

Security and Solidarity

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Abstract: The aim of this paper is to examine the phenomenon of the pandemic as a connection between security or freedom and solidarity. Fear and liberty are consistent, according to the famous Hobbesian saying. As Foucault explains, freedom is a functional component of the biopolitical security system, strictly related to the process of *circulation* of both people and things. The domain of such freedom is “population,” as state force: a peculiar field of relations, unlimited but defined, united and at the same time divided in classes. Definable as a polarized continuum, “population” is always strong or weak, healthy and diseased, normal or abnormal, “true” or “untrue.” The name of its internal cohesion is “solidarity”.

In this biopolitical-securitarian domain, a contagious disease (whether dormant or active) is a real and specific negativity, and its governance or “normalization” is a continuous task. More precisely, pandemic impact is not only related to welfare and environmental conditions of a “population” but coincides with its coextensive and negative state; microbic circulation is a micro-level of the social one, and transmission is a (diseased) manner of social interaction, even as physical distancing and self-quarantine are apparently paradoxical forms of social cohesiveness - i.e. of a latent illness.

It is precisely for this reason that only a new, radical form of solidarity could involve real freedom. Faced with the pandemic phenomenon, or with the real aspect of “population”, solidarity should be the loosening up of the connection between liberty and fear.

Keywords: pandemic, circulation, fear, security, freedom, class divisions, solidarity.

1. At the end of the second lecture of the series *Security, Territory, Population*, Michel Foucault recalled his research on disciplinary power by making a determining correction, in the perspective of securitarian regulation and normalization: “I said somewhere that we could not understand the establishment of liberal ideologies and a liberal politics in the eighteenth century without keeping in mind that the same eighteenth century, which made such a strong demand for freedoms, had all the same ballasted these freedoms with a disciplinary technique that [...] considerably restricted freedom and provided, as it were, guarantees for the exercise of this freedom. Well, I think I was wrong. I was not completely wrong, of course, but, in short, it was not exactly this. I think something completely different is at stake. This is that this freedom, both ideology and technique of government, should in fact be understood within the mutations and transformations of technologies of power. More precisely and particularly, freedom is nothing else but the correlative of

the deployment of apparatuses of security. An apparatus of security, in any case the one I have spoken about, cannot operate well [...] except on condition that it is given freedom, in the modern sense [the word]* acquires in the eighteenth century: no longer the exemptions and privileges attached to a person, but the possibility of movement, change of place, and processes of circulation of both people and things.”¹

Discipline and Punish actually defined the "panoptic modality of power", clearly separating it from the "structures juridico-politiques" of bourgeois society. Here, in the 1978-79 lectures, the mechanism of security is instead isolated through the double distinction from the legal system on the one hand and from the disciplinary apparatus on the other. The passage is well known: "law works in the imaginary, since the law imagines and can only formulate all the things that could and must not be done by imagining them. It imagines the negative. Discipline works [...] as it were, complementary to reality [...] security [...] tries to work within reality, by getting the components of reality to work in relation to each other, thanks to and through a series of analyses and specific arrangements."² And this reciprocal interplay of the elements of the real is aimed, as we know, not at avoiding dangerous conditions (e.g. famine) but at achieving "normalization" and equilibrium (between poor and rich-wheat areas). It is therefore "profoundly linked to the general principle of what is called liberalism. The game of liberalism—not interfering, allowing free movement, letting things follow their course; *laissez faire*, *passer et aller*—basically and fundamentally means acting so that reality develops, goes its way, [...] according to the laws, principles, and mechanisms of reality itself."³ Freedom is here, in other words, the principle that ensures the adherence of political technique, or of safety devices, to the free play of the real in which men and things participate.

Therefore, "*I was wrong* ..., because the modern transformation of the apparatuses and practices of power could not be understood by limiting oneself to the disciplinary technique understood as coercion or as "foundation of the formal, juridical liberties."⁴ But at the same time, I was never totally wrong ..., since it is not precisely a question of substituting the securitarian model for the disciplinarian one; just as this has not limited itself to supplanting the legal one, there is now no exclusive affirmation of freedom, and "letting do", specifies Foucault, certainly does not mean letting do everything. The rise to power of securitarian rationality thus does not imply the end of discipline (and even less that of panopticism, of course); on the contrary, it implies

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1 Foucault 2009, p.50

2 Ibid., p.49

3 Ibid.

4 Foucault 1995, p.224

the comprehension of the disciplinary system itself and of the legal system as entities of the real, as elements whose "reality develops and goes." More precisely and particularly, freedom is nothing else but the correlative of the deployment of apparatuses of security", it is so to the point of freely putting into play and integrating the other systems into its equilibrium. If Foucault was able to correct himself, that is, if he found himself partly wrong and at the same time did not have absolutely wrong *tout à fait tort*, it is on the one hand because "the panopticism of every day [...] in the genealogy of modern society, they have been, with the class domination that traverses it, the political counterpart of the juridical norms according to which power was redistributed,⁵ and on the other hand because this "contrepartie politique" is understandable only in the sense of the "genealogy of modern society", as a correlative of freedom and securitarian devices, that is, of "a series of analysis and specific disposition of the economic normalization. If disciplines are "a sort of a counter-right" and have "role of introducing insuperable asymmetries and excluding reciprocities."⁶ it is because they are consistent with the same "class domination that traverses it" [society] and at the same time with the "freedom is nothing else but the correlative of the deployment of apparatuses of security". On the other hand, it is true that it was the same "economists" who had the technique of power in the play of reality, that invented the modern use of the term class: dividing the population into classes means bringing it back to a discrete number of elements of reality.; or, according to the formula of Mirabeau's *Friend of the People*, "to state from where the revenue comes, how it is distributed... in which places it is lost, in which places it is reproduced", that is "to formulate a division of the social order, because we deal with people, through the unique criterion of the relations to the production of wealth."⁷ The disciplinary classification of bodies, corresponds and thus adapts to that which puts in work the distinction of a series of elements and of their free play - or of their economic relations - in the heart of society itself; the dissymmetries that it introduces are consistent with the new freedom, which is not formal and juridical, but is a freedom of movement, of wealth and of people, managed at the statistical level and marked by class distinction and domination.

2. It was Hobbes who linked freedom so tightly to the security apparatus, that is, tied it indissolubly to the negative pole of fear. In *The Leviathan*, the exercise of sovereignty corresponds, according to the well-known phrasing from Carl Schmitt, to the "effective and present performance of

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5 Ibid., p.225

6 Ibid., p.224

7 Piguet 1996, p. 48

a real protection"⁸: it applies exclusively within the city walls and as long as the sovereign is able to ensure the freedom (i.e. the safe movement) of the citizen. If these fail the sovereign on the one hand and its subject on the other logically cease to be such. Thus, the man who is no longer free to move, that is, forced into prison, has every reason to try to escape since the pact in his case has failed. Consistently, those who do not lock their homes or turn without protection - thus showing that they do not recognize the security principle, that is, the coherence of freedom and fear - place themselves outside the civil condition.

Since its evolution in the eighteenth-century, the model started to become openly dynamic: security is now an end to be pursued and which can only be achieved thanks to adequate solicitation, that is, under the pressure of fear. Dynamism is therefore a function of the balance between fear and hope, repulsion and attraction. Freedom or security is defined between these poles, and is, in turn, always anew desirable and solicitable.

Insecurity is therefore not pushed outside the city, but becomes the negative and efficient pole of the securitarian devices themselves. After a first series of adjustments, fine-tuning and sometimes admirable simplifications, towards the end of the eighteenth century, technologies replaced the impossible claim to completely protect with the ability to make protection desired, thus managing to transform weakness in a strong point. It will then be a question, not of eliminating the risks, but on the contrary highlighting them, of selecting and maintaining that specific threat against which it can be offered or made to believe that it can offer protection, or, if necessary, to produce it. This lucky formula of security techniques is not afraid of contradictions, and continues to act throughout the centuries.

Thus, it is understood how the same "liberty-genic" device⁹ may at times prove counterproductive, without however really entering into crisis: even in this way, they will in fact succeed in provoking the request for a freedom that once again is consistent with their functioning.

3. Marked by distinction and class domination, the freedom of movement of goods or of people, is coessential to securitarian normalization: the "population", the specific object that biopower produces and controls - as Foucault explained - is a classified multitude, disciplined and marked by levels of life which are either desirable or fearful, by collaborating polarities of risk and well-being. Be it when it reveals itself as the true "strength of the state" (Mirabeau), or when it is conceived as the "*Maximum* of strength of a given number of people" (Rousseau), it itself

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8 Schmitt 1995, p.53

9 Foucault, 2010, p. 70

divides between: the "right" or "true" population (Gianmaria Ortes), that is coherent with the needs, objectives and governmental strategies, and the "false" or "apparent" population, both close and foreign to the first, which it casts in a negative shadow. The great division into classes can then simplify its own scheme, that is to put in order, make intelligible and manageable, that variability of infinitesimal degrees which marks each individual, making his condition coveted or undesirable. Discipline collaborates to this micrologic definition, and carries out thus the grafting of singularities in the *en masse* classification of the social body.

The standard of living is a standard of protection, and risk exposure increases inversely with social rank. As Marx showed, capital captures and in turn makes this disparity productive, indeed by producing it, it historically reproduces itself, because the increase in excess labor in relation to the necessary one, that is, the relative surplus value, translates into a population that is "apparent" or, better still, in "surplus": "Only in the mode of production based on capital does pauperism appear as a result of labor itself, of the development of the labor force. At a certain stage of social production, becomes overpopulation what at another stage would not be deemed such, and which could have different effects.¹⁰The surplus of people thus constitutes, with the famous quote from *The Capital*, a useful "reserve army": "capital, since it constantly reproduces itself as surplus capital, tends to create this pauperism and at the same time to suppress it. It acts in two opposite directions, and from time to time, one or the other tendency prevails."¹¹ But this double, ambiguous capacity for action is already implicit in the securitarian order, which produces and makes use of insecurity, that is, the insecure population, and therefore has as a correlation a certain freedom that, belonging to some, is denied to others. That is, one or the other trend of capital prevails, in a historical development that corresponds to the dynamism of the security model.

The very definition of "population" is in fact, right from the encyclopedic entry of Damilaville, a relationship, a variation between the number of inhabitants and the territory, or between the former and the available wealth. The population P is obtained from N (number of inhabitants) / T (territory: i.e. the resources it offers). And if we substitute capital for this last variable, we understand how it is a direct expression of the relationship between the number of inhabitants and the population (or the labor force) useful and necessary for production. But the population of Damilaville is also, and more evidently, a relation between inhabitants and available space. Therefore, its excessive size will also correspond in this case to a bad spatial distribution ratio (of which the

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10 Marx 1953, p. 498

11 Ibid., p.503

Jewish ghettos provided the canonical example at the time). The standard of living is spatially marked and the class division (or exploitation, or surplus labor) restores the balance: the population becomes true, it becomes an economically efficient force, when the overpopulation itself (the unfavorable relationship between the number of inhabitants and size of the built-up area) becomes a class prerogative. Less space (that is, a space measured first of all by the concentration of the means of production) or less freedom, less movement for those on the lower classes, means more space and freedom for the upper ones. Once again, the discipline that distributes and closes and puts in boxes, responds to the fundamentals of economic-political logic. The same mechanism produces the search for freedom, and this, born in compulsion and poverty, not only does not radically contradict capital which operates in a double and opposite way to itself (and is therefore unable to contradict itself), but prepares the moment in which its anti-pauperistic tendency will be able to assert itself.

4. If the logically rigorous bond of protection established in Hobbes (at least literally) a limit between the natural freedom of the individual and sovereign right, the new configuration of the security model manages to break it down. Now, the inscription in the power relationship does not amount to the factual provision of protection: the citizen does not become a citizen by virtue of the protection that the sovereign assures him, but by the same insecurity that animates him internally. The sovereign power that is no longer subjected to the condition established by Hobbes: coincides therefore with the population itself, and in this it knows no limits; it inscribes the obligation in the intimacy of the subject and it makes his will coincide with the sovereign will of all. Thus, together with that of power, the very nature of citizens is redefined: when protection according to them corresponds perfectly to their exposure to danger, they have transferred *their very lives* to the sovereign. In the words of Rousseau (*Du contrat social*, I, IV), "The very life which they have devoted to the State is continuously protected by it; and when they expose that life in its defence, what are they then doing but giving back to the State what they have received from it?". When Schmitt affirms that being ready to die defines the political character of a people, he will give the latter a definition which is actually perfectly biopolitical and securitarian, consistent with the "maximum of strength", and closer to Rousseau than to Hobbes.

We know very well that the "life... devoted to the state" and at the same time "received from it" will be the object of the great medical-political investment, capable of distinguishing exactly in the body of the population, the subjects with healthy and productive behaviors, from those with sick, unproductive and burdensome behaviors, while organizing spaces, building cities, "curing machines" and the housing

itself. Now, medicine takes care of the population, but this also constitutes the field of intelligibility to which science itself refers and amounts, is specified and specializes: as a science of the population, in the double meaning of the genitive. Like their heirs, hygienists or urban planners, political doctors are no strangers to the body they treat, and the same "force of the state" is both exercised and empowered in them. This force is in fact none other than the population itself. Therefore, the medicine that separates and confines, that nourishes, heals and improves, that specializes and divides while building the healthy social body by isolating it from the abnormal, is but this very body that discovers itself, knows itself, and knowing itself grows and branches out, inspect and cure and improve himself. Each new discovery is a self-discovery and marks a new self-demonstrating stage of the same force within the framework of state rationality.

5. In his important book on Pasteur, *Les microbes. Guerre et paix* [The Microbes. War and Piece] (1984), Bruno Latour defined the discovery of microbes as a redefinition of the social body. He then insisted that this re-composition is preliminary to the police-like intervention of the twentieth-century hygienists: if they are able to act, exercising effective control, it is only because the battle has already been won in the laboratories. The intervention of the hygienists, technically specialized and operative, still derives from the police science and from the political medicine (or medical police) of the eighteenth century, which in all respects were a knowledge of the population, that is of the *polis* as its privileged living environment. In the same way that these sciences defined and built the social body, starting from the spaces and fluids that flowed through them (i.e. describing an urban square as a reserve of pure air, a source of healthy life or a lung to equip the social body), thus the discovery of microbes was a new, more precise, revolutionary vision on the population and its specific spatiality. The population is a set of bodies that move within the environment, and both population and environment are crossed by healthy or diseased, harmful or beneficial, infectious or disinfectant microbes. And if on the body of the population itself, on the great body-environment of the state force, the areas of positivity or the spots of the right vital intensity already appeared, these areas will cross also the individuals and the environments in which they move, and the battles of the antibodies in the smallest of organisms are but the microscopic appearances of the macro-inflammations that can afflict large cities and entire regions. In other words, microbiological specialization belongs to the same medical-political rationality and provides it with a new, decisive point of support (Latour). The discovery and treatment of the microbe is a discovery and sanitation of the social body that that little being permeates and unites at all levels: therefore, it can give a new coherence to the exercise of small disciplines (e.g. personal hygiene) and the statistical plan of

the major moments of regulation (e.g. the distribution of vaccines). If microorganisms form the appreciable, manipulable, manageable medium of all circulations, if they unite the mobility of all bodies by permeating and moving in them (and thanks to them), if each individual body is but a temporary arrangement of the microbial flow itself, then what is pasteurized is the population itself, and circulation defines not only the form of freedom but the form of life. So, not only is security a freedom of movement internally solicited by danger, but existence as such is a circulation both free and dangerous at the same time: microbial life (that is, life as a real entity) is strengthened by fighting, defense and risk, death and survival, are mixed in it, abiding only to the law of unstable equilibrium. The mutual dependence of the elements, or the solidarity of beings, is meanwhile reduced to this microbiological domain of life or of the population. And if it is true, as Deleuze pointed out, that Leibniz's baroque metaphysics is already closely connected with the discovery of new living beings within the organism, it is also true that an essential change is now taking place. It is a limitation, a boundary that delimits the field of causes and effects, or a caesura of which the neo-Leibnizian contemporaries of Pasteur, such as Charles Renouvier and Gabriel Tarde had a precise awareness: the first signaled that the actions, the affections and reactions that spread, from the small distance of the molecules in barely perceptible lengths, and then to the greater ones, involve an idea of transmission ordered to the "biological regime" therefore, "society is solidarity", is very different from the harmony of relations imagined by Leibniz, who on the contrary does not accept any limits, does not admit any term or obstacle to the propagation of movements.¹² Tarde, the author so loved by Latour, has superimposed and made monadology coincide with sociology, reducing the metaphysical plane to that of organic life. For him, every relationship is both social and vital, and as variable as the strength of the population: "The vitality of organisms, that is the intimate solidarity of their parts, rises or falls continuously."¹³

Observed by a philosopher or a sociologist, or under the microscope by a biologist, this field of solidarity relationships is nothing but the domain of securitarian devices, where capital has been able to install itself by monopolizing circulation: surplus value marks the threshold of positive and negative, strength is wealth, and exposure to danger is no longer a concomitant variable to protection but is co-essential to life, when this "life itself" is divided into classes.

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12 Renouvier, 1903, pp. 55-56

13 Tarde, 1999, p. 90: Gabriel Tarde, *Monadology and Sociology*, re.press Melbourne, 2002, 55

6. It is from this point of view that the current pandemic can be observed, shifting our gaze from the most conspicuous and coercive manifestation of the devices. The renewed Pasteurian structure of political medicine has indeed provided a striking demonstration of the fact that the population does not exist except in the discoveries and recompositions of itself: being only a function of the number of people and the environment they inhabit, it is nothing but the living organization, teeming with microbes that cross both the people and the environment. Even the illness is thus rigorously redefined, at this level, as a pathogen that has its limits, capable of living only inside the microbes. Again: the virus that appears to penetrate and spread like an enemy in a body made of billions of bodies and infinite particles, and whose way of existing is called contagion, was in a sense already there, it is the same "population" (in both the broader and the more precise meanings of the term, as the unity of living beings and as their environment) which is now reconfigured and revealed, according to the specific mode of its appearance; indeed, as the distinguished "false" and the "true" population of before, now appear together, the one (the illness) certifying the existence of itself in the existence of the other. In the contagion the population itself looks and discovers itself, and while it infects itself it manifests itself as the vitality of relationships that decreases or increases, as positivity that defends itself and lives or yields to its infectious part. The gradualness of the contagion, which "rises or falls continuously", is the expression of a collective life that is internally distinguished, advances on itself, reaches a balance only to lose and regain it, that is, it coincides with its inexhaustible process of normalization; and the daily statistics are updates, clarifications and graphic resolutions of the ancient eighteenth-century function: they make the "true population" appear in contrast with the sick one, as "maximum de force" or as a lower mortality rate, a better ratio of healthy and sick individuals, or a better ratio of inhabitants and medical devices. The "strength" is its management, life comes from its government. And again: strength appears in the encounter with a resistance or when it resists its opposite, showing itself as strength and life together, and sees itself in its yielding, recognizes itself as such or subjectivizes itself and takes charge of itself. The sick person is a danger to others and he also becomes other to himself by joining others in the personal struggle for survival. Precisely this unavoidable reference to oneself, this identification of the subject as a member of the population, this link, whether latent or actual, of the self to oneself and of one with the other, corresponds, according to the legal expression of the device, to the legal bond of solidarity (defined for example in art. 2 of the Italian Constitution, as a "mandatory duty"): each individual is defined as responsible for the common security (or well-being) to which he should sacrifice - or give back - a part of his personal freedom. Here, of course, "freedom" and "security" hardly have to conceal their synonymy, and

the former must hide its negative correlative. That is, the Constitutional Charter could be read in watermark: some have to sacrifice - or give up - their security, being bound to those who will see their freedoms protected in this way, or will give up part of their insecurity in exchange. The microscopic penetration of the deadly into the vital, the solidarity of the two or the coincidence of danger with "life itself" (of free circulation with the epidemic) thus finds a superstructural expression consistent with the social order divided into classes. At a new level of subjectivation, the sense of insecurity and the demand for protection grow meanwhile to become a paroxysm.

7. "The graph's good today," he would remark, rubbing his hands. To his mind the disease had reached what he called high-water mark. Thereafter it could but ebb."¹⁴ But illness does not call itself illness, and when it has a name and is described in a graph, it no longer attacks the population from the outside. While the danger is not cancelled but normalized, it is the security regulation itself that reaches its "level", just as the population (microbial, solidary, or viral) finds its most acute self-evidence in the epidemic. And it would be more correct to say that the revolution of modern bacteriology has finally solved the age-old problem of spreads, endemics, epidemics or pandemics, and their specific locations. If "the fundament of the epidemic is not the plague, the phlegm" it is not even the pungent air of Nîmes in winter or the putrid air of Paris in summer¹⁵: these conditions are rather the environmental variables of an inexhaustible, immanent or absolute circulation (which should be called at the same time life, population, or even pandemic) which appears and reveals itself openly as such only due to an evident imbalance and a new adjustment in the its unlimited domain. This function is now in force on a world scale and the most (at least apparently) inept systems of government, which also give free rein to illness, correspond to the most active ones, and find their internal equilibrium point as a reflection of a variable external equilibrium, or of a continuous normalization in the great space of planetary circulation. Meanwhile, the social classification shows itself in an exasperated way, in the exposure to risk - or rather to the equally asymmetrical consequences of its management. At the statistical-regulatory level, the areas of positivity that the maps or graphs highlight, correspond to those of the most violent deprivation. The social distinction must then be evident and claimed by the interested parties themselves: with the lockdown and the tracking, the safety devices provoke in the most evident way the request for the same freedom consistent with their functioning, acting as suggestive mechanisms on the petty-bourgeois

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14 Camus 1948, p. 196

15 Foucault 1963, pp. 22-23

crowd that claims among their rights, first of all, that of existing, that is, of gathering together; this reaction corresponds by contrast, by hiding it, to the condition of those who are meanwhile deprived of the right to speak, that is, transformed into purely objective labor-power, which must give up most of their freedom or face greater risk in the production of surplus value itself. What makes both positions coherent is precisely the solidarity essence of an entity, however crossed by antagonisms, such as the population, where the danger or constraint of one is linked to the protection and freedom of the other, the condition of the lower to its denial by the upper, for their own use and consumption.

8. With the appearance of the virus as a leading actor, it is the theater of biopower that has fully unfolded, that is, the scenario of securitarian devices, of the partitions and the of the most marked dissymmetries, the apparatuses of control, the run-in mechanisms of discipline. And if in the meantime the graph of illness can appear good or excellent, reaching the *level*, it is precisely because *contagion and biopolitical solidarity are coherent*; because a population exists and is managed, according to the criterion of production relations and the circulation of wealth to which the same emergency provisions remain subject. Some bonds are tightened, and with these the relative freedom to sacrifice, the disciplinary to the regulation.

But perhaps the possible resolution of the biopower constraint lies precisely here. If the current social order can in fact unite its members *in its own way*, conceiving them as elements of solidarity by associating in a gradual *continuum* the protection of one with the risk and exposure to death of the other, solidarity does not necessarily have to correspond to the determinations of the social and its statutes, and it can as well be not limited to a behavior disciplined by the rules and the protective devices. It is no coincidence that today, when a state of emergency is decreed, the rhetorical praise of such behavior is combined with a plaintive attachment to the rules that guarantee "my freedom": "an security-apparatus [dispositif] can work well [...] only under the condition [...] that one gives it something that is freedom"; and an attitude like "at the same time ideology and technique of government", has its counterpart in the fear, enslavement and ruthless violence of neoliberalism. Precisely the technique of governance, that is the structure of free circulation, is based on the bond that unites beings, or precisely on the biopolitical continuity that the medical police and then microbiology have made intelligible and of which the pandemic is the crudest manifestation. However, this bond tightens a life dedicated to the state, bestowed by the state, and which is defined as "life itself" only from a state perspective; what it makes perfectly unitary and in solidarity is none other than the very field of the rationality of government. The freedom we give up, in fact, is not exactly the security we receive in return (otherwise there would be no

renunciation, let alone as an "imperative duty"): between one and the other the securitarian device is inserted instead, which connects and maintains in relation, or in a variable equilibrium, assignment and gain, the protected life of the one and the life exposed to danger of the other, protects a freedom which basically is "my freedom" to let the other die.

The mythologem of "life itself" or of the "intimate solidarity" of the social organism can therefore only be replaced by a solidarity which is vital in itself or a life of solidarity which does not impose sacrifices, which is neither given nor received, nor is owing to nobody. Conceiving this solidarity in itself unlimited, and dissolved by the biopolitical domination of normalization, means implementing it: this seems to be the least obvious and at the same time most urgent thing today.

Translated by Arbër Zaimi

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