

CRIMINALS IN GLORY

EDITORIAL

Violence is a difficult phenomenon to think of. This is possibly so, one could argue, because violence is the place of the irruption of blind reality, void of all symbolic mediations — violence would amount to an escape from language, and therefore language would have a hard time understanding violence within its own forms. How could one explain the violence of words, though, as in a dictator's speech? What strange phenomenon would such a language without language be, a phenomenon that at times is so highly persuasive and rhetorically effective? Or could it be perhaps that violence cannot be thought of easily because violence constitutes a distinct world, which can hardly be thought of from the outside? Somewhat like theology, which can hardly think of its object unless it is itself supported by faith, it would be difficult to think of violence if not from within an albeit deplorable two-way exchange with violence (as violence that is done and/or suffered). Violence would then be an object which it would be better not to think of at all, as happens to Plato's judges who, like children, have reached old age without suspecting anything regarding evil and, precisely because of such extraneousness to it, can judge the offenders with no sympathy, with the icy — and violent — coolness of the good. For all these reasons, a discourse on violence would then be suspect of uselessness on the one hand, of complicity on the other.

The parallel with religion lets us perhaps see something regarding the essence of violence. This would be the case not simply because violence and religions often unfold together. Violence could be a way of being God. There would then be a nexus between glory and violence. The violent act (even as an act of speech or thought) could be some sort of an elevation, of the interruption of total mediation so that something (someone) may be elevated in its (his or her) splendid isolation. Glory of the criminal.

In sum, violence would look at phenomena against the light, making them stand out from their (ontological even more than social) link with their neighbors, from the knot of relations, from their very connection with space and time thereby protesting the absolute character of the latter (violent acts occur in the void of space and time: they occur in a "now" that is always or never, in a displaced "here," in a space empty of coordinates). Violence would be one of the few places available to us today for experiencing the absolute. Moreover, it would be one of the most accessible places.

The interruption of the connection, of the total nexus is ultimately a mark of madness, and violence is often associated with madness, as in the so-called massacres of madness.¹ Yet there is a meek way of isolating (or elevating) phenomena as well as there is a violent one. The "against-the-light" reading of the phenomenon as absolute, as being torn away from the net of being has its own good reason to be. The frantic quest for "particularity" (or unicity), which the society of images incentivizes up to paroxysm, hides the desire, important in its own way (but which may be violent), of exiting anonymity and standing out.

This standing out (or being by oneself), and as it were this fetishism, is the work of love and violence because the work of glory. In love, the other is always an exception. Every day we create small pedestals. This elevation (of the other's gestures, words, and so on), which not by chance may at times degenerate into

¹ There is something objectionable in this, as if the mad were necessarily violent.

violence (such as in crimes due to passion), has a positive meaning if it produces stars, as children do with sports players, and if it illuminates and elevates a piece of the world. The work of violence would then be similar to the work of love. These phenomena would be assimilated by the quest for glory, and glory would be an elevation of the phenomenon, its separatedness, and its luminescence. Violence would be a way to celebrate things, and not merely to nullify them, as it is always said. There would be an intrinsic link between violence and celebration.²

Acts of violence are celebrations. In violence, ultimately I am the priest to myself, I sacrifice to myself. I split myself into a subject and an object of liturgy. I make the effort to raise myself, I serve myself as winner.

If this were truly the case though, one would have to wonder what the difference is, in such a hypothesis, between opposite — and impossible — forms of celebration. In meekness, which is the character trait most specifically opposed to violence, perhaps there are no celebrations. Were there *meek* celebrations, in them glorification, which entails also a stiffening, would only occur together with a simultaneous fluidification (which at times takes up the form of irony). Here the exit from the nexus of exchange should be the way for a simultaneous re-introduction into the web of relations. Glory, joined with meekness, would indeed be an interruption of breath — an interruption of the exchange — that would however introduce into circulation: a turn or an alternation of breath (Celan), an *intake* indeed. The difference would then be between two forms of glory: the one that affirms and the one that denies exchange, albeit in a glimpse. This is perhaps the case in Plotinus' *Nous*, where every idea is a nugget that is separate from the golden flow of words only to the extent of its own coincidence with it (the Intellect is an apnea that gives breath). This is not the case, on the contrary, in sadism, in which the glorification of the possessor postulates the exchange only in order to revoke it.

There is something martial in celebrations, something violent in parades or even just in playing with toy soldiers. There is something militaristic (fetishistic) also in philosophy, which glorifies numinous words that tower as regiment banners or army flags: *being*, *essence*, *substance*, and so on.

Is it necessary that philosophers be violent, and the violent be philosophers? Perhaps. The tension, not to say the cramp, that occurs with respect to violence is a good thing because ultimately things do *wish* to stand out alone, and this holds true first and foremost for God (“you shall have no other God” / *Der Einzige* [the only one]). The question is how, where, even through which concrete steps this desire for glory can turn (that is, confirm and overcome itself) into a desire for the good rather than for the bad.

Enrico Guglielminetti

(Translated by Silvia Benso)

² Insofar as it implies undergoing violence, suffering would instead be an anti-celebration. Those who suffer are expelled, against their will, from an exchange with the world; they find themselves cast aside in the role of victims. The “now” of suffering does not succeed in transitioning into the immediately subsequent “now” nor does it inherit anything from the preceding “now.” It stands on the sharp climax of time, like a “here” without proximity that will never reach a “there” no matter how close such a “there” may be. For this reason too the affective experience of proximity can alleviate suffering by reconstructing some form of connectivity with the world.