

# »TERROR« OR THE LANGUAGE OF FEAR

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Terror has many faces. It manifests in the horrors of war, in the violence of dictatorship – and in the acts of terrorism. Are the shock and the attention that it creates the only »appealing« aspects of terror? Does it by necessity display the »evil«, the dark side of power(lessness)? Or may it also lead to something further (as at least the terrorists seem to believe)? Anyway, by its destructive effects, it irritates our everyday life experiences and, sometimes, even ends up in a complete collapse of (the symbolic) order (see Hitzler/Reichertz 2003). Yet, terror is not the exception, it is: *the rule*. Violence and fear are at the core of our culture – as (driving) forces that we flee, but also as means of forceful adoption and integration. This violence is, however, barely visible, it works below the surface, stays hidden. Where it carries the name of terror, it just becomes seizable and conceivable. Terror is thus a revealing sign. It does not tell a story of salvation (rather a story of failure); no purification and no catharsis is created by the victims and in the sacrifice of terror(ism), but it exposes a reality which we otherwise easily tend to ignore: the reality of violence, of oppression and of exclusion. Accordingly, in this »reflection«, terror shall be read as a sign in which the »other side« of the movement of modernity is disclosed – imaginary reflected by its »others«. Terror and violence are, nevertheless, a language that is not as easy to decode as its crude acts may make us believe. An interpretative approach to the phenomenon of terror must therefore start with a consideration of the term that signifies the meaning.

## 1. APPROACH TO THE TERM: THE AMBIVALENCE OF FEAR

»Terror« and »terrorism« are terms which are booming. We cannot escape them, they are our permanent companions throughout our daily (media) life, and it is hard to imagine that once there was a language without these »signifiers of the inexpressible«. But, historically, the word terror(ism) emerges in (modern) language relatively abrupt. Like a spectre, it appears together with the French Revolution, which for many historians marks the real beginning of the epoch of modernity. This coincidence is not at all by chance, and it will be considered in detail later on, but for now it is enough to wonder about how this omnipresent word could have infiltrated the field of speech and language so »immediate«. However, it possesses a rather familiar root (and cultural origin). The words »terror« and »terrorism« descend from the Latin verb »terrere« meaning »to tremble, to be afraid«, and which itself is derived from the Greek verb »trein«: »to run away in fear«.

Thus, terror is panic, it is an overwhelming feeling of fear. Terror and fear are synonyms, terror is fear itself. On the other hand, following the logic of this etymological root and the practice of language, terror – especially in its form of terrorism – is at the same time *the cause* of our fears, it is something that makes us tremble and feel frightened. In the term »terror« the cause and the effect converge, we cannot properly differentiate between the two, and this indifference, this ambivalence is a crucial characteristic for the phenomenons of terror(ism).

So already language reveals that there is always an interlocking of the concrete manifestations of terror and the (social and historical) contexts in which it is created. But there is even more that language may tell us about terror – if we are ready to go *into* it. The aspect of »trembling«, which is highlighted by the Latin root, points to the »material« dimension – and this materiality includes the bodily manifestations of fear as well as the (physical) destruction which usually is involved in the acts of terror. But terror has also a symbolic dimension: we imagine what we fear, and sometimes these fears are just imaginary. One may even get the impression that the more imaginary they are, the more powerful they are. Thus, Freud (1977 [1917]) may distinguish between what he calls »Realangst«: a *concrete fear*, which is bound to an object and therefore appears as something rational/understandable, and neurotic *anxieties* which are rather »diffuse« and lack a »real« background. I do, however, not want to draw a hard line between the two, because in (personal) *experience* it does not matter much if the feeling of fear has a real or an imaginary background (and what is real and what is not real is sometimes hard to tell). What is more, in the case of terror(ism) (projective) imagination is precisely its »real power«. But Freud's distinction can be useful in another respect: it refers to the dialectics of fear as something that »moves« us, that makes us flee and run away: something powerful and activating, and – on the other hand – as something that is paralysing. And again, it is language which already »knew« about this elementary dialectics of fear. Whereas the Greek root of the term »terror« involves the (struggling) elements of fright and *flight*, in the Latin word »angus« – which derives from »anxietas« – the deactivating aspect of strangling is expressed. The fright of terror is thus on the one hand »explosive«, it leads to headlong, desperate efforts of escape. At the same time it is paralysing: it makes motion- and speechless. The word »terror« describes a fear which can only be cried out loud, but which actually *cannot be expressed*.

## 2. GENEALOGY OF TERROR: THE MOVEMENT OF MODERNITY AND THE »DEFLEXIVE« DYNAMICS OF FEAR<sup>1</sup>

(The fright of) terror is in any respect an ambivalent, multidimensional phenomenon. It reveals the threats of and by (human) »nature«, it is an attack on the values of civilisation, it touches and it is itself a taboo – and thus it is placed in a strange relation of proximity to the divine and the diabolic alike (see Zulaika/Douglas 1996: pp. 149ff.). Undermining the established civilisational order, terror is yet a regular »follower« of the movement of modernity (see also Sagan 2001: pp. 1ff.). Fear and anxiety even mark the beginning of the epoch. Consequently, in the genealogic investigation that is targeted here, fear and the thinking of fear in a time of change are focussed in order to trace the roots of (modern) terror. But did change create fear? Or did fear create change? Whatever may be the answer: here, the two of them are considered to belong together. And fear and anxiety shall not at all be seen as peripheral, but must be considered as central to the understanding of the order of modernity and its movement of Enlightenment (see also Begemann 1987).

Modernity can never rest, it always must go further, it has fully subscribed to endless progress. Paradoxically, it is, however, exactly its forward drive that paralyzes modernity: in its permanent ambition of becoming something (else) it cannot be and thus cannot let be, it cannot bear and forbear, not itself and not its (imaginary) opponents. That is because the motor of the movement of modernity is precisely fear, and this fear does not allow a break, the flight has to be continued. The paining panic of stagnation and chaos is »moving« modernity. It seeks to escape the permanent threat of dissolution, and thus the existential fear of modernity cannot allow divergence. Everything has to unconditionally submit to its urge for order and progress. The forward-drive of fear therefore actually fixates modernity, captures it in an »iron cage« (Weber) of rigorous rationalism.

This regressive element in the »*Dialectic of Enlightenment*« was thoroughly revealed by Horkheimer and Adorno (1972 [1944]). Under the impression of the horrors of World War II and the Holocaust they state: »The curse of irresistible progress is irresistible regression.« (p. 36) Enlightenment, which worked towards »the dissolution of myths and the substitution of knowledge for fancy« (ibid.: p. 3), has become a violent, totalitarian system in which full control over the inner and outer »nature« is attempted to reach. The latent source of this drive for control is fear – the fear of chaos and dissolution. The situation of change, the questioning of old world views, the wars and political revolutions caused a situation of fundamental insecurity and intense feelings of anxiety. Thus, Horkheimer and Adorno come to the conclusion: »Enlightenment is mythic fear turned radical.« (Ibid: p. 16) And by the parallel radicalization of fear and Enlightenment the original dialectics is finally dissolved into one-dimensionality (see ibid.: 120ff. as well as Marcuse 1964). An unbound (subjective) reason disposes of all (objective) grounds so that any act of barbarity can be justified in its name (see op. cit.: pp. 168ff.).<sup>2</sup>

Everything »unclear«, everything that is resistant to the order (which was so painfully established) ought to be eliminated. Otherwise, the modern individual – who subscribed so brainlessly to the objectivity of reason – may tumble into the bottomless ground of fear. Paradoxically, ambivalence – which evokes feelings of a loss of control – is, according to Bauman (1991: pp. 1ff.), precisely a product of modern rationalism and its efforts to constitute order in its classificatory systems: whenever ambivalence appears, this results in a struggle to find more differentiated classes. But in the end, this only creates new possibilities for ambivalence. The movement of modernity therefore actually produces ambivalence in its classificatory in- and exclusion, which, at the same time, has to be fought more and more vehemently in the struggle for order. Thus, modernity is a never-ending war against ambivalence and chaos. Through classification and separations modernity is powerful and violent. Everything ambiguous and »impure« must be extinguished (see ibid.: pp. 7ff.).

The »purifying« movement of modernity is thus not only expressed in scientific classifications (see also Foucault 1973 [1966]), but it also manifests in social practice. A system of discipline evolved to which we have to submit (see ibid. 1977 [1975]). The disciplining violence hits and penetrates even the bodie(s), order is inscribed into them, they are »formed« by the routines of modern institutions: school, military, profession etc. (see additionally also Berger/Luckmann 1966, ch. II-1a). The violence of modernity is, however, a »refined« violence. It realizes in the form of a »civilising«

process in which external constraints are transformed into self-constraints (see Elias (1994 [1939])). The internalised violence is hard to identify, it works below the surface, and thus stays (mostly) invisible. In order to guarantee its invisibility, the deviant must be excluded from public space – in the name of humanity they are imprisoned in asylums and madhouses etc. where they are object of »educational« efforts and normalizing treatments. »In this central and centralized humanity«, Foucault concludes, »[...] we must hear the distant roar of battle.« (Op. cit: p. 308)

The (latent) violence of modernity and the voice of fear can even be traced in the writings of the grand thinkers of Enlightenment. For me, Thomas Hobbes (1588–1679) is one of the most interesting figures of modern philosophy because, in his biography as well as in his works, the contradictory tendencies of the fear-driven movement of modernity are reflected clearer than by any of his contemporaries. He is a »conservative revolutionary«, a warden and an innovator, one who departs from scholastic doctrine just to restore order with the structuring power of his »geometrical method«.

At the time when Thomas was born, the Spanish Armada intruded into British waters. A fact to which he refers in his autobiography with the statement that his mother had given birth to twins: himself and fear. And this fear accompanied him during his life and is reflected in his thought. After he had supported the King's party in a politically tense situation he had to flee to exile in France. He thus only observed the troubles of the Civil War (1642–48) from distance. But also on the continent the times were rough since there were still ramifications of the Thirty Years' War. Hobbes became the teacher of the Prince of Wales who as well lived in French exile. But again he lost backing when his »*Leviathan*« appeared in which he indirectly supported the rule of Oliver Cromwell whose autocratic government finally seemed to please Hobbes' yearning for order.<sup>3</sup>

Order is his highest goal and has to be established and sustained by any means. Accordingly, Hobbes (1957 [1651]: 30f. [ch. 5]) is asking for an accurate science as: »[...] the light of human minds is perspicuous words, but by exact definitions first snuffed, and then purged from ambiguity [...] metaphors, and senseless and ambiguous words, are like *ignes fatui*; and reasoning upon them is wandering amongst innumerable absurdities; and their end, contention and sedition, or contempt.« Insurrection and quarrel, however, lie within human »nature«. Only reason may control and limit them, since, driven by desire, man is longing for ever more power. The boundlessness of this desire is fed by the permanent fear to lose what already has been gained (see *ibid.*: pp. 63f. [ch. 11]). And this fear also makes suspicious towards others: »Fear of oppression, disposeth a man to anticipate, or to seek aid by society: for there is no other way by which a man can secure his life and liberty.« (*ibid.*: p. 65) – at least not in the state of nature. Here, everybody is everybody's enemy which results in a »war of every one against every one« (see *ibid.*: pp. 81f. [ch. 13]).

But fear is dialectic, it is at the same time the starting point and motor to overcome these pitiable conditions. In the fear of death and following the first law of nature which tells us »*to seek peace, and follow it*« (*ibid.*: p. 85 [ch. 14]) the people transfer their natural right to everything (especially their right of self-defence and self-government) in a reciprocal contract to a third

party – the only condition is that peace and order have to be secured and it shall be possible to enjoy all goods without fear (see *ibid.*: pp. 112f. [ch. 17] and additionally ch. 18 and p. 144 [ch. 21]). This is the birth of the great Leviathan, the »mortal god« and »artificial man« to which everybody has to submit. The radical individualism of the state of nature is thus replaced in the state of society by an authoritarian anti-individualism, and the natural equality is reversed into a relation of political inequality. Hobbes legitimizes an (absolutistic) system of suppressive violence, and, obviously, (the drive of) fear is a central motive to the understanding of this rather »irrational« turn in the political theory of Thomas Hobbes.

A similar statement can be made for another cardinal modern philosopher: René Descartes (1596–1650). Also his flight into rationality was motivated by the wish to overcome an existential fear, and, again, historical and biographical reasons can be given. After his degree in law in the year 1616, Descartes became only for a short period a teacher at the university of Portiers because his father sent him – right before the beginning of the Thirty Year's War – for military training to the Netherlands where he made the acquaintance of the physicist Isaak Beekmann. Beekmann reinforced his already high interest in the sciences and made him think about his future. However, Descartes did not immediately give up his life as a soldier. After a trip to Eastern Europe, he joined the troops of Maximilian of Bavaria which were passing the winter at Ulm. There, exactly one year after his first meeting with Beekmann, in the night from November 10 to 11, he had a series of three dreams of which we know through his first biographer, Adrian Baillet, who had access to Descartes' own records (which, unfortunately, got lost).

The dreams reflect his extreme uncertainty at this period of his life. He did not know where his place was. As it seems, he was very excited about a discovery that he made the day before, and, what is more, he was suffering from tuberculosis. In the first dream, he had to struggle against a storm: the wind pushed him aside from his way to a church. In the second dream, he got the vision of a frightening thunder storm. In the third and last dream, he saw two books: an encyclopaedia and a collection of poems. While opening the latter he came across the line: »quod vitae sectabor iter?« (what path shall I take in life?) and the suggestive phrase »est et non« (it is and is not).

As reported by Baillet, Descartes himself tried to explain his dreams. He interpreted the wind in the first dream as an evil ghost who wanted to move him away from the right path, whereas the thunder in the second dream was seen by Descartes as a »sign of the Spirit of Truth descending on him to take possession of him« (Baillet, paraphrased by Gabbey/Hall 1998: p. 654).<sup>4</sup> The third dream obviously pushed him towards a decision about his future and thus initiated his metamorphosis from a doubtful seeker to the philosopher of certainty. Accordingly, at the beginning of his second »Meditation« (on the nature of the human mind), he admits: »The Meditation of yesterday filled my mind with so many doubts that it is no longer in my power to forget them. And yet I do not see in what manner I can resolve them; and, just as if I had all of a sudden fallen into very deep water, I am so disconcerted that I can neither make certain of setting my feet on the bottom, nor can I swim and so support myself on the surface. I shall nevertheless make an effort and follow anew the same path as that on which

I yesterday entered, i.e. I shall proceed by setting aside all that in which the least doubt could be supposed to exist [...] and I shall ever follow in this road until I have met with something which is certain, or at least, if I can do nothing else, until I have learnt for certain that there is nothing in the world that is certain.« (1996 [1641]: p. 63 [II,1])

Descartes, who was searching for absolute certainty, did, however, never really consider the last possibility »that there is nothing in the world that is certain«. Already in his »*Discourse on the Method*« (1998 [1637]: pp. 21ff. [IV,1]) he had identified the unquestionable basis of philosophical certainty in the subject. The »self« was his »Archimedean point«. Following the principle of radical doubt, he had torn down the old fundamentals of knowledge and built new fundamentals in scientific method (see *ibid.*: ch. II and III). Driven by fear, this results in a rationalist capturing of the self which is – by self-reassurance – the starting point and anchor of this new, fictional certainty. But this is only possible by paying the price of a suppression of the latent moments of uncertainty and fear. Instead of »reflecting« and admitting it, fear is deflected (see Jain 2000: pp. 375ff.). This leads to an »*Escape from Freedom*« (Fromm 1941) – for freedom always also bears elements of threat – right into the prison walls of a one-sided and domineering rationality promising, as a compensation for its accounts, security and shelter.

Thus, Stephen Toulmin (1990) identifies the order of modernity as marked by a »politics of certainty«. He shows that – after the breakdown of the old (theological) order – there were strong efforts to constitute a new »Cosmopolis« by the means of reason, i.e. to create a comprehensive system (re)integrating human and cosmic order. This struggle for order, however, called for a departure from the particular, the local and the temporal, which had its justification in the medieval tradition as well as in the times of Renaissance, and lead to a totalising turn to the general, the universal and the timeless.

But in spite of this reorientation, the intended *tabula rasa*, the revolution of modernity is a mere fiction: also the fundamentals of the modern order rest in history and are not independent from time and space. What is more, the target of the project of modernity is indeed »reactionary«. In a time of uncertainty, lost security had to be restored. This can also be demonstrated with the example of the French Revolution, which did not only defeat the exhausted order of the *Ancien Régime* but established on its ruins a new, even more extensive order. Here, the contradictions, the achievements and the abyss of the movement of modernity are shown focussed like in a prism glass. This is why for many the true story of modernity starts with the »Grande Revolution« of 1789. But soon the revolution lost its »innocence«, the Jacobinical system of »terreur« evolved, but also this radicalism was born from fear (see also Sagan 2001).

It was the fear of loss: along with the Jacobinical terror the revolution turned »conservative«. Its violence served to conservation. The revolution eats its children – in order to keep itself and its achievements alive. This (cannibalistic) violence (see also *ibid.*: pp. 349f. and 444f.) is defensive, it reveals the weakness and uncertainty of the revolutionaries as well as of the order of modernity in which the defensive violence was »incorporated« – however, in a less visible form. In the following, the modern system of society learnt to hide its immanent violence in order to make it less conceivable. But still, an enormous amount of violence is present and it serves to the same mission:

the defence of a success permanently endangered by the fear which lead to it. Therefore, the initial impulse of modernity and its revolution(s) is conservative, and the revolutionary origin of modernity as well as its supposed »rationality« is a myth. The modern movement stays controlled by the fears that »move« it, that it seeks to suppress, but that determine it – ever more the more modernity seeks to escape this determination and refuses to accept this fact. The latent violence must, therefore, permanently be increased in order to mantle the contradictions that are thus caused. Enlightenment undermines itself. Radical reason turns against itself and instead of leading to »man's emergence from his self-imposed immaturity« (Kant 1991 [1784]: p. 54) it demands total submission to the vigorous rule of rationality. In this context, Agnes Heller (1990) chooses the notion of a latent »death wish« of modernity. Could it be possible that the terror of terrorism is the manifestation of this latent death wish?

### **3. THE SYMBOLISM AND LANGUAGE OF TERROR/ISM: A DIALOGUE OF VIOLENCE**

The movement of modernity bears right from the beginning a (self-)destructive moment. Violence is inscribed into the modern order. Driven by fear (and in order to flee it), Enlightenment establishes its forceful regime of rationality which only seemingly provides security and simply internalises fear. The mask of civilisation and humanity can only insufficiently cover this correlation. Rationally suppressed, fear thus becomes the latent fundament of modernity. Everything that is ambiguous, that endangers the established order must violently be »clarified« – to eliminate the horrors of ambivalence. Thus, a logic of (the suppression of) fear determines the movement of modernity. Underneath the surface, fear is even increased as the rigidness of rationalism creates its own terrifying and relentless system of »discipline« asking for full control (over the body as well as thought and emotions). The liberal impression of the order of modernity is merely superficial, its controlling power diffusely penetrates all areas (see additionally Deleuze/Guattari 1987 [1980] and Deleuze 1992 [1990]).

The violence and terror are simply hidden by the cover of civilisation and its techniques of discipline and disguise. Subcutaneously, they stay effective and cause a discomfort with the culture of modernity – its anonymity, its coldness, its threatening complexity, its disembedding power of dissolution, its uncompromising striving for progress (see Freud 1930 [1929] and Berger et al. 1974). Accordingly, it is exactly the »fundamentalism« of modernity which provokes the fundamentalist counter-movements. To simply identify those as anti-modern means to misunderstand them. They are true »children« of modernity. In the end, the similarities are bigger than the differences (see also Eisenstadt 1999). This »kinship« is also revealed addressing the question of violence. The violence of modernity only takes more subtle forms than terrorist or fundamentalist violence (see for the latter the examples described in Kakar 1996).

However, when the amount of latent violence exceeds a certain level the suppressed terror breaks through explosively – in the destruction of war, in the inhumanity of concentration camps, in the rage of the unleashed crowd. One of those explosive manifestations of the latent terror of modernity

is indeed terrorism. The latter is no »relapse into barbarism« but, just like fundamentalism (which is one of the main roots of current terrorism), a truly modern phenomenon. It is no contradiction to this interpretation that terrorism often seeks to depict itself in its »articulations« as a (radical) alternative to the modern order. This is in fact a part of the immanent logic of the language of terrorism that only symbolically represents a different system – without really embodying it, since the symbolism of terrorism is just a (metonymic) reflection of modernity. And, reversely, it is part of the logic (and the metaphorical rhetoric) of the modern identity that the terrorist outbreaks of fright are considered as mere exceptions, as deviations to the norms of civilisation. But this reading is simply an effort to hide the reality of the terror of modernity: as work discipline, economic »laws«, »side effects« etc.

Terror is the rule and the law of modernity, it is its destiny and its governing principle. Modernity is the terror of order, and the order of modernity is nothing but a »civilised« system of terror. Who ever opposes the (established) order easily becomes a terrorist (to it), since terrorism is a sign of the (permanent) threat of chaos – and, therefore, it is the proof of the failure and the *result* of the modern efforts of ordering. The latent (however penetrating) terror of the modern order just becomes manifest in the acts of terrorism. That is why terror ought to be excluded from the modern mind. The secret power (of fear), which determines and drives modernity, must not be revealed so that it could be reflected in this mirror since this would endanger power. This »insight« is thus blocked and deflected. Because of this »deflexive« reflex violence in fact becomes more and more a, *the* instrument of (institutional) politics (which will, at the same time, eliminate politics as the possibility of opposition and resistance). Accordingly, Jean Baudrillard (1991 [1983]: 38) concludes: »It is from this no man's land of terror that the world is now managed; it is from this in some sense extra-territorial [...] space that the world is literally taken hostage.« Any irritation of the balance of the (ruling) power (which, in the times of the Cold War, was called the »balance of terror«) may lead to total destruction. We are the hostages of terrorism as well as of the »war against terror/ism«.

But what, then, is the »essence« of (terrorist) terror? Is it the terror of its violence? Alberto Melucci (1989: p. 55) understands the new social movements as »messages«, as symptoms and indicators of the structural deficiencies of the system. Similarly, one should read terror/ism as a message: the message about the latent, suppressed (structural) violence that is prevalent in the order of modernity – causing a crisis exactly by its suppression. The latent violence which was made invisible (by the means of discipline and exclusion) is »revealed« through terror. Thus, Baudrillard (2001) may conclude that, by the (symbolic) acts of terrorism, a »process of realization« is initiated – which, however, rather means the real appearance of modernity's own violence than the (temporary) breakdown of the hyperreal simulation to which social reality, according to Baudrillard, has become.<sup>5</sup> *Terrorism is the other within modernity.* It is the manifestation of an invisible terror; the inconceivability of the terror of modernity is made conceivable in its inconceivability (as terror).

The sign of terrorism yet carries another message: the (tragic) message about a failed act of communication. Terrorism symbolizes a severe crisis of understanding. The exclusions, which the order of modernity produces in its fear, fall back on it: as an attack. Its misunderstanding of »the

others«, which it creates, is dreadfully disclosed to it. Terrorism is thus not so much an act of mere physical violence but a communication act that seeks to overcome the speechlessness that results from the processes of silencing invoked by the order of modernity.

Although the terrorist acts themselves are in fact hard to ignore, their latent messages are hardly ever understood. Not only do they evoke misunderstandings but complete rejection. The misunderstanding occurs in spite of the communicativeness of the terrorist which not only manifests in violent acts but (many times) in letters of confession and treatises. Sometimes, the transmission and publication of these accompanying messages is even the primary task of terrorism. Violence creates attention and publicity – even if the messages never reach their audience (in the sense of a real understanding). The acts of terrorism – which rather show helplessness, a lack of the ability and possibility to articulate oneself – are hardly ever seen as expressions of the immanent, centralised and excluding violence of modernity.

And one must admit: they even cannot. How shall the victims and/or the representatives of the system understand the subtext of terror – since it undermines their position. What is more, the position of exclusion is a condemnation to speechlessness. In order to be heard and understood, the (subaltern) terrorists would have to adopt to the (suppressive) logic of the language of the system they fight (see also Spivak 1988). The only »solution«, the only way of (desperate) articulation is destruction, a radical attack of the system. But the challenged system cannot forgive this strike. It responds in the same language, at the *only* level of mutual understanding: (the media of) violence. Thus, an escalating dialogue of violence is initiated. The anti-terrorist violence expresses: you are and stay »the others«.

This is not a completely unjustified »statement«. However, the terrorists do not become »others« by the execution of terrorist acts, they are (already) »others by definition«: the order of modernity permanently produces »the other« by its exclusions. Everything that cannot be incorporated and appropriated by modern reason, that withdraws from its rule, is being discarded and suppressed as it appears to be dangerous (see also Böhme/Böhme 1983). Within this process of »othering« everything that is bad is projected into the created image of the (threatening) other. Thus, one gets rid of all own ambivalences. In fact, it is, however, the realization of the (secret and rejected) similarity of the other to us that creates these strong defensive reactions (see Kristeva 1990 [1988] as well as Bielefeld 1991).

The other serves thus as a projection screen of own ambivalences, and the wish of a separation from these »disturbing« elements manifests in the desire to locate the other also geographically far away from oneself. The best example of this tendency is orientalism (especially in 19<sup>th</sup> century literature) in which the Orient serves as a contrasting mirror of Western self-identity (see Said 1978). The current »clash of civilizations«, which was proclaimed by Samuel Huntington (1993), is therefore only the reappearance of an older motif. It is a struggle about the definition of reality and the question of identity. The other, being an »effect« of suppressive exclusion, strikes back and thus shows that it is existing. However, this way, it becomes an integral part of the order which it is seemingly fighting, but, in fact, stabilising by offering the possibility of a negative mirroring. Modernity recognises and disguises itself in its violent others.

Accordingly, the horrors of terror may easily also turn into fascination and (narcistic) delight. This is particularly true for aesthetic representations of terror (e.g. in action movies). Such terror evokes pleasure, it is a consumable sensual stimulation which enables to get rid of suppressed fears in a »relaxing« manner (see Heller 1987). Even voyeuristic media coverage of »real« acts of terror may cause fascination and »attraction«, which, however, barely results in identification. Terrorism stays unloved: modernity is a bad mother that turns away from its »illegitimate« child – an unpleasant, embarrassing »accident« better not to be remembered. Therefore, the acts of terror – which cannot be ignored – must be, by necessity, abnormal mishaps of civilisation. The strong (and violent) deflection, however, clearly points to the secret proximity and kinship.

Terrorism eagerly engages in this dialogue of violence as it contributes to its goals. Violent rejection is not really a threat to it. On the contrary, terrorism rather seeks to provoke it. The terrorist is the radical other; terrorism is about the destruction of the old system and the envisionment of a new system – or, to stick to the metaphor: it attempts to kill its parents in order to found a new dynasty. In spite of all power imbalances, we thus find it to be a matching relation: violence is answered by counter violence, for both sides assume that this is the only articulation that will not be ignored (although it might be misunderstood). And as it seems: they are right.

#### **4. THE »REFLEXIVE« DIMENSION OF TERROR**

In its essence, terrorism – whatever may be the concrete targets of the terrorists – is about the possibility of articulation and recognition. Terrorism is a sign, and this sign points to the latent violence of the order of modernity and its exclusions. Thus, terrorism enters a dialogue of »symbolic«, yet »massive« violence with the system that represents this order. The dialogue of violence and counter-violence serves to a (mutual) self-assurance. The self-images must not be irritated, and that is the paradox of this communication act. Terrorism is »reflecting« the culture of modernity – but the cosmopolitan world society refuses to look into the mirror since the image that is reflected destroys all illusions, it causes terror: the terror of its latent violence. So the reflected image of terror has to be destroyed, the mirror of terrorism must be smashed.

Accordingly, the fright of terrorism may easily lead to flight reactions (and also the retreat in the imaginary safety of a fortress can be a flight). The (own) fear is fought with (counter-)terror. A fundamental misunderstanding occurs. The secret code of terror cannot be understood since there are no efforts to decipher it. But if these (vast) signs were recognized, terror could unfold a reflexive dimension. Fear is not one-dimensional, it may unroll a process of »self-enlightenment«, it bears a dialectic.

Søren Kierkegaard (1801 [1844]) was first to develop an explicitly dialectical notion of fear – however, embedded into a Christian dogmatism. Human existence is charged by a deep feeling of fear, the fear of emptiness, of annihilation. But, according to Kierkegaard, this fear also captures the possibility of redemption. If one does devote to it, it leads to faith and thus to liberation in the realisation of god. Especially existentialism referred to this dialectical concept of fear, but »saves«

it from its theological component. Thus Heidegger (1993 [1927]: § 30) regards fear as »the dormant possibility of the conditioned being-in-the-world« (own translation),<sup>6</sup> since, even caused by a concrete threat, one always fears about existence (Dasein). Concrete fear (as an objective fear) is only »realised« because of the reality of a fundamental feeling of anxiety. And, according to Heidegger, this existential anxiety is, as a »condition« (Befindlichkeit), not negative, but, in analogy to Kierkegaard, indeed »conditional« to the self: »Fear reveals, in existence, the being of a most own being, that means *being free* to the freedom of a choosing-and-capturing-oneself.« (Ibid.: § 40 [own translation])<sup>7</sup> Jean-Paul Sartre (1956 [1943]: pp. 29ff.), who as well provides fear (and its dialectic) a prominent part in his »phenomenological ontology«, states that for Kierkegaard fear is the fear of the nothing and thus, in consequence, the fear of freedom, whereas it is for Heidegger exactly the grasping of the nothing. Sartre aims to bridge this (supposed) opposition in his concept, and he exactly identifies the fundament of freedom in existential fear/anxiety. Sartre remarks: fear is »the reflective apprehension of freedom by itself« (ibid.: p. 39).

To identify the fundament of freedom in fear, is, however, nothing else than an ideology to legitimize a (repressive) »condemnation to freedom«, and, accordingly, Adorno's perspicacious critique of the existentialist concept of freedom (derived from fear) reveals: »Angst, that supposed »existential«, is the claustrophobia of a systematized society.« (1973 [1966]: p. 24) This statement refers to the fact that fear (respectively »Angst«) is not so much an existential basic condition but rather the expression of deficient social conditions, which, at the same time, are pressing for a suppression of fear, make one flee into conformance instead of reflecting it – which could result in a questioning of this »cold« system built on fear (see also Geyer 1998: pp. 355ff.). Adorno (op. cit.: p. 347) points out: »Along with angst and the cause of it, this coldness too might pass.«

Therefore, in order to cope with fear, it must first be admitted, recognised and reflected, i.e. it has to be enabled to articulate if one does not want it to grow unceasingly (hidden in – false – certainties). We must read the signs that point us to the fears that drive us: our own and those of other ones. Only thus will fear not determine and terrify us, but finally be read as what it is: the (symbolic) materialisation of an existing violence (of suppression and exclusion) which, maybe, is just not visible. The fears that we feel when we approach terror are the latent fears that the order of modernity excludes. Terror is a sign, a reflection, a reflex of latent fear and violence. We must reflect the fear and the violence in order to liberate us from it and the horrors of terrorism.

**NOTES:**

1. For a more detailed discussion see Jain 2000: ch. 5.
2. See in addition also Schabert 1972 as well as the contributions in Miller/Soeffner 1996.
3. Further biographical data can, for example, be obtained from Tönnies 1971 (1896).
4. In the cited article Gabbey and Hall give a much more detailed summary on Descartes' dreams.
5. Baudrillard (2001) states: »The tactics of terrorism are to provoke an excess of reality and to make the system collapse under the weight of this excess. The very derision of the situation, as well as all the piled up violence of power, flips against it, for terrorist actions are both the magnifying mirror of the system's violence, and the model of a symbolic violence that it cannot access, the only violence it cannot exert: that of its own death.«
6. In the German original the phrase is: »das Fürchten als schlummernde Möglichkeit des befindlichen In-der-Welt-seins«. The English standard translation (by John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson 1962): »a stunning possibility of Being-in-the-world« did not seem fully appropriate to me.
7. Again, the standard translation: »Anxiety makes manifest in Dasein its *Being towards* its ownmost potentiality – for-Being – that is, its *Being-free for* the freedom of choosing itself and taking hold of itself« is to me not very close to the (meaning of the) original: »Die Angst offenbart im Dasein das *Sein zum* eigensten Seinkönnen, das heißt das *Freisein für* die Freiheit des Sich-selbst-wählens und -ergreifens.«

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