inadequacy of the intolerant strategies and weapons of fundamentalisms for a pluralised scenario crossed by grievances of every sort. They recoil from the most fundamental weapon of all, a pro-active tolerance that comes with *love*. Without it, neither justice nor peace can permeate the increasing webs connecting us all in this fragile but beautiful planet. We are not saying that fundamentalists are incapable of loving, or that they are all equally "violent," but that they are blind to the *political dimension* of love. In this they are not alone; if both the forces that create economic disparities as well as many of the fundamentalist reactions

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[48] Cfr. Francis Schüssler Fiorenza, "The Crisis of Hermeneutics and Christian Theology," in Sheila Greeve Davaney, ed., *Theology at the End of Modernity* (Philadelphia: Trinity Press International, 1991), p. 135.

[49] See Michael Foucault, *Power/Knowledge* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1982), pp. 80f.

make of violent behaviour and intolerance a prime weapon in this time of bifurcation, then violence can only grow exponentially until it destroys us all.

This is why fundamentalism is a *symptom* of the disruptive forces of an unfair globalization, but not its *cure*. It is one of the powerful fluctuations indicating a possible bifurcation. But so are the powerful cultural and political experiences disclosing a common bio-political desire that rests on a pro-active exercise of tolerance as an affirmation of life in its multiple expressions. For that to happen, the fight for democracy must always be tied to a relentless pursuit of fairness and the eradication of poverty, which can only be reachable through a serious reorientation of the disparities generated by capitalism and its global division of labour. For only when the grievances of the majority are duly heard and redressed, when we are ready to look at the grim face of asymmetrical power, then shall we be able to walk in the full promise and creative force of tolerance and democratic affirmation.